



Inventing THE
AMERICAN PRIMITIVE

Politics, Gender and the Representation of Native
American Literary Traditions, 1789-1936

HELEN CARR

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To Isobel and Gillian

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Helen Carr
Goldsmiths College, 1996

ABBREVIATIONS

(in order in which they appear)

- ASPI *American State Papers Class II: Indian Volume 1. Documents Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States from the first session of the first to third sessions of the Thirteenth Congress, Inclusive: Commencing March 3, 1789 and ending March 3, 1815*, Selected and Edited, under the Authority of Congress, by Walter Lawrie, Secretary of the Senate, and Matthew St Clair Clarke, Clerk of the House of Representatives. Gales and Seaton: 1832.
- OVN Sarah Wentworth Morton, *Ouâbi: or the Virtues of Nature*, Boston: Thomas & Andrews, 1790.
- ACT 'Azakia, a Canadian Tale' in *The American Museum or Repository of Ancient and Modern Fugitive Pieces*, Vol. 6, September, 1789.
- SH Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Song of Hiawatha*, London: David Boyne, 1855, 3rd ed.
- HWL1 Samuel Longfellow ed., *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from his Journals and Correspondents*, Vol. 1, Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1886.
- HWL2 Samuel Longfellow ed., *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from his Journals and Correspondents*, Vol. 2, Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1886.
- LH Lewis H. Morgan, *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee or Iroquois*, Rochester, New York: Sage & Bros, 1851.
- ISS Alice C. Fletcher, *Indian Story and Song from North America*, Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., 1900.
- OM Alice C. Fletcher aided by Francis La Flesche, *A Study of Omaha Music, Archaeological and Ethnological Papers of the Peabody Museum*, Vol. 1, Camb., Mass: Peabody Museum, 1893.
- OT Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe, 27th Annual Report 1905-6*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, DC, 1911.
- HAK Alice C. Fletcher, *The Hako: A Pawnee Ceremony, 22nd Annual Report, 1901-2*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, DC, 1904.
- PW Ruth Underhill, *Autobiography of a Papago Woman*, Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association, No. 46, 1936.

INTRODUCTION

I^N 1922, THAT *annus mirabilis* of high modernism, the art critic Edgar Holger Cahill wrote an article which argued, as his title put it, that ‘America has its “Primitives”’:

We great Machine People, who have carried ugliness well-nigh to apotheosis in the fairest of lands, . . . may forego the conqueror’s pride and learn wisdom from our humble brother of the pueblos, who has made the desert bloom with beauty.¹

The gloss which Cahill gives here to ‘primitive’ was a modernist one, in which the primitive art of undeveloped peoples was a source of regeneration for a desolate modern world. Americans had until quite recently been rather reluctant to use the word ‘primitive’.² Even when it had become an established norm in British late nineteenth-century anthropological writing, Americans preferred to choose instead words like ‘ancient’, or alternatively,

1. Quoted in Robert Fay Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board: an Aspect of New Deal Indian Policy* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983, p. 13. The term ‘American’, meaning ‘appertaining to the United States of America’, is itself an imperialistic one, ignoring as it does Canada and Latin America, but it is in general use, so I shall follow it.
2. There was a further paradox, in that the works which eventually emerged in the States with the word ‘primitive’ in their titles (for example, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1916) and *Primitive Art* (1927), by Franz Boas, *Primitive Society* (1920), and *Primitive Religion* (1924), by Robert Lowie, and *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (1927), and *Primitive Religion* (1937), by Paul Radin) were in fact stressing the heterogeneity of the different cultures labelled ‘primitive’ and insisting that there was no essential difference between ‘advanced’ and ‘primitive’ minds.

'savage', depending on their attitude to their country's native people. Yet, paradoxically, it had been in accounts of the Native Americans that modernity's concept of the 'primitive' first emerged.

What the word 'primitive' connotes is a place in time. The primitive is the first, originary stage of development. The word was employed from the time of the late fifteenth century as a historical term (the 'primitive' Church seems one of the most common usages) but, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, its first use in its anthropological sense, to describe the earliest stage of human development, was in 1781, while the American War of Independence raged. This was in the third volume of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Speculation about those early stages was common throughout Enlightenment thought, though most systematically developed by the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, in whose works theories of cultural development had been discussed and formulated since the 1750s.³ In their scheme of the developmental stages of mankind, they had (with slight variations) come to agree on four: hunting, pastoral, agricultural and commercial. The Native American was placed firmly in the first of these. It is in this fused sense of 'early' that Gibbon employs the term: he is describing the *human savage*, (Gibbon's italics) as observed by 'antique and modern navigators', the savage whose 'abject condition' is 'perhaps the primitive and universal stage of mankind'. Though he says it would be 'an easy, though tedious task, to produce the authority of poets, philosophers and historians', the one modern instance he gives is of a voyage to the New World.⁴ What had been a geographical remove from the metropolis was transformed into a temporal one. It is this controlling and coercive metaphor which, as Johannes Fabian has argued in *Time and the Other*, underlies not only western anthropology but also colonialism.⁵

But as far as America was concerned, this metaphorical transformation had begun even earlier. Harry Levin, in his account of *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*, looked at the way the Golden Age, which in classical times had been seen as an earlier period, became transformed into a different place, projected on to the New World in the West.⁶ The idea of the Golden Age was of course only one of many images by which the inhabitants of the New World were represented, others being on the whole a great deal less commendatory. Notions of an Edenic innocence were sometimes drawn on too, although in theological orthodoxy there were now no unfallen members

3. See Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976. As Meek points out, the theory of the four stages was developed by some but not all of the French Enlightenment thinkers, also from the 1750s onwards.

4. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, verbatim reprint in four volumes, Vol. II, London and New York: Frederick Warne, 1890, p. 581.

5. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.

6. Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*, London: Faber & Faber, 1970.

of the human race. Eden was another temporal image through which time and geography could imperceptibly merge. Native Americans were not simply *over* but *back* there. By the late seventeenth century Locke could famously say, 'In the beginning all the World was AMERICA'.⁷

In this book I shall look at how this idea of the primitive shaped the understanding of Native American literary traditions from the first days of the United States until the modernist period, when Boasian anthropologists began to challenge that evolutionary narrative. Edgar Cahill was writing four years after the publication of the first anthology of Native American poetry, entitled, in a phrase taken from the Navajo, one of those beauty-making desert groups, *The Path on the Rainbow*.⁸ Whilst much of the collection exemplified how translation should not be done, it marked the beginning of a serious and growing interest in transcriptions of that poetry as part of American literary traditions. Since the 1960s, the 'Native American Renaissance' has seen a revival, as well as a transformation, in English language fiction and poetry, of the rich traditions of the Native Americans.⁹ Among groups whose language survived the years of forced assimilation, traditions of oral narrative, performance and song persist. Whilst Mary Austin, in her introduction to *The Path on the Rainbow*, calls this poetry pre-Homeric, and laments the loss of the best of it through the 'stamping out of the superior tribes', it now seems clear, as Arnold Krupat has recently written, that 'Native American verbal expression – literature – is as alive and important today, five hundred years after Columbus's incursion, as it ever was'.¹⁰ Not only are there English language writers of the stature of N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, Gerald Vizenor, James Welch and Wendy Rose, but increasing critical attention – now renamed 'ethnocriticism' by Krupat – is paid by both anthropologists and literary critics to the literary art of the past and present oral tradition.¹¹

Yet cultural traditions are not discrete entities. 'Travelling cultures', in James Clifford's phrase, are nothing new.¹² Both Native Americans and whites took much from each other: in material terms, on the one hand,

7. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, 1689, in *Two Treatises of Government*, New York and Scarborough, Ontario: Mentor Books, 1965, p. 343.
8. George Cronyn, *The Path on the Rainbow: an Anthology of Songs and Chants from the Indians of North America* (1918), republished as *American Indian Poetry: the Standard Anthology of Songs and Chants*, New York: Liveright, 1934.
9. The name was given by Kenneth Lincoln, more appropriately than in the case of many a renaissance. See Kenneth Lincoln, *Native American Renaissance*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
10. George Cronyn, *The Path on the Rainbow*, p. xxiv, and Arnold Krupat, *New Voices in Native American Criticism*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993, p. xviii.
11. See Arnold Krupat, *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
12. See James Clifford, 'Traveling Cultures' in *Cultural Studies* edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, New York and London: Routledge, 1992.

Native Americans acquired horses, iron goods, methods of torture, alcohol; on the other, European settlers discovered maize, squash, hunting techniques, turkeys. If my examples highlight the appropriation of sustenance by the Europeans, and the acquisition of tools of resistance or destruction by the Native Americans, that is perhaps not unrepresentative. But for a colonised people, verbal cultural traditions, which name and give significance to a way of life, in themselves offer a powerful tool of resistance: this is why colonisers repeatedly attempt to eradicate the language of the colonised. Yet if it has been necessary for Native American forms to adapt and recreate themselves, the existence of these Native American traditions, however ill-understood or misapprehended, has also helped to shape literary traditions in the States. The responses of white Americans to these Native American traditions, their attempts to transcribe and translate them, and what these attempts reveal about the angst-ridden desires which formed the American nation will be the focus of this book. In the words Derrida quotes from Montaigne, my aim is to 'interpret interpretations'.¹³

The 'interpretations' which I examine include political, literary and anthropological texts. I shall begin by analysing the political representation of the Native Americans in the early days of the United States. The conflicts and contradictions of that period underlie all the later writing on the Native American with which I am concerned, for the moral and material dilemmas of the United States' Indian policy were never resolved, except through the temporary expediencies of violence. In the remainder of the book I shall look at a series of literary and anthropological texts, all of which draw on, interpret or transcribe Native American literary traditions. The earliest (a poem) does this only in a conjectural, tangential and uncertain way; the last (an anthropological memoir) claims to translate an authentic Native American account. In all cases the texts are inscribed by the guilt, anxiety and evasion to which that Indian policy gave rise.

In the last two decades literary criticism and anthropology have come closer together, and both have become increasingly aware of the political implications of their disciplines. New historicists, cultural materialists and feminist critics have drawn on theories of cultural anthropology to understand texts as part of power-bearing symbolic systems within a given culture.¹⁴ Interpretative anthropology, as exemplified in the work of Clifford Geertz, has read cultures as if they were texts. In the words of Geertz and Paul de Man's seminal joint conference, anthropology and

13. 'We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things' (Montaigne). Cited as epigraph to 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in *Writing and Difference*, (1967) trans. Alan Bass, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 278.

14. New historicists have drawn particularly on the work of Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu. Feminist literary critics have used the work of Lévi-Strauss, (generally his *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, not a work I think helpful to the feminist cause) and some of the ideas of Edwin and Shirley Ardener.

literary criticism both undertake 'the systematic study of meaningful forms'.¹⁵ Re-readings of American literary history have examined texts to attempt to understand the racial and gender conflicts in American culture.¹⁶ Under the influence of post-structuralism, ethnographers have begun to deconstruct their own discourse, questioning the rhetorical role of the ethnographer/hero in their texts, the invisibility of 'native informants', and the assumption that ethnography offers authoritative representations of other cultures.¹⁷ In response to this self-critique, a movement of post-modern ethnography has called for 'polyphonic' accounts of cultures, using Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theories of the *heteroglossia* of the novel-form as their model, now allowing the voices of the observed to appear in their texts, not simply offering the seamless prose of the observer.¹⁸ Journals like *Cultural Critique* and *Representations*, whose very titles sum up the central concerns of this latest development, publish literary and anthropological, as well as historical and psychoanalytic articles, most of which draw on more than one discipline for their structure and content. As Geertz has put it, we have moved into an era of 'blurred genres'.¹⁹

Colonial Critique and Postcolonial Critics

One of the shared concerns in this literary and anthropological co-dependence has been the working of power. For anthropologists, what was central was colonial power, but the book which became in itself the most visible icon of colonial critique was written by a literary critic: Edward

15. The book which came out of that conference was *Myth, Symbol and Culture*, ed. Clifford Geertz, New York: Norton, 1971. Its introduction now seems remarkable for the tentativeness with which it suggests looking at 'commonalities of concern', very different from the confident textual (in the conventional sense) criticism of Geertz's *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, Oxford: Polity, 1988, which won the National Book Critics Award for Criticism for 1989. The two most representative collections of Geertz's work are *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973 and *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books, 1983.
16. See – as just one example – *The American Literary History Reader*, ed. Gordon Hutner, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
17. *Works and Lives* is an example of this kind of approach, but the figure most associated with it is James Clifford. See *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986 and James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, Boston: Harvard University Press, 1988.
18. 'Heteroglossia', like 'polyphony' refers to the multi-voicedness of such texts. See again the work of Clifford, particularly 'On Ethnographic Authority' in *The Predicament of Culture*. See also Stephen Tyler, 'Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document' in *Writing Culture*, and George E. Marcus and Michael J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: an Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
19. Clifford Geertz, 'Blurred Genres: the Refiguration of Social Thought' in Geertz, *Local Knowledge*.

Said's *Orientalism*.²⁰ As James Clifford has said, 'much of what Said said there about the west's political domination of others through an essentialising and containing discourse was not really new.'²¹ Certainly, in the area with which this book is concerned, the language through which Europe had categorised and appropriated the New World and its inhabitants had been widely analysed. Said's melding of a Foucauldian and a Gramscian analysis gave the subject a cohesion it had hitherto lacked, and, it has been argued, made his theory acceptable to the two main strands of radical (or at least non-conservative) critics, the post-structuralists and the Marxists.²² But the power of the book did not lie only in its argument. What gave it such impact was that Said had provided a *gestalt*, by which what had been previously a heterogeneous collection of texts, prejudices, and political expediencies acquired a coherence and a significance. Said found a name, indeed a representation, for this western representation of the east. But all representations – even those of the falsity of other representations – can be only provisional discursive tools. Said's work has been much criticised: in one sense, unfairly, or in an unfair spirit, because it was his imaginative leap that has helped to give direction to much of what has been written in this area since. Yet to continue as a productive analysis of colonialism his work has needed modification, which he, among others, has provided. *Orientalism's* strength was that it gathered this process of colonialist representation into a perceptible totality. Since then, the complexities and discontinuities have become increasingly apparent.

After the publication of *Orientalism*, the term 'colonialist discourse' came into use to describe the focus of this area of academic debate. Already that phrase is in danger of effacement by the emphasis on postcolonialism, despite repeated angry denunciations of the way that monolithic word is re-colonising all areas to do with either race, colonialism, colonial resistance or non-metropolitan writing.²³ The chief criticism levelled at Said's work was that it imposed too simple a grid on his subject, neglecting the differences between different periods and different countries, reifying and totalising the Occident in much the same way as he himself had objected to in the west's processing of the east. Similar criticisms can be, and are, levelled at aspects of contemporary post-colonial criticism.²⁴ The present state of postcolonial theory seems to have

20. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

21. See 'On *Orientalism*' in Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*.

22. This is argued by Linda Chrisman and Patrick Williams in their introduction to the collection they jointly edited, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: a Reader*, New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994, p. 6.

23. This process is in fact resisted by the Chrisman and Williams reader, and also by the collection edited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iverson, *Colonialist Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.

24. See, for example, Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Postcolonialism"' in Barker et al., *Colonialist Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, and Kenneth Parker, 'Debate: Very Like a Whale: Post-Colonialism Between Canonicities and Ethnicities', *Social Identities*, Vol. 1/1, 1995.

much in common with the rough passage of feminist criticism in the seventies and early eighties, when easy generalities about 'women's' oppression had to be painfully differentiated by class, economics, sexuality and race.²⁵

Both postcolonial theory and colonial discourse analysis are relevant to the texts which I discuss (though I shall make use of these approaches in a critical and sceptical way): the United States was a postcolonial country as well as an aggressive Empire. Anne McClintock, in what is perhaps the most telling and incisive critique so far of the term postcolonial, condemns the way the word homogenises 'a multiplicity of powers and histories' and calls instead for 'a proliferation of historically nuanced theories and strategies'.²⁶ In that she is clearly correct; it is essential to discriminate between the very different circumstances, struggles and agencies involved, not least the very great political difference between settler and other colonies.²⁷ All the same, I think she is too sweeping when she denies the possibility of using the word 'postcolonial' at all in connection with the United States. 'By what fiat of historical amnesia', she asks, 'can the United States of America, in particular, qualify as "post-colonial" – a term which can only be a monumental affront to the Native American peoples who opposed the confetti triumphalism of 1992?'²⁸ Of course, as a present day – *the* present-day – superpower, United States' postcolonial history no longer has the cultural effects it once did, but that history is crucial in understanding its past.²⁹ It is surely rather an act of historical amnesia to forget that the United States went through its own version of the colonial/postcolonial transition. If McClintock means the United States' role as an oppressor disqualifies it for the term, plenty of others would have to go too. Being postcolonial may mean a wrongful oppression has been overthrown, but it is no guarantee of moral rectitude. Postcoloniality is a historical stage, not a virtue.

The crisis of legitimation brought about by the American Revolution is illuminated, I would suggest, if one thinks of those events in terms of

25. McClintock makes a related point, arguing that 'Just as the singular category "Woman" has been discredited as a bogus universal for feminism, incapable of distinguishing between the varied histories and imbalance in power among women, so the singular category "post-colonial" may license too readily a panoptic tendency to view the globe within generic abstractions voided of political nuance'. 'The Angel of Progress', p. 255.
26. McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress', p. 266.
27. The need to differentiate between different colonialisms is a point strongly made by Robert Young in his most recent book *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London: Routledge, 1995, though largely ignored in his earlier *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London: Routledge, 1990. See my review article on the latter, 'Colour-Coded Critiques', *New Formations* 20, 1993.
28. McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress', p. 256. McClintock is one of the present-day critics I admire most, so I am sorry to disagree with her so early in my book, but on this point I have to. Linda Chrisman and Patrick Williams argue that involvement in contemporary capitalism casts doubt on a country's postcoloniality – they reject Australia and Canada out of hand – so they would certainly not accept the USA. But again I think that is giving 'postcolonial' a non-historical meaning.
29. Though why, one might ask, does it still seem to be the case that, in literary studies in the United States, English literature remains the most prestigious area in which to work?

postcolonialism. This is not to forget or excuse the treatment of the Native Americans, rather to see more clearly how white/Indian relations were profoundly affected by the emergence of an independent United States. Most neighbouring Native American groups were aware that it would not be a development in their interests, which was why so many supported the British. Whilst the texts at which I look are best described as examples of colonialist discourse, it is essential to see how, in the American context, this writing, like their nationalistic rhetoric, often had as its subtext the postcolonial insecurities of the new America. The white inhabitants of the United States did not, of course, have at its conception the same painful problems faced by countries, like, for instance, those of Africa, whose own pre-colonial cultural traditions had been disrupted, suppressed and denigrated. Part of the struggle and achievement of independence in those countries has been the attempted recovery and revalorisation of those traditions. The United States had the reverse problem as it searched for an identity by which to escape its cultural subordination to the metropolis. As Homi Bhabha has said, 'nations, like narratives, lose their origin in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye'.³⁰ But the origin of the States, as its citizens remind themselves each year, is not lost but can be clearly traced to a very particular Fourth of July. The 'invention of America' as Garry Wills put it, was an urgent task, and its legitimating myths were intimately bound up with its representations of the Native American.³¹ The process which I trace from my first to my third chapter is the way in which the idea of the Indian moved from being a symbol of the States themselves to becoming, by the 1850s, a definition of everything Americans were not. The United States came into being as a critique of modernity, made legitimate by its difference from the corruptions and oppressions of a decadent Europe. In the Enlightenment critique of over-civilisation on which it relied, the primary example and symbol of freedom-loving natural man was the American Indian, the image or mirror of the new American. But increasingly, as the frontier was pushed remorselessly back, the Native American became the defining Savage Other by which the Civilised American could be known.

The rhetoric of American patriotism still exploits this dual self-representation; the American can be, like the Indian, Natural Man – simple, homey, honest, Natty Bumppo or Forest Gump – or, in contradistinction to the Indian, a citizen of the world's most modern nation. Jean Baudrillard, in his postmodernist paean, *America* (1988), evokes both claims: 'Deep down, the US . . . is the *only remaining primitive society*. . . . America is the original version of modernity.'³² For Baudrillard, in the United States primitive and modern mean

30. Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, London and New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 1.

31. Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1978.

32. Jean Baudrillard, *America* (1986) trans. Chris Turner, London: Verso, 1988, pp. 7, 76.

the same: without roots or history. The 'myth of time' most often told in the United States is that it has no past. This United States' 'tradition of the new' has in itself a long and politically complex history, but Baudrillard does not distinguish between myth and politics, any more, I shall later suggest, than some literary critics have done. In his flat, high-speed, celluloid world, all is simulacrum, or, as the Anglo-American tradition would rather put it, representation. The politics of such myths or representations will, however, be central to my examination of what poetic primitivism has meant in the States. The mythic figurations of the United States as both the truly primitive and the truly modern, radically breaking with the past, goes back to that critical emergence as a separate country in search of nationhood. If the white American could at the country's inception identify with the Native American as natural, uncorrupted man, soon only the white American would be eligible for that role. The United States was the country of the future, where the westward course of Empire made its way: as its citizens transformed the plains and deserts, the Indian along with the wilderness would give way to a modern culture. The new Americans had defined their nation in terms of opposition to injustice, and of belief in inalienable natural rights; but they found that only by injustice and the alienation of rights could they bring their nation into being. In order to create the future, the nation had to argue that the *present* (the living Indian) was already the *past*.

The ideological beliefs of the young United States were not new; rather they were an eclectic transformation of previous colonial or European ideas. That the Native American represented the primitive past was an idea in currency long before the revolution. The definition of the European settlers' identity – and their right to land – by contrast with that of the Native Americans dated back to the seventeenth century. European Enlightenment theories underpinned the Declaration of Independence. The States tried to build its own literary nationalism, more than once, on European models, in an ironic anticipation of what Kwame Anthony Appiah has castigated as 'nativism' – the construction of an African literary nationalism in terms which are a counter-image of the west's nationalist discourses.³³ European ideas of folk or primitive art were uneasily mapped on to Native American culture. But if there are continuities in this story there are also breaks and reversals. While 'orientalism' cannot always be compared with the construction of what Robert Berkhofer's book called 'the White Man's Indian', I approach these representations of Native Americans with the same desire to see their multistranded history as Lisa Lowe in her book, *Critical Terrains: British and French Orientalisms*.³⁴ There she argues:

33. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, London: Methuen, 1992. Incidentally, Appiah sees at work there the same kind of Herderian nationalism which was present in the early United States. See chapter three here, and Appiah, p. 89.

34. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (1978), New York: Vintage Books, 1979; Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991. Berkhofer

for a conception of orientalism as heterogeneous and contradictory; . . . orientalism consist[s] of an uneven matrix of orientalist situations across different cultural and historical sites . . . and . . . each of these orientalisms is internally complex and unstable.³⁵

The language that constructs the Native American is also heterogeneous, contradictory, complex and unstable. Robert Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian* appeared in 1978, and although it did not use the same theoretical perspectives as Said, it has striking likenesses to *Orientalism*. Berkhofer identifies a set of repeated images, stereotypes and ideas of the Indian from the Renaissance to the present day, images which he sees falling into the often evoked binary of the good and the bad Indian, the noble or ignoble savage, with regularly recurring characteristics. Though he uses a different language, like Said he is showing at work a hegemonic self-sustaining discourse which has produced the Indian in certain consistent ways over several centuries. Berkhofer's account is in many ways a most useful and wide-ranging one; like Said in *Orientalism*, he draws together a good deal of past analysis to form a *gestalt* through which one can better understand this history. But in any particular discursive instance, this notion of a coherent, continuing, structuring dichotomy becomes inadequate. For one thing, depictions of unequivocally noble or ignoble Indians, particularly the former, are rare. Even the noblest Indians are shown with a flaw, the

argues that the Indian, conceived either as noble savage or as uncivilised brute, would in both cases be defined against the European in terms of lack. The noble savage lacked corruption, guile, artifice. The uncivilised brute lacked refinement, morality, arts. He describes this 'dual image', as he calls it, in this way:

In general and at the risk of oversimplifying some four centuries of imagery, the good Indian appears friendly, courteous, and hospitable to the initial invaders of his lands and to all Whites so long as the latter honored the obligations presumed to be mutually entered into with the tribe. Along with handsomeness of physique and physiognomy went great stamina and endurance. Modest in attitude if not always in dress, the noble Indian exhibited great calm and dignity in bearing, conversation, and even under torture. Brave in combat, he was tender in love for family and children. Pride in himself and independence of other persons combined with a plain existence and wholesome enjoyment of nature's gifts. According to this version, the Indian, in short, lived a life of liberty, simplicity, and innocence.

On the other side, a list of almost contradictory traits emerged of the bad Indian in White eyes. Nakedness and lechery, passion and vanity led to lives of polygamy and sexual promiscuity among themselves and constant warfare and fiendish revenge against their enemies. When habits and customs were not brutal they appeared loathsome to the Whites. Cannibalism and human sacrifice were the worst sins, but cruelty to captives and incessant warfare ranked not far behind in the estimation of Whites. Filthy surroundings, inadequate cooking, and certain items of diet repulsive to White taste tended to confirm a low opinion of Indian life. Indolence rather than industry, improvidence in the face of scarcity, thievery and treachery added to the list of traits on this side. Concluding the bad version of the Indian were the power of superstition represented by the 'conjurers' and 'medicine men', the hard slavery of women and the laziness of men, and even timidity or defeat in the face of White advances and weaponry. This list substituted license for liberty, a harsh lot for simplicity, and dissimulation and deceit for innocence.

35. Lowe, *Critical Terrains*, p. 5.

moral equivalent perhaps of the skull in Arcadia. Many accounts do not fit either label very easily. Moreover, what is thought to be admirable or reprehensible is by no means consistent. For Revolutionary America, the Indian could be most positively evoked as a lover of liberty; for a modernist, like Cahill, as a lover of beauty. Most significantly, in the examples I shall look at here, the difference between the good and bad Indian is, though often asserted or implied, subordinate to the relation, whether of identity or difference, between the white American and the Native American. In each of these texts the production of a certain kind of American (and there may be different kinds of American) is accomplished through the production of a certain kind of Indian (and there are then inevitably different kinds of Indians).

When I talk of the 'American' here, I am not only thinking of the construction of a national identity, crucial though that is at certain points. To return to Lisa Lowe, she writes:

My textual readings give particular attention to those junctures at which narratives of gendered, racial, national and class differences complicate and interrupt the narrative of orientalism, as well as to the points at which orientalism is refunctioned and rearticulated against itself.³⁶

In my account I am, unlike Lowe, who contrasts French and British orientalism, dealing only (for the most part), with one nationality,³⁷ but gender, class and race certainly enter in and problematise any simple history of representations of the Native Americans. Like Said, Lowe draws on Gramsci, but unlike Said, who in *Orientalism* emphasises the Gramscian theory of the hegemony of the dominant group, Lowe is most interested in the moments when hegemony is disrupted by the 'subaltern' classes of the colonising nation – 'the emergent, not yet unified groups who may ally to create a "new historical bloc"'.³⁸ Perhaps it is significant that in the United States the dominant group could only successfully incorporate a positive identification with the 'subaltern' Native American at the moment when in relation to Britain, they themselves were an emergent, subaltern group. Since then the Native American has been repeatedly invoked as a counter-cultural, counter-hegemonic symbol. When, as with the modernists, the Indian is reclaimed as the quintessential American, it is as a bid for an alternative kind of America.

Colonialist images and language meet particular historical needs and change with them. Each of the texts I discuss gives a different reading of Native American culture, from its own position within American society; each is shaped by its writer's class, education, gender and politics. Although several of the junctures which I look at most closely are those where gender

36. Lowe, *Critical Terrains*, p. 5.

37. I touch on different national approaches to some extent when I look at what happens when ideas move from Europe to America.

38. Lowe, *Critical Terrains*, p. 11.

issues enter in and inflect these representations, gender is never, in the western post-Enlightenment tradition, separable from race and class. Both Said and Bhabha have emphasised the use of stereotypes in colonialist discourse, and while I am not denying that stereotypes can be identified – the stoic Indian, for example – it is more useful to think of these representations as mythic images, which, like all myths, can be transformed, reversed and reinterpreted.³⁹ The stoic Indian may be admirable or sinister, and can signify very different concerns, fears or intentions. What runs throughout these texts is a continuity not of a representation, which changes considerably, but of a problematic relationship between the American and the Indian. All these texts are concerned with Native American traditions: they are all written within a culture deeply disturbed by genocidal guilt. But the psychological strategies they employ to deal with that guilt are varied, as are the reasons for their interest in what Native American culture can offer them. What is consistent is that the Native American is observed across a temporal divide.⁴⁰

Can the Native American Speak?

The texts I shall deal with are not solely reflexive, written only about white American concerns, with Native American culture as a chance vehicle. They register the difference of that culture. If Said's *Orientalism* emphasised a monolithic will to knowledge and to power in the west, his more recent *Culture and Imperialism* suggests a much less omnipotent and self-sufficient west, pointing to the strength of resistance to western imperialism, and to the heterogeneous, fragmented forms of western society.⁴¹ This change of emphasis is a significant and necessary one, because the theoretical language in which even anti-colonialist critics operate is so often suffused with western arrogance. Some analyses of colonial discourse have appeared to reinscribe rather than undermine a western desire for dominance in their story of the Sovereign Self imposing itself on the colonised world. Globalising accounts of postcolonial theory, as McClintock and others have argued, reproduce rather than redress the compulsion in western thought to collapse multiplicity into sameness and to replace multiple viewpoints with the western gaze; the collective noun 'difference' often erases, rather than examines, differences.⁴² Robert Young

39. See Said, *Orientalism*, and Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism', *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994.

40. Berkhofer sees lack as a constant (see note 34, p. 9) but as I shall argue here, in L. H. Morgan's scheme that is no longer so much the case: they have pictographs, rather than simply lacking alphabetic writing.

41. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) London: Vintage, 1994.

42. See McClintock, 'Angel of Progress', and Parker, 'Very Like a Whale', and also the consistent critique mounted by Benita Parry, who is particularly critical of postcolonial critics (like Bhabha) who, she believes, privilege discourse over politics. See Benita Parry,

argues, and I would agree with him, that post-structuralism, particularly the work of Derrida, is a critique of the way western meanings have worked to oppress non-Europeans, women, the working class, and other disvalued groups.⁴³ Yet even post-structuralist critics still find it hard to free themselves from the dominance of the universalist, which is inevitably western supremacist thought, which powerfully underlay the development of structuralism in the postwar years, for all its claims to offer a radical break from Enlightenment assumptions. Structuralism is a theoretical grid which has been productive in many ways – as I shall suggest, for example, later in this book in my discussion of the proto-structuralist Lewis Henry Morgan. But its legacy has also pushed our theoretical language into reductive and imperialist positions, which have crucial implications for anyone dealing with the question of translation, as I shall be doing here.

Accounts of structuralism tend to begin chronologically, in a very non-structuralist fashion, generally with Saussure. I think instead one should begin with the question of why structuralism attained the dominant position which it did in intellectual thought in France between the late 1940s and the 1960s. The answer must be over-determined, but one reason may be that, as in the United States, where Theodor Adorno and others produced *The Authoritarian Personality* in 1950 and Hannah Arendt, in 1951, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,⁴⁴ the overwhelming question of those years was how to come to terms with the totalitarian nightmare and its legacy of guilt, and with a postwar world of superpowers and multinationals which left little space for the individual. For Lacan, existence could only be described as ‘concentrational’ – that is, all the world seemed now a concentration camp.⁴⁵ Structuralism, with its displacement of meaning from the individual to the system gave a possible way of conceiving this oppressive world. The works of Lacan and Althusser, in particular, can be read as explanations for the success of totalitarianism. Whilst Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, with its imperative of choice, ruthlessly gave no quarter to the conscience

‘Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse’, *Oxford Literary Review*, No. 9, 1987 and ‘Signs of Our times: a discussion of Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*, *Third Text*, 38/39, 1994, pp. 5–24.

43. Young, *White Mythologies*, see particularly pp. 1–20.

44. As well as the memories of Nazism and Fascism, there were other factors; those were the years of Stalinism, McCarthyism, Vance Packard’s *Hidden Persuaders*, the growth of multinational corporations, all of which reinforced a sense of control by forces well beyond the individual. *Animal Farm*, and *1984* were early expressions of this concern in England. In the States in the early sixties there were a whole series of novels dealing with paranoia and conspiracy: Joseph Heller’s *Catch 22*, Norman Mailer, *American Dream*, Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*.

45. Jacques Lacan, ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the function of the I’ (1949) in *Ecrits: a Selection* (1966), trans. Alan Sheridan, London: Tavistock, 1977, p. 6. Alan Sheridan’s note on the word ‘concentrational’ reads: “‘*Concentrationnaire*’, an adjective coined after World War II (this article was written in 1949) to describe the life of the concentration-camp. In the hands of certain writers it became, by extension, applicable to many aspects of “modern” life.’ (p. 7)

of any Frenchman who compromised with Nazism, Althusser's interpellated subjects, their agency voided, were in a very different position.⁴⁶ Yet totalitarianism, like colonialism, and even the stunned conformity of the postwar years, only worked for a while. These were also the years when the authority of western territorial imperialism was coming to an end, and young people in the west, and particularly women, were beginning to question the traditional paternalist structures. Anne McClintock, in another coruscating article, a critique of the language of nineteenth-century imperialism in Lacan's construction of the feminine, suggests that Lacan

re-invented the idea of the father as a universal, precisely because [its] sovereignty . . . had been threatened in at least three ways: by the feminist critique of patriarchy, by Third World objections to a global order centred on a single, western authority, and by the fact that the structure of western bureaucratic states are themselves no longer directly dependent on metaphors of paternity to distribute, manage and justify male power.

Lacanian psychoanalysis, she goes on to argue, attempts 'to rescue the potency of "the law of the father" as an abstraction, at the very moment when it is disappearing as a political force'.⁴⁷ Not just 'the Law of the Father' but Lacan's whole theory of language (though that, of course, is inseparable from the Law of the Father) is a western imperialist one. Lacan made two crucial moves when he took into psychoanalysis the version of structural linguistics which he found in Lévi-Strauss's anthropology.⁴⁸ Firstly, while for Lévi-Strauss social symbolic codes are structured and function like a language, for Lacan the symbolic order and language collapse into one. When Lévi-Strauss talks of the possibility of different languages structuring different symbolic orders, Lacan talks of the structures of Language. Lacan's unitary Symbolic Order and unitary Language emerge as a universal patriarchal, western discourse which can admit no other voices. It is not that his notion of the split subject alienated from itself in language is not a useful one. It is just that, like traditional humanists, he emphasises as universal something which is experienced to very different degrees. Language may always be Other, but those of us who speak a dominant language as our first language are not nearly so alienated within it as those whose first language has been suppressed, marginalised, disparaged or ignored, or those who, in the unwilling migrations which have

46. Interpellation, according to Althusser, is the process by which ideology gives us the illusion of being free subjects ('hails' us).

47. Anne McClintock, 'The Return of Female Fetishism and the Fiction of the Phallus', in *New Formations*, No. 19, Spring 1993, p. 15.

48. This process can be clearly seen in Lacan's adaptation in 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language' (1953) in *Écrits*, pp. 31–113 of ideas from Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (French publication 1949) and his 'Language and the Analysis of Social Laws' (1951) in *Structural Anthropology* (1958), trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grandfest Schoepf, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963. I have argued this at greater length in 'Post-it Notes: Observations on Postcolonial Theory' in *Women: a Cultural Review*, Vol. 7/3, 1996, forthcoming.

been so much a feature of the late colonial and postcolonial world, no longer live in a community which speaks their language.

This imperialist notion of language is not limited to Lacan. One can see it at work even in the writing of a Derridean, post-structuralist, postcolonial critic like Gayatri Spivak. I want to draw attention to the title of her famous article, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'⁴⁹ This is a long and subtle piece, but the question which in fact Spivak asks herself in the part of her article that approximates to the title is whether westernised intellectuals can ever recapture in their discourse the authentic experience of colonised women of the past. Her answer is not surprisingly no, and I would not disagree with it. But what I find dangerous is that she presents the question in her title as the question implied within her article. The answer to the simple question, 'can the subaltern speak?' is surely yes. The subaltern speaks all the time. The problem is that the dominant so rarely listens, and when they do they do not understand. There are other voices than those of the west, other viewpoints, other values, which of course Spivak would be the first to acknowledge. But this critical language continually pressures those other voices out of our awareness. It repeats Columbus's move when he emphasised his need to teach the Indians to 'speak', even though of course he knows that in another sense they already do. It echoes Miranda's assertion that a Caliban cannot speak unless the west takes 'pains to make' him.⁵⁰

see Spivak's
Speculation

Even the term subaltern, though useful (I used it myself earlier), can in itself aid that silencing. Gramsci's concept of subaltern is of a class within a single nation. The west has regularly expressed its relation to the rest of the world in class terms, a metaphor which has been a powerful element in colonialist discourse, and anti-colonialists should perhaps employ that metaphor with caution. Relations between cultures are not same as between classes. Cultural difference in itself offers a powerful political resistance to what the west may consider hegemonic. In this context, Native Americans are a complex example. At the beginning of the period this book covers, they were independent nations, outside the jurisdiction of the United States, speaking their own languages. At the end of its period, they were, on however unequal terms, part of the American nation, and many of their languages, indeed many of those independent nations, had been eliminated. That complex history cannot easily be subsumed under a conventional monocultural class model.⁵¹

49. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice', *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, London: Macmillan, 1988. The figure who is most often accused of reducing colonialism to western discourse is Homi Bhabha (see note 42, pp. 12–13) his Lacanianism often being blamed, but I think the problem is endemic in our critical language.

50. See William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act I ii 356.

51. See Karen Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580–1640*, London: Dent & Sons, 1980, for a discussion of the early colonialists' metaphors of class.

In his book on North American Indian texts, David Murray has commented on this coercive drive in our western theoretical language:

It would probably be true to say that most of the work in this field of colonialist discourse is informed by strong political beliefs in the validity, and right to autonomy, of other cultures. Nevertheless, the effect of a Foucauldian approach can be to deal with the other only as a creation of *this* culture . . . the danger can be described as textualising the Indian out of existence⁵²

As he points out, the crucial, and often forgotten, figure is the interpreter: 'Any temptation to imagine an archetypal pristine moment of confrontation between absolute others needs to be tempered by the almost ubiquitous presence on the scene of someone, usually an Indian, or . . . mixed-blood, who had already made the connection.'⁵³ Each of the texts I look at has a prehistory of cultural contact and of earlier translation, literal and conceptual, between Native Americans and Euro-American culture. Though I am writing of works authored or edited by whites, they owe their possible existence to Native American or mixed-race informants, even if, in the earlier texts, these informants are effaced, and, in the later ones, patronised or reconfigured. All the same, these are texts which are aware that other voices exist. Texts like these, which draw on or transcribe the texts of another culture, operate at a cultural border, as Krupat and Murray have suggested.⁵⁴ In Eric Cheyfitz's phrase, they inhabit 'the Frontier of Translation', though as he insists, it is often a frontier of violence rather than exchange, a frontier between unequal powers.⁵⁵ What I look at is certainly a form of intertextuality, but it is always inscribed by colonial politics. The ultimate pretexts of the texts were oral ones, belonging to specific cultural matrices: western transcription, translation and framing has radically transformed them. But unless one sees these attempts to incorporate the words of others as a response as well as an appropriation one falls back into a western, Eurocentric solipsism.

In short, what I want to argue is that it is not simply the case that these writers use their representations of Native American culture as a *means* of critiquing their own society; Native American society exists as a critique, one which troubles the insistent self-righteousness of their own world. From the days of the first Jamestown settlement, colonists, particularly the lower classes, deserted in their droves to the Indians. There has never been a unified adamant western self-confidence. Patriarchal capitalism pro-

52. David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts*, London: Pinter: 1991, p. 3.

53. Murray, *Forked Tongue*, pp. 1–2.

54. Murray, *Forked Tongue*, and Arnold Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*, Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989, in which he talks in particular of Native American autobiography as 'the textual equivalent of the frontier', p. 33.

55. Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from 'The Tempest' to 'Tarzan'*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. xvi.

duces many casualties, and it is not surprising such casualties sometimes wonder if things could be organised better. The writers I consider make no radical break with their society and its ways, but they are troubled by it. In addition, they are intrigued by the possibility of otherness. In the course of this book, I identify something I have called the 'ethnographic imagination' which emerges in the eighteenth century, the fascination with different ways of being, with what that century would refer to as 'the manners and customs' of another age or place. It can be seen in the development of the realist novel, which I would argue is an eminently ethnographic form, but I am most interested in the part it played in romantic primitivism, in the cult of the picturesque and in the emergence of anthropology. The ethnographic imagination desired and fed on particularity and authenticity – at least what it took to be authenticity – but it was also highly emotionally charged. Even when I reach the modernist period in my last chapter I shall be discussing writers and anthropologists who are alike producing what could be described as passionate ethnographic fictions.⁵⁶ It could be argued, and probably argued rightly, that this imaginative construction of otherness is one facet of the implacable Enlightenment drive towards the classification of difference, one facet of its insistence on distinct and hierarchical racial and sexual categories. But it is also, however tentatively, one strand in the movement towards the critique of western monologism which is the project of postcolonial criticism today.

American Primitivism

Kenneth Parker has insisted that anyone writing on postcolonial issues should acknowledge their point of origin.⁵⁷ He has in mind the strong divide between those postcolonial critics who originated from India and those who came from Africa, whose very different histories of colonialism can be seen to shape their theoretical approaches. Were I to be asked to do the same, I should have to acknowledge one of the many forms of hybridity in the modern world. On my father's side, the best I can claim is the category Parker describes as 'dissenting colonist', in my case, dissent from Ulster Protestantism. On my mother's side (with more ideological

56. The demand for both particularity of detail and emotional charge could be related to John Dwyer's point, when he argues that the Scottish Enlightenment, which had a profound influence, not only in Scotland, but throughout Britain and the United States, and in German Romanticism, stressed both empiricism and affectivity: see 'The Melancholy Savage', in *Ossian Revisited*, Howard Gaskill (ed.), Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991, p. 167. There are perhaps links between my argument here and Said's description of the novel-form, which he sees as inseparable from imperialism, as 'an incorporative, quasi-encyclopedic form. Packed into it [is] . . . an entire system of social reference', *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 84.

57. Parker, 'Very Like a Whale'.

soundness), I can claim affinity with the colonised (Scottish) and the postcolonial (Irish). But perhaps in my case it is more important to explain how I came, from my side of the Atlantic, to write about representations of Native Americans in the United States. I cannot say, as Eric Cheyfitz does, that I am writing 'to critique the violence of my own culture, specifically the violence of my own language', or at any rate, not absolutely straightforwardly.⁵⁸ Whilst the last thing I should wish to claim is that British colonialism was any less morally reprehensible than American, and while they had much in common, they *were* different, and I cannot claim to be participating in quite the same kind of self-critique as Cheyfitz. I would however argue that Americans and Europeans are implicated broadly in the same imperialist history, even if to understand that history fully one needs to unpick its complex strands.

The reasons why I came to write on this subject will perhaps also explain why I am so indignant with those for whom western discourse subsumes all others. Whilst doing an MA in American Poetry in the late seventies, I heard a chance remark at a party, made by a stranger I never met again, which made me think I should find out something about Native American poetic traditions, not included in my course.⁵⁹ I have to admit with some shame that I started in a spirit of social justice rather than with any great expectations of what I should find. I was always rather alarmed by the homespun, leather-saddled British folklorists I knew, and feared it might be the sort of stuff that appealed to them rather than to me. I located a couple of anthologies and then looked up their sources, the vast majority of which were the heavy green-backed tomes of the Bureau of American Ethnology, which I discuss later in this book.⁶⁰ What I found astounded me by its richness, its complexity, its depth, its beauty. I wrote a dissertation on it, and even a couple of articles, but from the beginning I could not but be aware of the problems of interpreting these once oral texts, now transcribed, translated, recontextualised, edited, used as evidence for particular anthropological theories and for western ends.⁶¹ What I read was already

58. Cheyfitz, *Poetics of Imperialism*, p. xv.

59. This was at the University of Essex, and although this was a new departure for the course, I was very much encouraged to find out about Native American poetry, which now forms a regular part of the MA syllabus.

60. In 'The Work of the Bureau of American Ethnology' *Structural Anthropology II*, (1973) trans. Monique Layton, London: Allen Lane, 1977, Lévi-Strauss recalls his rapture at discovering, in New York in 1941, a bookshop where he could buy these second-hand.

61. My MA thesis (at the University of Essex) was on 'North American Indian Poetry'. My articles on Native American literary traditions were 'Navajo Poetics' in *Memory and Poetic Structure*, Middlesex Polytechnic, 1981 and 'The Myth of the Hero Twins' (paper given at the 44th International Congress of Americanists, 1982) in a special number of *The New Scholar* (Vol. 8), Santa Barbara, *Voices of the First Americas: Text and Context in the New World*, Gordon Brotherston (ed.), 1985. I also used my work on Native American poetry as the basis for a general article on women's poetry, 'Poetic Licence' in *From My Guy To Sci-Fi: Women's Writing and Genre in the Postmodern World*, Helen Carr (ed.), London: Pandora, 1989.

selected, interpreted and slanted according to the particular bent of the anthropologist, and then perhaps seized on by an anthologist, reproduced, recontextualised, reinterpreted yet again. I felt that I had to find out what processes were going on, what needs were being satisfied by these appropriations.⁶² The result is this book, though it now starts well before the beginning of the Bureau of American Ethnology and of the reproduction of these traditions in English-language anthologies and collections.

What I found was a long tradition of American primitivism, with a complex political history, enmeshed in the process of American Empire building. My choice of title now has been influenced by Adam Kuper's compelling book, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion*.⁶³ The idea of primitive society that Kuper deals with there lasted for more than a hundred years: he sees its beginnings in Henry Maine's *Ancient Law* (1861), and suggests it lingers even today in a 'few twilight refuges'. This idea, as his title suggests, went through many transformations, but it might be briefly summed up as the belief that there had been a universal primitive stage in the evolution of human society, that primitive society had been organised through kin relations, and that its form could be reconstructed by studying present day 'primitive' groups. Regular discoveries of groups which did not fit an anthropologist's given version shook this idea not at all: they were interesting exceptions. How, he asks, could this theory last so long?

62. I am not, of course, aiming to find out what this poetry was 'really like'. One other criticism of Said put forward by James Clifford in 'On Orientalism' is that although Said is intellectually opposed to any kind of essentialising of peoples, in practice he at times slips into writing 'fables of suppressed authenticity', as if there were an essential Orient behind the oriental images. Like Clifford I think it is important to avoid this. Even those who have been most anxious to think in humanitarian ways about the Native Americans have tried to defend them by substituting positive stereotypes for negative, hypostatising them as icons of natural virtue or true feeling but failing to allow them the full complexity of human beings, with their own history and culture. But I am not just concerned here with texts about another culture, but texts about another culture's texts, and if after Geertzian anthropology that distinction is less marked, it still means I am working in a tradition which has accepted for longer that it deals with interpretations rather than definitions. How to read traditional Native American literary texts is still a matter of unresolved debate at the present, with some (like Denis Tedlock for example) wanting to stress their oral, often communal nature, and so to see them as an art form which needs understanding of its performance to be appreciated. Others (like John Bierhorst) want to see them more as products of a rich cultural heritage, and so are more interested in what they see as central classic texts, which need the understanding of their philosophical and historical context to be adequately interpreted. I think both these hermeneutics are valuable in different ways: I would not in any way claim to have a right interpretation of this literature. But on the other hand if there are no right definitions there can be wrong ones. In Lacanian psychoanalytic practice (and here I do find Lacan's ideas illuminating) although the ego is always a misrecognition, neurosis is caused by the excessive rigidity of a false ego – in other words, although there is no such as a 'true' self-image, self-images can be harmfully and dangerously wrong ones. The same applies to all representations. The primitivist assumption that this verse is spontaneous and without complexity of thought or form is a false representation: see note 14, p. 50.

63. Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion*, London and New York: Routledge, 1988.

The persistence of a myth is usually explained in terms of its political functions, but I have tried to show the variety of public purposes which were served by these ideas. The idea of primitive society served imperialists and nationalists, anarchists and Marxists.⁶⁴

What he suggests perhaps most sustained this myth was that, since it implied:

social forms were not fixed . . . the idea of primitive society . . . provided an idiom which was ideally suited to debate about modern society, but it itself was neutral. It could be used equally by right or left, reactionary or progressive, poet or politician. . . . Primitive society was the mirror image of modern society – or, rather, primitive society as they imagined it inverted the characteristics of modern society as they saw it.⁶⁵

I would qualify this slightly, as I find it hard to agree that the idea of the primitive, projected as it was on to the Third World by the First, could be entirely neutral. But otherwise this is a useful model for how the idea of the primitive in its wider conception worked. In the United States it was used by philanthropists and racists, patriarchs and feminists, socialists and capitalists, to shore up their own particular arguments. Because I shall deal here with texts which try, even if sometimes ineptly and self-interestedly, to engage with Native American traditions, they are (with one or two border-line cases) necessarily liberal rather than reactionary. They show primitivist appreciation rather than racial-supremacist scorn. What the idea of the primitive made possible for both liberals and reactionaries was a way of remaining innocent, or claiming to remain innocent, of the guilt of destroying it. The Indian was of the past, and would, sadly, but perhaps luckily, inevitably vanish.⁶⁶

All the texts I look at are elegiac. Until I reach my last chapter, no-one seems to be able to imagine that Native American culture can survive, and even then Ruth Underhill believes that the truly Indian will fade away. Like the others, she watches with sadness as the Indian disappears into the past. I would suggest that elegy can be understood in two different ways, both of them useful here. It can be seen as Freud sees melancholia, as a profoundly narcissistic emotion, where what is being mourned for is not another person but a lost part of the self.⁶⁷ Alternatively, elegy can be understood in terms of Melanie Klein's view of mourning, that is guilt and fear at the

64. Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society*, pp. 239-40.

65. Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 240.

66. As Mary-Louise Pratt says of what she calls the 'anti-conquest', it is one of 'strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony', *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 7.

67. The use of Freud's 'Mourning and Melancholia' in connection with poetic elegy was suggested to me by a talk I heard given by Stephen Barfield, based on a chapter from his PhD on Samuel Beckett and melancholia. The application of Melanie Klein's analysis of mourning and its connection with the arts is discussed by Janet Sayers in 'Sex, Art and Reparation: Melanie Klein, the Middle Years' in *Women: a Cultural Review*, Vol. 1, no. 2, 1990.

destructive impulses towards the mother's body, for which we long to make amends. For Klein, that is one explanation of art, which is an attempt to make wholeness again out of what has been destroyed, making, as she puts it, reparation, by the recreation of what has been damaged. In the texts I analyse in this book, both these moves are there. Firstly, in Freudian terms, these writers see themselves mirrored in the Indian. All of them are in some degree oppositional to America or to modernity.⁶⁸ They dissociate themselves from the aggressiveness, destructiveness and materialism of the present, and identify with the Indians' difference from this. This identification may be political or personal, but the sense of loss is there. Yet, in Kleinian terms, the aim of these texts is to save this disappearing world in the only way they think they can, by inscribing it in words. They create the world which they believe modernity is destroying. In the later years of the nineteenth century, anthropologists talked about salvaging Indian culture. That is what these texts attempt to do; they try to make reparation for their complicity in the destruction of the Indians and all they represent by recreating their world. Yet that attempt is deeply ambivalent. These texts want to encompass Indian literary traditions; they want to preserve the Indians' voice. And yet, in all the examples I look at, Indian words are edited, reshaped, invented, redirected. They are put to the service of white American needs.

Nevertheless, the attempt to record Native American literary traditions means these are 'polyphonic' texts, 'heteroglossia'; these can never be complacent, untroubled accounts. The existence of sophisticated, complex literary art, including works which were centuries old, gradually became apparent, gradually made its voice heard. At the beginning of my account primitivist literary theory held Indian poetry in high esteem, but knew little about it. By the end, the recording of the rich heritage of Native American literature had begun, though aided by a government which was simultaneously working to eliminate Indian languages. This story does not follow a steady line of progress. Far from it. Yet by the early twentieth century, some Americans could argue that there are no primitive societies, only societies that have developed differently. There is no primitive verse; only other traditions.

68. These oppositional groups correspond in Raymond Williams' Gramscian analysis to the emergent groups I mentioned earlier: see *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

I

THE AMERICAN INDIAN AND THE NEW REPUBLIC

IN 1789, WHEN the first Congress of the United States met under the presidency of George Washington, the Native Americans presented the leaders and intelligentsia of the newly constituted United States with both a practical and an ideological problem. As the prelude to my studies of the more specific attempts to understand Native American culture and literature, I want to look at the difficulties and confusions felt by the newly formed United States in its relations with the Indians. Later in this chapter I shall look in particular at how these bafflements and tensions emerge in the contradictory language of the state papers of the first US Secretary of War, Henry Knox. The conflicts which Knox experienced as a leading statesman of the new and exemplary republic dedicated to creating 'land and colonial systems all in accordance with . . . the most liberal ideals of their age'¹ epitomise the ambivalence of early US attitudes towards the Indian. Knox faced dilemmas impossible to resolve, because they sprang from the contradictory desires which structured the new American nation. These same dilemmas and desires underlie the interpretations and transcriptions of Native American culture with which the rest of this book will be concerned.

The problem confronting Knox and his fellow statesmen might be summed up like this. The American Constitution, which was ratified in 1788, and under which that first Congress met, was based on the

1. Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, p. 137.

principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence, most notably on the Enlightenment belief in the natural, inalienable rights of all men. This belief in natural rights was founded on, or at any rate made use of, the arguments and theories of those very thinkers like Locke and Rousseau who had cited the American Indian as the exemplum of the natural man. All men were by nature free and equal; those nearer the state of nature were less likely to have had their rights alienated unjustly, and therefore retained an admirable and exemplary freedom lost by those in the grip of decayed and tyrannical conventions.² In 1789 itself, the power and rightness of the American stand for liberty and equality seemed re-enforced by the first successes of the French Revolution. *The Declaration of the Rights of Man* owed much to the American Bill of Rights, and drew on these same ideas. The first Congress saw itself quite self-consciously as a defender of natural rights against the wrongs of tyranny. This was the principle on which its own claim to legitimacy rested. The revolutionaries had justified their fight for independence on the grounds that the natural rights of the American settlers had been infringed by the British government. Yet one of the prime motives for the American Revolution and first aims of the new government was to extend the colonies westward, to take over Indian land however unwilling the Indians might be to relinquish it, and whatever their rights might be.

To put the problem another way: since the time of Montaigne one of the elements of a European critique of their own society had been the topos

2. On natural rights of all men, see Locke's *Second Treatise*:

The STATE OF NATURE has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges everyone: and Reason, which is that Law, Teaches all Mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm one another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions . . . in the beginning all the World was AMERICA, and more so than that is now . . . (John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, 1689. In John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, New York and Scarborough, Ontario: Mentor Books, 1965, pp. 311, 343.)

See, for a study of the political use of these ideas, Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967. Bailyn points out that Locke and Enlightenment figures are not only quoted by what he calls the 'great virtuosi of the American Enlightenment – Franklin, Adams, Jefferson' but invoked and cited widely in the pamphlets of the period (*ibid.*, p. 27). On the place of the American Indian and more generally the Noble Savage in Enlightenment philosophy see Paul Honigsheim, 'The American Indian in the Philosophy of the English and French Enlightenment' in *Osiris* Vol. 10, 1952, pp. 91–108, and Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, pp. 74–6. Rousseau does not actually see the American Indian as being still in a 'state of nature' but rather in the third stage of patriarchal family organisation which he thinks is the happiest mean between the animality of the state of nature and the corruption of civilisation. In the dissemination of Rousseau's ideas this distinction often disappears. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, translation and introduction by G.D.H. Cole, revised and augmented by J.H. Brumfitt and John C. Hall, London: Dent & Sons, 1973, and A.O. Lovejoy, 'The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*', and 'Monboddo and Rousseau', in *Essays in the History of Ideas*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1948, pp. 14–37.

of the virtuous, childlike savage whose natural goodness and good sense contrasted with the corruption and folly of courts and with the civilised abuse of power. This topos was part of the corpus of ideas by which the American rejection of *monarchy* was justified. The idea that the American colonist was, like the Indian, natural and virtuous by contrast with the corrupt, over-civilised European court was a constant motif in independence rhetoric. But on the other hand if the Americans intended to establish an empire, and to legitimise the movement across the continent by which that empire could be achieved, they would have to re-invoke all the European assumptions of Indian otherness and savagery, their inferiority and deficiencies, which had earlier been used to justify colonisation. As I said in my introduction, the United States was both a postcolonial country, whose national identity and right to independence was posited on the justice of its cause, and an aggressive *empire*, for whom justice would soon be too expensive a luxury.

The word 'Indian', of course, is a term which did not originally signify so much the native populations of America as the people the Europeans expected and wished to find there. The word itself is a reminder that the Europeans went to find gold, jewels, spices – the transportable riches of the Indies. In the northern part of America, in what is now the United States and Canada, what the Europeans wanted of these 'Indians' (at any rate from the seventeenth century onwards) was land. For the Puritans, acquisition of this land was made legitimate by the meaning they gave to this word Indian, which according to Roger Williams in 1643 was for them synonymous with 'Natives, Salvages . . . Wild-men . . . Pagans, Barbarians, Heathen'.³ Indians, defined in such terms, were without the same rights as Christian men, especially when they opposed the implementation of God's Providential will. In addition, in spite of the fact that the first New England settlements would have failed without Indian corn, Indians were described as slothful, vagrant hunters, who failed to make the land fruitful, and who therefore lost their claim to steward God's earth.⁴

3. Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, (London 1643) in *Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, Vol. 1, 1827, pp. 18–19.

4. For example:

The whole earth is the Lord's garden, and he hath given it to the sons of Adam to be tilled and improved by them. Why then should we stand starving here for places of habitation, (many men spending as much labor and cost to recover or keep sometimes an acre or two of lands as would procure him many hundreds of acres, as good or better, in another place) and in the mean time suffer whole countries, as profitable for the use of man, to lie waste without improvement. (John Winthrop, *General Considerations*, 1629)

This is not to say that dispossession of the Indians did not present moral questions for the Puritans. Roger Williams for example repudiated this *vacuum domicilium* argument: see Gordon Brotherston, 'A Controversial Guide to the Language of America, 1643', in *1642: Literature and Politics in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Francis Barker et al., Colchester: University of Essex, 1981. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The*

These rhetorical justifications for dispossession of the Native American had certainly not been abandoned by 1789 when the first US Congress met. The conviction that God's people should not be obstructed by these inveterate savages persisted until the closing of the frontier. In this tradition, even when orthodoxy still made it impossible to deny that Native Americans were descended from Adam, they were undoubtedly degenerate sons. As Cotton Mather had put it, they were 'doleful creatures, the veriest ruins of mankind, which [were] to be found any where upon the face of the earth'.⁵ This Christian theory of degeneracy, with its 'Mosaic cosmogony' remained alive enough to be attacked by Lewis Henry Morgan in 1877, and although he delivered the *coup de grâce* to its serious defence in American anthropology, ideas of degeneracy persisted elsewhere.⁶ In more sophisticated nineteenth-century writing these assumptions and assertions of Indian inferiority were, far from vanishing, translated into the language of Manifest Destiny and scientific theories of evolution and racism.⁷ Expansionist rhetoric continued to deplore the notion that these savages could have rights which impeded the growth of prosperous Christian civilisation. Justifications of white appropriation on the grounds that the Indians were mere hunters continued into the nineteenth century,

United States Government and the American Indians, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984, pp. 14–15, points out that although Winthrop argued that because the Indians did not cultivate the land they 'have noe other but a naturall right', he does not say they have no right at all. See Francis P. Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Colonialism and the Cant of Conquest*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975 and Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620–1675*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1965, for two very different views on this subject. The Puritan view of the Indian ultimately is very like the Hobbesian, although from a different standpoint: see Richard Ashcraft, 'Leviathan Triumphant: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Wild Men', in *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought From the Renaissance to Romanticism*, edited by Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972.

5. Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind*, (1953, revised edition 1965) Berkeley: University of California, 1988, p. 29.
6. Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society, or Research into the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization* (1877), Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985, pp. 7–8. In the States, belief in Native American degeneracy was found not only among the frontiersmen but also among less sophisticated and more fundamentalist Americans like Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, as I shall show in chapter three. Margaret Hodgen sees ideas of degeneracy in the early part of the nineteenth century as a reactionary religious backlash against the secularism of Enlightenment ideas of progress, with the idea of progress becoming successfully hegemonic in the second half of the century. E.B. Tylor in England was, like Morgan, intent on refuting theories of degeneracy. See Margaret Hodgen, *Doctrine of Survivals*. On the continuing belief in degeneracy, see Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States Between the World Wars*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London: Routledge, 1995, and (though it only covers European examples) Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848–c.1918*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
7. This relation between the continuing belief in Native American inferiority, and changing justifications for it, could be seen in terms of the first and second level of discourse suggested by V.W. Mudimbe in *The Idea of Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

strengthened with a Lockean gloss. As the right to property is dependent on the labour expended on it, and as it was asserted that the Indians did not cultivate their land, surely they forfeit their rights?⁸ John Quincey Adams asked in 1802:

What is the right of a huntsman to the forest of a thousand miles over which he has accidentally ranged in quest of prey? . . . Shall the fields and vallies, which a beneficent God has formed to teem with the life of innumerable multitudes, be condemned to everlasting barrenness?⁹

What had changed by the nineteenth century were simply the terms which defined Native American deficiency. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europeans had conceived the otherness of the Indian essentially as a *cultural* rather than a *racial* difference. Like the Irish, who could be described as 'more brutish than the Indian', they were barbarians.¹⁰ Sir Philip Sidney, in his *Defence of Poesie*, lists the American Indians, after the Irish and before the Welsh, as examples of peoples who lacked learning.¹¹ The idea that the Indians were at a further remove than the Celts from the civilised English, because the Indians, unlike the Celts, are not 'white', did not emerge until much later. Sidney is writing about their degree of education, not drawing on the idea of race as an absolute hereditary and hierarchical difference.¹² It has been argued that such racialism would have clashed with Christianity: if all

8. My thinking on this aspect of Locke's influence and its continuance in another form of the *vacuum domicilium* was helped by Peter Hulme's article on 'The Spontaneous Production of Nature: Savagery, Colonialism, and the Enlightenment' in *The Enlightenment and its Shadows*, edited by Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova, London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

9. Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, p. 138.

10. Norah Carlin, 'Ireland and Natural Man in 1649' in *Europe and its Others*, ed. Francis Barker et al., Colchester: University of Essex, 1984, Vol. 2, p. 94. The Irish were important as a prototype of the barbarian in early descriptions of the Indians. Robert Young has recently argued that we have moved on from nineteenth-century racial to twentieth-century cultural prejudice. Perhaps, in fact, my argument here suggests, we have moved *back*. See Robert Young, *Colonial Desire*.

11. Sir Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poesie* (1581), London: Cassell & Co., 1891, p. 20. The Turks also appear in this little section. Sidney makes it clear that the Welsh had had learning which was almost obliterated by their invaders. For the argument that education is the essential factor in difference see also Robert Gray:

And surely so desirous is man of civill society by nature, that he easily yields to discipline and government if he see any reasonable motive to induce to the same . . . for it is not the nature of men, but the education of men which makes them barbarous and uncivill, . . . therefore . . . it is everie mans dutie to travell both by sea and land, and to venture either with his person or with his purse, to bring the barbarous and savage people to a civill and Christian kinde of government, under which they may learne how to live holily, justly, and soberly in this world, and to apprehend the meanes to save their soules in the world to come. (Robert Gray, *A Good Speed to Virginia* [1609], New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1937, p. C2.)

12. It is true that Aristotle's theory of natural slavery was used in Hispanic colonies as a proto-racist argument for the exploitation of Indian labour. See Pagden, *Fall of Natural Man*, chapter 3, 'The Theory of Natural Slavery', pp. 27–56. In addition, there was deep prejudice against Africans on account of their different physiognomy and particularly

mankind were descended from Adam, and created in 4004 BC (as Bishop Ussher was to date it in the 1650s), the possibility of significant innate differences between them could hardly be logically great.¹³ But eschewing logical contradiction was not really the issue; if common humanity was generally assumed in the Renaissance period, there was, all the same, a powerful hereditary argument in play in another context, in the distinction between nobles and base-born (also strictly inconsistent with monogenesis, as the Lollards had pointed out: 'When Adam delv'd and Eve span/Who was then the gentleman?'). That Pocahontas was a princess was crucial in the English response to her, as was the fact that the eponymous hero of Aphra Behn's 1690 novel *Oroonoko* is a prince.¹⁴ Karen Kupperman has argued that the concept of the 'base-born' was in fact the most powerful articulation of the early colonisers' low estimation of the Indians.¹⁵ Although class position is only one of several such analogies (gender is one I shall be examining later), it played a powerful part in fixing the Indians in their inferior position. But 'race' as we know it was not yet part of the argument. It is striking that the idea of social rank conferred by birth disappears from political discourse (though not from social life) in America at the same time that the notion of hereditary difference becomes attached to race.

their colour, and their descent from Ham was used in defence of slavery. See Jack Forbes, *Black Africans and Native Americans: Colour, Race and Caste in the Evolution of Red-Black People*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, particularly for the importance of colour symbolism in the Renaissance. His work suggests colour emerging earlier as a racial marker in Latin American contexts than was the case in the north. As Berkhofer comments, the plays of Shakespeare are packed with instances of stereotyped views of different nationalities (*White Man's Indian*, p. 24). Paul Brown in "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine": *The Tempest* and the discourse of colonialism' in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985 talks of Shakespeare as using a 'racist' discourse, which I think is anachronistic, although it can be defended if one follows the distinction Reginald Horsman makes between 'racism' (prejudice) and 'racialism' (theory). See Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, Cam. Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1981.

13. Francis Prucha puts it like this:

The concept of savagism and inferiority did not imply racism, that is, a belief that the Indian was an inherently different kind of being incapable of rising out of an inferior condition. There was little question in the minds of Englishmen that the Indians were human beings like themselves, a belief firmly planted in the scriptural account of Adam as the single progenitor of all men. (Prucha, *The Great Father*, p. 8)

The origins of the Indians were much debated. See for example Hogden, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964, and Leo Huddlestone, *Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492–1729*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967.

14. Even one of Spenser's 'salvage men' in *The Faerie Queen* is kindly because 'he was born of noble blood'. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen*, VI.v.1&2.
15. Karen Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580–1640*, London: Dent & Sons, 1980. For a discussion of the validity of Kupperman's viewpoint, see Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from 'The Tempest' to 'Tarzan'*, pp. 84–86. The British press still finds high-born non-whites much more acceptable than others: viz. the xenophobia released when it was discovered in the Harrods sale revelations that the Al Fayeds were only Fayeds.

Some early colonists did, in fact, question the humanity of the Indians, seeing them, as Roger Williams says, as a species of 'Wild-Men', but that view had little intellectual support, although a great deal of imagistic power. Yet physical differences between the settlers and Indians were rarely stressed at that period in other than positive terms; in the early colonial literature, the well-made limbs, handsome faces and height of the Indians are frequently commented on. It was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that the Indian came to be generally described as red. Earlier they were perceived as 'tawny', 'browne', or more bizarrely in one description, 'olive of a sad French green'. Moreover it was frequently asserted that even that degree of colour was the result of the sun or of ointments or dyes, and that Indians were born white. Francisco López de Gómaro in 1555 had insisted that the colour was hereditary, but according to Alden T. Vaughan that was unusual. Writers on the Indians like William Penn, Thomas Morton and Roger Williams all believed them to be essentially white.¹⁶

This cultural difference between Europeans and Indians – which was perceived often as the difference between nature and culture – was, all the same, felt to be a potent and far-reaching divide. For the early colonists Christianity and civility were synonymous. Indians were barbarous heathen; the colonists were civil Christians. In 1583, colonisation could be described as 'a most excellent work, in respect of reducing the savage people to Christianity and civilitie'. Similarly in 1610 William Crashaw could say: 'We give the Savages what they most need. 1. Civilitie for their bodies. 2. Christianitie for their soules'.¹⁷ Although the possibility of conversion

16. Alden T. Vaughan, 'From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 87:4, 1982, pp. 921–2, 923. Cf. the description of Man Friday in *Robinson Crusoe* with his features of European softness, and his tawny or olive colour. According to Francis Prucha (*Great Father*, p. 8), the first references to Indians as red come at the very end of the seventeenth century, but even these may only refer to war paint. Sheehan in *Savagism and Civility* suggests rather more emphasis on colour, although he agrees it did not seem to connote value and was often thought to be artificially produced (p. 49). He describes European commentators as virtually unanimous in praise of Indian physique, quoting Raleigh's comment on a chief's wife in Guinea, that he had 'seldom seen a better favoured woman'. Sheehan does not add Raleigh's one apparently neutral reference to her colour: 'I have seen a lady in England so like to her, as but for the difference in colour, I would have sworn might have been the same', in Richard Hakluyt, *Voyages and Discoveries: The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of English Nation*, ed. Jack Beeching, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 397. See also Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians*, which agrees that Indian colour was nearly always thought of as artificially produced until the late seventeenth century. Among several examples, she quotes Thomas Morton saying, in 1637, Indian babies are 'of complexion white as our nation' (p. 36). In *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, V.Y. Mudimbe quotes a seventeenth-century Italian missionary in Africa, Giovanni Francesco Romano, who also insisted that Africans babies were born white (p. 49). According to the *OED*, *Othello* contains the first usage of 'white' skin colour as a racial description, as opposed to its medieval differentiation of class.
17. Prucha, *Great Father*, p. 9.

to Christianity thus implied a potential corresponding move from barbarity to civilisation, for the majority of the settlers the hope of such civilising conversion soon died away, and in most instances it was assumed that the Indians were, like Caliban, 'born devil(s), on whose nature/Nurture can never stick'.¹⁸ The Indian association with nature implied an association with bestiality, the fallen world and the devil.

The Idea of the Indian in Enlightenment America

By the mid-nineteenth century the paradigm by which the relation of natives and colonisers was understood would be different: the otherness of the Native American was by then clearly racial and biologically absolute. But for the progressive Enlightenment Americans who led the new government neither the earlier nor the later language was possible. Enlightenment tolerance, its search for universality, its changed view of Nature and critique of dogmatic Christianity made the seventeenth-century language obsolete. Although nineteenth-century ideas of race can be traced back to Linnaeus' categorisation of types of men in the 1730s, racial hierarchy was not yet an accepted intellectual concept. The eighteenth century was, however, a period both of the beginnings of the study of racial difference and of growing racial prejudice. In Europe proto-racialist theories were emerging. A few Europeans, such as Lord Kames, John Pinkerton and Jean-Joseph Vivrey, went as far as to insist on separate creations or polygenesis; more generally accepted was Linnaeus' classification into varieties of the one species, followed influentially by Count Buffon and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach.¹⁹ These thinkers made a powerful impact in the United States in the nineteenth century, but in the revolutionary period notions of universal humanity and natural rights were politically too necessary for their ideas to find support, even among those few Americans who were aware of the new currents. Some statements of eighteenth-century American intellectuals might be – and are – called *racist*, but, to follow Reginald Horsman's distinction, they are not yet *racialist*. There was prejudice (racism), but the belief in race as a fixed scientific category, by which physical differences justify political discrimination (racialism) had not established intellectual authority, even if it was already popularly assumed.²⁰ This transition is apparent in James Otis's arguments against the slave trade in 1764, in which, as Bernard Bailyn recounts, Otis,

18. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act IV i 188–9. William Penn and the Quakers were strikingly different: see chapter two.

19. On these proto-racial ideas see John G. Burke, 'The Wild Man's Pedigree: Scientific Method and Racial Anthropology' in Dudley and Novak, *Wild Man Within*, and also chapter three, 'Science and Inequality' in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 43–61, and Vaughan, 'From White Man', pp. 944–6.

20. See note 12, p. 26.

following out the idea that 'by the law of nature' all men were 'free born' concluded that by 'all men' was meant all human beings 'white or black' . . . [and] launched forthwith a brief but characteristically fierce attack upon the whole institution of slavery: 'Does it follow that 'tis right to enslave a man because he is black? Will short curled hair like wool instead of Christian hair . . . help the argument? Can any logical inference in favor of slavery be drawn from a flat nose, a long or short face? Nothing better can be said in favor of a trade that is the most shocking violation of the law of nature, has a direct tendency to diminish the idea of the inestimable value of liberty, and make every dealer a tyrant . . .'²¹

Otis knows he is addressing a society which *feels* that physical difference should indicate a difference in status, but what he relies on is that this *feeling* has no theory to back it up, indeed can be argued to be at odds with current rational thought. The same uncertainty can be seen in Thomas Jefferson's difficulty in explaining his prejudices against the blacks. He *believes* that whites will always feel antipathy towards blacks and he *feels* that they are a variety of the human species inferior by heredity, but, he admits, not enough scientific study has been done to assert this as *fact*.²²

Of course, Enlightenment Americans' search for terms in which to define Indian difference was far from being merely an intellectual problem. The definition of Indianness which evolved was inseparable from a wider set of ideas by which the American right to Independence was argued, and was itself a powerful part of that argument. The Enlightenment Americans' concept of the Indian was produced as much by desire as the Puritans' had been, but their desires were different. For most of the eighteenth century the thrust of colonial Americans' thinking about the American continent was moving primarily towards the establishment of American Independence. The desire to move west was temporarily controlled by the British, and the issue of land receded from centre view. It was the British, not the Indians, who were at that time the primary opposers of the acquisition of land. Until the time of the Revolution the colonists needed a political ideology to justify independence; expansion would come later.

The ideology of the American revolution, as Bernard Bailyn has argued, drew on varied and sometimes contradictory traditions: covenant theology, and its promise of God's providential arm in the establishing of a new world; idealised versions of Roman republicanism; a Whig reading of British history and, most importantly, Enlightenment views of natural rights. It was from these Enlightenment thinkers that a new understanding of the Native American was formed. This view of the Native American,

21. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 237.

22. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787) in Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, New York & Cambridge: Library of America, Viking/University of Cambridge Press, 1984, p. 270. Jefferson argues that what is needed is a natural history of 'the races of black and of red men' to answer such questions. Richard Drinnon comments on Jefferson's 'extraordinary capacity to sound like an enlightened reformer while upholding the interests of the planter class': see *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980, p. 79.

which became a significant weapon in the propaganda war, relied principally on three important ideas from contemporary European thought.

Firstly, there was the Enlightenment idea of the natural, which was very different from that of the Puritans. The 'natural' in the eighteenth century is a complex and contradictory term, and I shall return to some of its ambiguities later.²³ But 'nature' was no longer the world of the sinful flesh as opposed to the redeemed spirit: nature was no longer under the tutelage of the devil instead of God. As Ernst Cassirer puts it, the Enlightenment concept of the natural 'did not oppose the "material" to the "spiritual"'. "Nature" at this period does not refer to the existence of things but the origin and foundation of truths'.²⁴ So as 'natural' man the Indian's distance from the civilised world was not necessarily any longer a mark of his fallen, bestial and brutish nature. His way of life could now be seen as commendably closer to the truths of the laws of Nature than were the corrupt regimes of Europe. 'Nature' had become an ethical and aesthetic norm.²⁵ The topos of the Classical and Renaissance gentle savage was re-invoked, and, as the noble savage (first so named by Dryden) became widespread in European Enlightenment thought as a critique of contemporary societies with their irrational, outworn conventions.²⁶ In Europe the inherent and natural rights of the free-born savage became an integral part of the argument for bourgeois rather than aristocratic regimes; in America, the identification of the noble savage with the Indian gave this imagery an added nationalistic fervour, and was seized on by the revolutionary colonists.

23. For a discussion of the idea of Nature at this period, see Ludmilla Jordanova's 'Introduction' to the collection she edited, *The Languages of Nature: Critical Essays on Science and Literature*, London: Free Association Press, 1986, especially pp. 36–40.

24. He goes on to say that 'Such truths are now not sought only in the physical but also in the intellectual and moral world; for it takes the two worlds together to constitute a real world, a cosmos complete in itself'. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951, p. 242.

25. See A.E. Pilkington, 'Nature as Ethical Norm in the Enlightenment' in Jordanova, *Languages of Nature*, pp. 51–85 and for the classical origins of this concept, George Boas, *Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1948, p. 7.

26. On this see Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*, London: Faber & Faber, 1970 and Dudley and Novak, *The Wild Man Within*. This tradition is discussed further in the chapter two. In John Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* the character of Almanzor says

But know, that I alone am King of me.
I am as free as Nature first made man
Ere the base Laws of Servitude began
When wild in woods the noble Savage ran.

(London: Henry Herringman, 1672, p. 7)

See Peter J. Weston, 'The Noble Primitive as Bourgeois Subject', *Literature and History*, Vol. 10:1, Spring 1984, pp. 59–71 for a discussion of the European political significance of the idea of the noble savage. He points out (p. 70) that though Dryden's is the first original English use of this phrase it appears earlier in the translation of Marc Lescarbot's *Nova Francia* published in London in 1609.

A second element in the revolutionaries' attitude to the Indians was the Enlightenment belief in developmental progress. This might not be thought to sit very easily with the idea of the noble savage, but it was all the same important in two ways. On the one hand, there was the insistence that progress towards perfection was possible through the natural goodness and essential equality of mankind. The quality that indeed defined the difference between animal and man was 'perfectibility', the capacity to stretch and increase abilities and skills.²⁷ On one level of the revolutionary debate, this made it possible to argue that the Indians could, under the tutelage of the Americans, attain an equal level of civilisation. In one of the key words of the century, they were capable of 'improvement'. On the other hand, perhaps ultimately more significantly, the Enlightenment story of the development of civilisation from a state of nature, was, in spite of its progressive teleology, not necessarily a straightforward one. In Europe, this story was sometimes told in terms which emphasised the backwardness of Native Americans: Ronald Meek has rightly argued that some Scottish Enlightenment philosophers stressed more often the defects than the virtues of savages, and it is true that their description of the development of human society as four stages, marked by different modes of subsistence – hunting, pastoral, agricultural, and commercial – was a paradigm which could be, and was, as easily used to evoke the moral depravity as the moral superiority of the earlier periods.²⁸ All the same, as I hope to show in the next chapter, in spite of their generally prudent emphasis on improvement, in some of their writings they allowed (as Rousseau repeatedly emphasised) that there were in the early stages of mankind virtues and qualities whose absence from the contemporary world might lead, and often did, to effete-ness or corruption. Only by recapturing such qualities could true progress go forward. It was out of this ambiguity in the notion of progress that the Americans were able to develop a rhetoric in which the Indian was, on the ideological level, a living critique of the excesses of European civility, while at the same time capable of attaining white civilisation, and therefore, on the practical plane, not likely to be a hindrance after Independence.

Thirdly, theories of the origin of difference in environmental influence provided a rational, secular explanation for the variation between groups, and so could hold at bay, for a little while, the hierarchical binaries of civilisation/savagery or white/other. For most eighteenth-century natural

27. According to Lovejoy, Rousseau did more than anyone to develop the concept of perfectibility: see Lovejoy, 'Supposed Primitivism' and 'Monboddo and Rousseau'.

28. See Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976. (Although I would agree that these representations of the Native Americans cannot on the whole be even approximately called noble, I think ignoble is an equally unsatisfactorily absolute term.) See Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, for support for the idea that the overwhelming vote of the Scottish Enlightenment was for culture rather than nature. Thinkers like Locke and Rousseau also use narratives of development, though not precisely in these stages.

historians, there was only one human species, but many varieties, produced by differences in climatic and social conditions.²⁹ In Europe the most influential of these environmental theories was Buffon's, which maintained that the geographical conditions of the New World led to weak, puny and degenerate specimens. This view was not surprisingly fiercely attacked by the colonists. After all, if the New World was an environment that caused its flora and fauna to degenerate, that could eventually affect the colonists as well as Indians, as de Pauw and Abbé Raynal had indeed argued.³⁰ But Jefferson, for example, accepted environmentalism as a principle, while claiming that the effect of the New World was entirely beneficial.³¹ Although Jefferson himself equivocates on whether or not the Indians should be considered a distinct 'variety' of the human species, he is certainly able to suggest that in spite of the apparent dissimilarity in culture there are no meaningful innate differences:

To form a just estimate of their genius and mental powers, more facts are wanting, and great allowance to be made for those circumstances of their situation which call for a display of particular talents only. This done we shall probably find that they are formed in mind as well as in body, on the same module with the 'Homo sapiens Europeaeus'.³²

Jefferson is cautious here: he only says 'probably'. He annotates 'Homo sapiens Europeaeus' as a quotation from Linnaeus, who in fact placed 'Homo Americanus' in a separate category. Jefferson opens up, while tentatively denying, the possibility that the Indians are indeed on a 'different module', a possibility that would later become accepted as fact. Jefferson maintains that the differences are purely cultural, but in the language which was to give birth to physically-based racialism – as when he writes elsewhere that the 'proofs of genius given by the Indians of N. America, place them on a level with Whites in the same uncultivated state' – which asserts their difference while maintaining it *makes* no difference.³³ The idea of the essential unity of mankind can be seen here breaking down, as it does in his discussion of the possible inferiority of blacks 'in the endowments both of body and of mind'. As Kwame Anthony Appiah has pointed out, his emphasis there on 'endowments', i.e. heredity, is one of the earliest expressions of the possibility 'that the cultural inferiority of the non-white races flowed from an inherited source'.³⁴ But, for the meantime, the leaders of the new republic held on to the belief that the Indians had only been

29. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, some eighteenth-century writers argued for polygenesis: See p. 29.

30. See Sheehan, *Seeds*, p. 70.

31. Jefferson, *Notes*, Query VI, pp. 167–92.

32. Jefferson, *Notes*, p. 187.

33. Jefferson to Chastellux, June 7, 1785, quoted Sheehan, *Seeds* p. 124.

34. See Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, London: Methuen, 1992, pp. 77–8.

kept back by their social environment. If like Jefferson most felt that the blacks would (probably) always be inferior – and certainly some New England liberals would still have refused to countenance such a notion – they believed that Indians, with education in American social ways would (probably) be like them.

Indian Liberty or Indian Land?

So the Native Americans, in revolutionary political language, represented an earlier stage of mankind: they might in time progress to civilised refinement, but for now their unpolished virtues made clear the defects of the European present. The contradiction between the idea of the noble savage's moral superiority to contemporary European civilisation, and the idea of progress bringing man to perfection, was resolved by a rhetoric which depended on three terms rather than on the Puritans' binary, a Lévi-Straussian resolution of the nature/culture divide.³⁵ Simply put, the Indian is not sufficiently civilised, the European is over-civilised, the Euro-American is just right. In this nationalist rhetoric, there is no doubt that the Indian is always better than the European, though always inferior to the American. As Jefferson puts it:

... were it made a question, whether no law, as among the savage Americans, or too much law, as among the civilized Europeans, submits man to the greatest evil, one who has seen both conditions of existence would pronounce it to be the last: and that the sheep are happier of themselves, than under the care of the wolves.³⁶

In the years preceding Independence, the view that the Native American possessed virtues cast aside by the decadent courts of Europe appeared in various forms,³⁷ but the pre-eminent Indian characteristic asserted by

35. These ideas were, Whitney argues, regularly to be found enmeshed contradictorily together in the eighteenth century: in America, the cracks between them begin to emerge very shortly after the Revolution, just as the attempt to maintain a tolerant view of Indian difference rapidly unravelled. See Lois Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1934, especially chapter 5.
36. Jefferson, *Notes*, Query XI, p. 220. This passage is commented on by Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 120.
37. There is, for one thing, the repeated observation that some white settlers had indeed actually found Indian life preferable to their own, while the Indians never could accept the European lifestyle. This claim was made in such popular works as de Crèvecoeur's *Letters of an American Farmer*, and lies behind Freneau's poem on 'The Indian Student'. See J. Hector St John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Father* (1782), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981, pp. 213–14. According to James Axtell, there is much in what they say. Although there were Indian converts to Christianity, far more Anglo-Americans defected to the Indians. See *The European and the American: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial America*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, especially p. 72 on the Indians' resistance to conversion, p. 161 for a comment on de Crèvecoeur, and the chapter on 'The White Indians of Colonial America', pp. 168–206.

travellers and historians of the period from both sides of the Atlantic was their passion for liberty. According to Cadwallader Colden they have 'such absolute notions of liberty that they allow no kind of superiority of one over another'.³⁸ William Burke, who like many others sees them as admirable Spartans, says that

Liberty in its furthest extent, is the darling possession of the Americans [i.e. Indians]. To this they sacrifice everything. This is what makes a life of uncertainty and want supportable to them; and their education is directed in such a manner as to cherish this disposition to the utmost.³⁹

James Adair wrote in 1775 that 'They are all equal – the only precedence any gain is by superior virtue, oratory or prowess. . . . Governed by the plain and honest law of nature, their whole constitution breathes nothing but liberty'.⁴⁰ And perhaps most strikingly of all the fur-trader John Long speaks of the Iroquois in terms which make them prototypes for both the American and the French Revolutions:

The Iroquois laugh when you talk to them of submission to kings; for they cannot reconcile the idea of submission with the dignity of man. Each individual is a sovereign in his own mind: and as he conceives he derives his freedom from the Great Spirit alone he cannot be induced to acknowledge any other power.⁴¹

This particular language, of course, ignores the Indians' own social organisation: it is ironic that the Iroquois, who here apparently insist on absolute anarchy, in fact provided the framework for the American Constitution. But revolutionary Americans believed, as Tom Paine argued in his widely

38. Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada which are dependent On the Province of New-York in America and Are the Barrier between the English and the French in that Part of the World, etc.* London: T. Osborne, 1747. Colden was a distinguished scientist, a friend of Franklin and Linnaeus (who named a plant after him): see Alice Mapelsden Keys, *Cadwallader Colden: a Representative Eighteenth-Century Official*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1906.

39. William Burke, *Account of European Settlements in America* (1757) quoted Benjamin Bissell, *The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century*, Yale Studies in English, No. 68, New Haven: Yale University, 1925, p. 20.

40. James Adair, *History of the American Indians* (1775), ed. Samuel Coe Williams, New York: Promontory Press, 1930, pp. 406–7.

41. John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Trader* (1791), quoted Bissell, *American Indian*, p. 20. Hugh Honour has suggested an interesting reversal of this imagery, he quotes William Robertson's comment:

The bonds of society sit so loosely upon the members of the more rude American tribes that they hardly feel any restraint. Hence the spirit of independence, which is the pride of a savage, and which he considers as the unalienable prerogative of man. Incapable of control, and disdainful to acknowledge any superior, his mind, though limited in its powers, and erring in many of its pursuits, acquires such elevation by the consciousness of its own freedom that he acts on some occasions with astonishing force, and perseverance, and dignity.

Honour comments: 'this association of the spirit of independence with savagery (with all the terms of praise carefully qualified) makes one wonder if Robertson was not thinking also of the Colonists who had signed the Declaration of Independence the previous year' (*New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1975, p. 132).

read *Common Sense*, that the less government, the better the society.⁴² Some government there has to be, and the American Constitution's aim was to negotiate no more than the required amount. Jefferson's argument for America as a land of yeoman farmers rather than of manufacturers is in part based on his belief that less government is needed for farmers than for 'the mobs of great cities'.⁴³

Praise of the Indian love of liberty should be understood in Jefferson's terms. It is a virtue, but only in as far as no law is better than too much; for the American people there should be a rational moderation. All the same, as an emblem of freedom, the Indian became in the revolutionary period a potent symbol for the Americans themselves. Popular iconography used the Indian to represent the new, freedom-seeking Americans, and the revolutionaries repeatedly drew on the image of the Indian to exemplify the defiant colonists in their struggle. The perpetrators of the Boston tea-party dressed up as Mohawks, and cartoons depicted the colonists as Indians oppressed by the British. Paul Revere, who had produced many such engravings, was asked in 1780 to engrave a seal for the state of Massachusetts to the following specification:

An Indian dressed in his shirt, moggosins, belted proper – in his right hand a bow – in his left an arrow, its point towards the base . . . on the Dexter . . . side of the Indian's head, a star for one of the states of the United States of America – on a wreath a dexter arm clothed and ruffled proper, grasping a broad sword.⁴⁴

There is perhaps a certain anxious ambiguity about the relationship of these Native and Euro-American elements, the bow and the sword, but there is no doubt that, in that 1780 medal, as so often in the early years of the United States, the Indian as natural man, at once noble and democratic, a free and true American, was a signifier for the virtues of the new nation. But already by 1789 the pressing political reality was that the Indians stood in the path of expansion. The might of that broad sword would be needed. But how was its use to be justified?

In many sections of the new republic, of course, the Native Americans had continued to be viewed simply as hostile savages. On the frontier, the theories of the intellectual eastern leaders had no place. The Indian warfare during the Anglo-French struggles of the mid-1740s to 1760, Pontiac's uprising in 1763 and continuing border disputes since, had kept frontier hatreds alive, to say nothing of the anger aroused by the Indians' support of the British in the War of Independence. In 1793 the first collection of captivity horror stories issued solely for commercial reasons was published,

42. Tom Paine, *Common Sense* (1776) edited by Isaac Kramnick, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976. These ideas are central at present, to the revival of the Republicanism.

43. Jefferson, *Notes*, p. 291.

44. Bruce E. Johansen, 'Mohawks, Axes and Taxes: Images of the American Revolution', *History Today*, April 1985, Vol. 35, pp. 10–16.

and Charles Brocken Brown was shortly to develop the form into some of the most successful novels of the young republic.⁴⁵ Popular belief in the racial inferiority of the non-white races, including the Indians, although still argued against by progressives, had markedly increased in America in the eighteenth century. As Reginald Horsman writes of this period:

Long before science provided a rationale for rejecting the Indians as equal human beings, America's empire builders regarded the Indians as 'violent savages' and as much less than inherently equal members of the human species. As Southerners had come to accept the idea of blacks as inherently 'different', in spite of the assertions of an intellectual elite, Westerners built their own image of the Indian, which contrasted sharply with the eighteenth-century intellectual transatlantic view. The practical groundwork for the rejection of ideas defending the inherent equality of all human beings had been firmly laid in the United States by the end of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶

By the 1760s the enlightened Thomas Hutchinson was saying regretfully, 'We are too apt to consider them as a race of beings inferior to us, and born to servitude.'⁴⁷ Native Americans were now frequently identified as black, or mulatto, and, according to Alden T. Vaughan, had much less chance of justice in eighteenth-century than in seventeenth-century colonial courts.⁴⁸ In Europe there was already a substantial corpus of intellectual work arguing the case for a low estimation of the Indian – as well as Buffon, de Pauw and Abbé Raynal, whom I have already mentioned, there were also William Robertson and Blumenbach.⁴⁹ Those were the writers on whose work nineteenth-century scientific racism would build.

Both the apparently anti-American intellectual tradition of the European proto-racialists and the populist idea of brute savagery were alien to the beliefs of the Founding Fathers. Neither could be easily used as arguments for the right to Indian land in the first years of the United States. For the Puritans, intent on establishing a new kind of existence in the wilderness, denouncing Indian savagism had been essential in defining their own identity as civilised people of God. But notions of savagism could not be easily assimilated into a doctrine of natural rights, nor be reconciled with the Enlightenment belief in progress, which, in contrast to the Christian doctrine of original sin, relied on the principle of innate goodness. In any case, revolutionary Americans needed first and foremost to define themselves against Europeans, and one way of doing that was to identify themselves, at

45. Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, p. 85. Tory opponents of the Revolution used Indian imagery to indicate the savagery of the insurgents – though that in itself might have made it more difficult for the new government to reverse its language with any rapidity.

46. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 108–9.

47. Quoted in Vaughan, 'From White Man', p. 938.

48. Vaughan, 'From White Man'. Vaughan gives a good deal of evidence to support his argument. However, judging from his book, *New England Frontier* his (here unacknowledged) aim is to defend the Puritans. On the similarity of assumptions about Native Americans and Blacks, see Forbes, *Black Africans and Native Americans*.

49. See Burke, 'The Wild Man's Pedigree'.

any rate partially, with Indians. Soon they would need to identify themselves against the Indians, but so far that was less urgent.

In many documents of these years, as well as later histories, the Indians are not even represented as alien savages: they simply become invisible. Discussion of the American Empire implied that it would be achieved by the acquisition of uninhabited land: for Philip Freneau 'awful solitude' would be transformed to 'empires rising where the sun descends'; 'the millions of souls' whom Jedidiah Morse predicted would inhabit the 'American Empire, west of the Mississippi' were to be white emigrants.⁵⁰ Francis Jennings has argued that the language in which the annexation of America was, and is, described – virgin land, settlement, the opening up of the west – removes the Indian from view. Traditional historians of this period have stressed the 'non-colonial' nature of the American Empire, that is, all new states were politically equal to the old, but in terms of the Indians whose land was taken, the term 'non-colonial' is entirely misleading. One historian describes the Northwest Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 as measures which 'extended the principles of the Declaration and applied them successfully to a vast and virgin land. . . . They were non-colonial in spirit.' This particular historian acknowledges that the Ordinances helped land speculators more than ordinary citizens, but his only reference to the fact that this 'vast and virgin land' of the North West was cleared ruthlessly and brutally of Indians before these high-minded non-colonial laws could flourish is the comment that 'it was not until 1795 at the Treaty of Greenville, that a peace with the Indians was won'.⁵¹

The new government employed the language of invisibility when it could, but the need for an Indian policy was too pressing for that to be wholly possible. Like the uncomfortable clash between the views and practice of figures like Washington and Jefferson on the question of slavery, the Enlightenment view of the Indian, so integral to the fight for Independence, posed a severe problem for the new republic. As Bernard Bailyn and Robin Blackburn have both argued, the use of the metaphor of slavery to describe the colonists' treatment by George III provoked for some Americans a crisis of conscience, and for others embarrassing confusion.⁵² Similarly, the revolutionary iconography of the Indian clashed awkwardly with the drive to possess Indian land that followed Independence, and with much popular sentiment. Benjamin Franklin had said as early as 1764, the year after

50. Philip Freneau, 'The Rising Glory of America', written in collaboration with Hugh Brackenridge, in Richard Gray (ed.), *American Verse of the Nineteenth Century*, London and Totowa, N.J: Dent, 1973, pp. 2–3, and Jedidiah Morse quoted Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, pp. 138–9.

51. Esmond Wright, *Fabric of Freedom 1763–1800*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1961, p. 161.

52. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, pp. 232–46, and Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848*, London: Verso, 1988, p. 103. See also Ronald T. Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, New York: Knopf, 1979, pp. 42–55.

Pontiac's uprising, 'The Spirit of killing all Indians, Friends and Foes, [has] spread amazingly thro' the whole Country.'⁵³ The language of Indian policy at this period was inevitably contradictory and evasive. Jefferson's warm estimation of Indian potentialities in his *Notes on Virginia* is very different from his comments on them in the Declaration of Independence. There the brief reference to Indians conjoins them with George III as tyrannous and external opponents of the American nation, placed firmly outside the United States: 'He [George III] 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'.⁵⁴ That the United States was already established on Indian lands – not the Indians 'brought on' to them – is ignored. The Indian might still appear symbolically as the emblem of new-found liberty, but in the Constitution Indians were conceived as aliens, and Congress given power to treat with them as with other foreign nations. The Founding Fathers, as much as the Puritans, now needed an ideology that would justify the acquisition of Indian land. What they found they had was one that made that extremely difficult.

Henry Knox and his Dilemmas

As first Secretary of War, to whose department Indian affairs were assigned, Henry Knox found himself in a political and moral impasse. The United States were determined to move west, and therefore inevitably on to Indian lands. As Washington had said in 1783: 'The Settltmt. of the Western Country and making a Peace with the Indians are so analogous there can be no definition of one without involving considerations of the other'.⁵⁵ In 1763 the British had established the deeply unpopular Proclamation line, which ran down the Appalachians from Canada to Florida, beyond which white Americans were ordered not to settle. Although the British evoked the fur trade and humanitarianism as motives for this protection of the Indian, a more pressing reason for the Proclamation was that it forced the continued dependence of the colonists on British merchandise; if they went too far west the British feared they would start manufacturing for them-

53. Vaughan, 'From White Man', p. 937.

54. Quoted in Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1978, p. 377. The Constitution from its inauguration has been attacked for its failure to give rights to women, slaves and poor white males. and in this century the complex intermeshing of principle and private interest, idealism and speculation that lay behind the policy of the founding fathers has become clearer. See the works already cited by Horsman and Takaki, and also Gareth Stedman Jones 'The History of US Imperialism' in *Ideology in Social Science: Readings in Critical Social Theory*, ed. Robin Blackburn, Glasgow: Fontana, 1972 and Peter N. Carroll and David W. Noble, *The Free and the Unfree: A New History of the United States*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977.

55. Prucha, *Great Father*, p. 36.

selves. In the Treaty of Paris of 1783 all British lands as far as the Mississippi were ceded to the colonists. At first it was assumed by some states that the American colonists could take over the Indian territory west of the Appalachians by right of conquest, on the grounds that the Indians had been the allies of the defeated British. But his time as Secretary of War to the Continental Congress had taught Knox the impracticability of relying on the right of conquest. As he ruefully said in his first report to the First Congress that met under the United States Constitution, 'the confederated Indians entertained a different opinion', and unequivocally demanded their 'rights'.⁵⁶ They asserted that they, unlike the British, had not been defeated, and that, though they wished to live in peace with the new United States, if their territory were invaded, they would 'most assuredly with (their) united force, be obliged to defend those rights and privileges which have been transmitted to (them) by (their) ancestors' (ASP1:9).

Knox had no choice but to accept this. As he wrote to Washington, 'the Indians are greatly tenacious of their land, and generally do not relinquish their right, excepting on the principle of a specific consideration, expressly given for the purchase of the same' (ASP1:8). Although he later acted against that right, he never argued against it, or ever explicitly suggested that the Indian right to their land could be ignored. In 1789 the association of the image of the Indian with liberty and natural rights was still powerful for educated seaboard Americans, even if it had never been for those on the frontier. The precarious national identity which was so essential to this uneasy, newly independent country was based on the espousal of liberty (and hence the Indian) as a moral crusade. Both the disturbing power of that association and the desperate need to escape it can be traced in Knox's awkward prose, where the natural rights of the Indians keep cropping up uncomfortably in his papers. In 1790, he told Congress: 'That the Indians possess the natural rights of man, and that they ought not wantonly to be divested thereof, cannot be well denied' (ASP1:61). The hesitant and cumbersome syntax of the sentence, the moral ambiguity of the phrase, 'ought not wantonly', the disturbing qualification of the irresolute conclusion, 'cannot be well denied', all betray the fragility of Knox's belief that the Indians' tenure of those rights will be respected. But for the previous thirty years, the political language of America had been concerned with the establishment of white American natural rights, in particular American

56. *American State Papers Class II: Indian Affairs, Volume I. Documents Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States from the first session of the first to the third session of the Thirteenth Congress, Inclusive: Commencing March 3, 1789 and ending March 3, 1815*, selected and edited, under the authority of Congress, by Walter Lawrie, Secretary of the Senate, and Matthew St Clair Clarke, Clerk of the House of Representatives, Gales and Seaton: 1832 (hereafter cited in the text as ASP1), p. 13. See Prucha, *Great Father*, pp. 48–9. Knox by 1789 had also come to realise that it was imperative that only the federal government treat with Native Americans.

rights to their own land. How could that language be used abruptly to denude the Indians of theirs?

Indeed, with a regular army of less than a twentieth of the number of Native American warriors along the border, warriors able to call on help from the British in the north and the Spanish in the south, seizing Indian lands by force at this stage was a dangerous enterprise.⁵⁷ Yet the pressure westward was irresistible. Many of the states were claiming large stretches of land, and it was impossible, in spite of legislation, to prevent the haphazard migration of settlers westward.⁵⁸ In addition, part of Knox's brief as Secretary of War was to allocate 'bounty land' along the frontier to those who had fought in the War of Independence. And there were both public and personal economic pressures. Money from the sale of this territory would be vital in replenishing the impoverished Congress finances, and Knox, like many of his friends and class, had speculated heavily in land in the Northwest Territories, a speculation which could not be realised until the Indians were removed. Knox himself had an extravagant life-style, and was constantly pressed to pay for it. But far beyond such personal considerations, American nationalism was celebrated in descriptions of a westward Empire; economically and ideologically the westward movement could not be stopped.

The papers Knox presented to Congress have been quoted by some historians as if they were weighed and weighty statements of policy, offering proof that Knox was 'a friend to the Indian', aware of the inevitability of westward expansion but concerned to make it as humane and just as possible. Even historians critical of general Indian policy, like Horsman and Berkhofer, have accepted Knox as the moderate and consistent exponent of gradualist and legitimate measures, committed to combining what Knox himself calls 'policy and justice'.⁵⁹ Yet the papers are pragmatic, provisional, oscillating and confused, written to secure agreement of Congress to ratify treaties, or, more often, to provide money. In Knox's papers there emerges not only a clash between his patriotic enlightenment rhetoric and the far from humane compromises and prevarications of his practice; in addition that very rhetoric opens up the possibility of its own subversion. One has to resist the temptation to construct a consistent narrative of Knox's actions, and to face the contradictions both in his policy and in his prose.

Knox is, of course, strikingly more liberal than his successors three or four decades later. At this time, as the historian Francis Prucha puts it, the

... policy makers, from George Washington and Henry Knox on, were imbued with a vision of the United States as the great republican model for the world,

57. Prucha, *The Great Father*, p. 29.

58. Prucha, *The Great Father*, p. 62.

59. Berkhofer certainly suggests, I think correctly, that Knox was more interested in strengthening federal power than in maintaining Indian rights: Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, pp. 142-3.

and they were continually conscious of the duties of justice towards a less favored people.⁶⁰

This was the postcolonial imperative: if they were not moral they were nothing. Their whole *raison d'être* and self-definition depended on their virtuous republican defence of liberty and justice. Even so, being conscious of duties and carrying them out are two different things. In the papers Knox presented to Congress, both the very hesitancy of his punctuation and his jerky paragraphing reflect the starts and uncertainties of his thought. In his first paper, after asking if the United States has 'a clear right, consistently with the principles of justice and the laws of nature, to proceed to the destruction or expulsion of the savages, on the Wabash, supposing the force for that object easily attainable', he continues:

The Indians, being the prior occupants, possess the right of soil. It cannot be taken from them unless by their free consent, or by right of conquest in case of a just war. . . . But should it be decided, on an abstract view of the question, to be just, to remove by force the Wabash Indians from the territory they occupy, the finances of the United States would not at present admit of the operation. (ASP1:13)

There are ultimately no clear rights here: even what appear absolute affirmations (their 'right of soil') are then qualified: what is 'just' will eventually depend, the uneasy sentences suggest, on what force is 'easily attainable' and affordable. Even the general assertion of high-minded US policy which Knox makes earlier in this document (quoted by Prucha to show Knox's belief in 'the common principles of human decency') is in fact prefaced by a qualifying phrase which undermines its moral earnestness:

It is presumable that a nation solicitous of establishing its character on the broad basis of justice, would not only hesitate at, but reject every proposition to benefit itself, by the injury of any neighbouring community, however contemptible and weak it might be, either with respect to its manners or powers. (ASP1:13)⁶¹

I think 'it is presumable' that that is how Knox hoped things would be, but the vocabulary suggests that such hesitation might later be followed by something other than this rejection, where the victims are described in such damning terms. As well as Enlightenment idealism, self-interest and pragmatic compromise lay behind Knox's measures: his papers reveal a Defoe-like confusion of the moral and the financial. As he continues in that first paper:

The principle of the Indian right to the lands they possess being thus conceded, the dignity and interest of the nation will be advanced by making it the basis of future administration of justice towards the Indian tribes.

The whole number of Indian warriors south of the Ohio, and east of the Mississippi may be estimated at 14,000.

60. Prucha, *Great Father*, p. 32.

61. Commented on in Prucha, *Great Father*, p. 59.

Those to northward of the Ohio, and to the southward of the lakes, at about 5,000. In addition to these, the old men, women and children, may be estimated at three for one warrior, the whole amounting to 76,000 souls.

It is highly probable, that by a conciliatory system, the expense of managing the said Indians, and attaching them to the United States for the ensuing period of fifty years, may, on an average, cost 15,000 dollars annually.

A system of coercion and oppression, pursued from time to time, for the same period, as the convenience of the United States might dictate would probably amount to a much greater sum of money; but the blood and injustice which would stain the character of the nation, would be beyond all pecuniary calculation.

As the settlements of the white shall approach near to the Indian boundaries established by treaties, the game will be diminished, and the lands being valuable to the Indians only as hunting grounds, they will be willing to sell further tracts for small considerations. By the expiration, therefore, of the above period, it is most probable that the Indians will, by the invariable operation of the causes which have hitherto existed in their intercourse with the whites, be reduced to a very small number. (ASP1:13–14)

This oscillation between the principled and the economic is present too in his scheme for 'civilising' the Indians, by the relatively inexpensive means of sending them cattle and missionaries, which he claims would show 'the free operation of the mild principles of religion and benevolence towards an unenlightened race', and 'be at once economical and highly honourable to the national character'.⁶² Knox's Indian policy was always intimately connected with monetary considerations, but the contradictory, indecisive language of his early papers reveals more than the constant preoccupation with finance: it allows as well for the later 'extirpations' that were carried out under his auspices.

In 1789 arguments for the civilisation of the Indian, although raised, sound more like a wistful hope than a policy. Knox presents them as a coda to some firm talking on the need for discipline on the frontier if the US reputation is to remain untarnished. In a paper in July 1789 on the Southern Indians, arguing strongly for central control and the end to the continual migration that was stirring up trouble, Knox tries again for a high moral line. As usual it wavers unsteadily. First, the general elevated sentiment:

The obligations of policy, humanity, and justice, together with that respect which every nation sacredly owes its reputation unite in requiring a noble, liberal and disinterested administration of the Indian. (ASP1:53)

Then the bribe, which repeats the hope of cheap purchases Knox held out in the first paper, if for the present, migration can be 'restrained':

As population shall increase, and approach the Indian boundaries, game will be diminished, new purchases may be made for small considerations. This has been, and probably will be, the inevitable consequence of cultivation. (ASP1:53)

Knox does not wish this to sound a cavalier hope for the death of the present occupiers (reminiscent of the British estate agents who used to put

62. Quoted in North Callahan, *Henry Knox: George Washington's General*, New York and Toronto: Rinehart, 1958, p. 316.

in house particulars, 'Controlled tenant, 89'): that would go too blatantly against the philanthropic ideals of the new nation. This was still the age of sensibility. Before the revolution Knox had been a bookseller, selling, as well as political and philosophical books, novels with titles like *Delicate Distress* and *Fatal Step*, writing notices for them such as 'a reader of sensibility cannot help paying a tear to many a scene in this agreeable and romantic performance'.⁶³ So here:

It is, however, painful to consider, that all the Indian tribes, once existing in those States now the best cultivated and most populous, have become extinct. If the same causes continue, the same effects will happen; and in a short period the idea of an Indian on this side the Mississippi will only be found in the pages of an historian.

How different would be the sensation of a philosophic mind to reflect, that, instead of exterminating a part of the human race by our modes of population, we had persevered, through all difficulties, and at last had imparted our mode of cultivation and the arts to the aboriginals of the country, by which the source of future life and happiness had been preserved and extended. (ASP1:53)

Here, in common with much of the literature of sensibility, the centre of attention is on the 'sensation of (the) philosophic mind', not on the victims. And indeed, the victims have been rhetorically transformed into beneficiaries. Knox, conscious of the United States' need to be seen as a principled and benevolent government, is laying the foundation of the policy of Americanisation, which reformulated the removal of land as the granting of civilisation. Here he expressly builds on the Jeffersonian belief that the Indian was potentially the equal of that summit of progress, the white man, and is aware that this policy had to be championed against what he sees as ignorant prejudice:

But it has been conceived impracticable to civilize the Indians of North America. This opinion is probably more convenient than just.

That the civilization of the Indians would be an operation of complicated difficulty; that it would require the highest knowledge of the human character, and a steady perseverance in a wise system for a series of years, cannot be doubted. But to deny that, under a course of favorable circumstances, it could not be accomplished, is to suppose the human character under the influence of such stubborn habits as to be incapable of change – a supposition entirely contradicted by the progress of society, from the barbarous ages to its present degree of perfection. (ASP1:53)

Knox had already made a tentative move in this direction in 1785, when he asked Congress for money to buy books on morality and religion to present to the Indians (with what result I have been unable to discover).⁶⁴ Bernard Sheehan in his book on Jeffersonian philanthropy, *Seeds of Extinction*, argues that this plan to civilise the Indian was doomed to fail because it could not comprehend the tenacity with which the Indians would guard their

63. Callahan, *Henry Knox*, p. 30.

64. Callahan, *Henry Knox*, p. 316.

culture. In the end it eliminated Indians because that was the only way of getting rid of Indianness. I do not want to disagree with that, but I would add that, although this policy of civilisation and assimilation was clearly the only one that could offer a *theoretical* basis for expansion with honour, in *practice*, in spite of its dominant rhetorical role and of some very real efforts made to implement it, it was often ignored. Often – mainly – the westward pressure was too strong to allow for moral nicety. Knox typically ends his paper by appealing again to economy rather than morality:

The expense of such a conciliatory system may be considered as a sufficient reason for rejecting it.

But, when this shall be compared with a system of coercion, it would be found the highest economy to adopt it. (ASP1:53–4)

But neither the constraints of philanthropy nor of economy could always prevent the new Congress from using force. Prucha argues that even in these early decades of the United States, when a morally irreproachable policy towards the Indian seemed essential, there was always the supposition that the Indians could be subdued if necessary. He quotes Jefferson in 1803, that ‘we presume that our strength and their weakness is now so visible, that they must see that we have only to shut our hand to crush them’.⁶⁵ In 1816 a later Secretary of War, William Crawford, was saying rather grandly:

When we are judges in our own cause, and where the weakness of the other party does not admit of an appeal from our decision, delicacy, as well as proper sense of justice, should induce us to lean in favor of the claim adverse to ours.⁶⁶

By 1803 there was some truth in Jefferson’s view of the balance of power, but Knox in 1790 seriously over-estimated how ‘contemptible and weak’ the Native Americans were. Having argued that to treat with the Wabash Indians was the only moral and economic course, he was stymied by their refusal to discuss terms. Knox sent General Harmar in 1790 ‘to punish the Wabash Indians for their depredations and their refusal to treat with the United States when invited to do so’.⁶⁷ It appeared that Indian rights were only to be respected on United States terms. Stanhope Smith had argued in 1787 that ‘for the Indian, the philanthropist played the divine role’.⁶⁸ Here it appears it was that of the divine Judge. But in this case, God was mocked. The result was a devastating defeat for Harmar with 183 casualties. This disaster was followed by an even more appalling rout for the army of Arthur St Clair, where 38 officers and 493 enlisted men were killed, after St Clair had been told by Knox to ‘seek the enemy and strike them with great severity’.⁶⁹

So in 1792 Knox returned to his arguments for gradualist measures, particularly fearing encounters with the Southern Indians: land must be

65. Prucha, *Great Father*, p. 31.

66. Sheehan, *Seeds*, p. 123.

67. Callahan, *Henry Knox*, p. 318.

68. Sheehan, *Seeds*, p. 35.

69. Callahan, *Henry Knox*, p. 319.

purchased, and at the same time the Indians must be educated in European farming methods, so giving them 'the blessings of civilization, as the only means of perpetuating them on earth' (ASP1:235). Horsman suggests Knox thus created the basis of a humane official policy towards the Indian for the next few decades.⁷⁰ But Knox's policy was not consistently humane, though his papers suggest that he was genuinely relieved when 'policy and justice' could be brought together. He certainly felt the need to justify his Indian policy in humane terms: in that he contrasts sharply with later politicians.

Melancholy Reflections

If one looks more closely at these gradualist policies, contradictions appear even here. The argument that the Indian could be taught to be a European is dependent on a view of the Indian as natural, perfectible man, potentially equal, as Jefferson had argued, to the whites. But Knox frequently argued for gradualist policies, as in the two papers I have already quoted, on the grounds that the Indian would eventually die away with the advance of 'civilization', particularly as 'game will diminish'. This scenario depends on the assumption that the savage hunter will never change, but as an irredeemably inferior other will vanish before the stride of civilisation. 'It is', he wrote two days before his resignation in 1794, returning to the language of sensibility once more, 'a melancholy reflection that our modes of population have been more destructive to the Indian than the conduct of conquerors of Mexico and Peru. . . . The evidence of this is the utter extirpation of nearly all the Indians in the most populous part of the union. . . . A future historian may mark the causes of this destruction of the human race in sable colors' (ASP1:544). But involuntary effects like the disruption of game – and indeed the spread of disease and alcoholism, which must lurk somewhere in the undertones of this passage, though it seems unlikely that Knox would care to evoke them explicitly – were only part of the process by which the thirteen states had taken land from the Indian. This reliance on a 'melancholy' inevitability could be only one of Knox's strategies, though the one he presented most often to Congress in these years. Money was short and public prestige important; the American army, as he had originally argued and painfully proved, was hopelessly outnumbered and ill-disciplined. Conciliation, except for the very small and weak tribes, seemed the only practical course. But the idea of Indian savagery remained to justify necessary force.

70. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*. The point about influence might in any case be taken differently, because Knox here was presenting a Jeffersonian policy, which not unnaturally, Jefferson continued to pursue under his own Presidency.

When he could, Knox conjoined 'policy and justice'. But if he could not, policy came first. All those gradualist, humane arguments are certainly there in Knox's papers, but are entwined with and qualified by the ever-present alternative (which was in practice followed) – the seizure of lands by any means, provided those means were economically possible and could be publicly justified or ignored. His later violations of Indian rights were the results of the same pressures that bend and twist his language. In 1794 he was still faced with the portmanteau of problems that he met in 1789: the land claims of states, the maverick movement of individual settlers, his brief to provide 'bounty land' on the frontier, the speculations in land in the Northwest Territories unrealisable until the Indians in that area were dispossessed, his own personal over-expenditure and indebtedness, making realisation of those speculations ever more urgent.

Recommending the civilisation of the Indians had not been Knox's only response. After the public humiliations of the Harmar and St Clair defeats, Knox had quadrupled the army. Now known as the Legion of the United States, under the somewhat brutal leadership of Anthony Wayne, who, as Callahan puts it, literally whipped his soldiers into discipline, it was an efficient force.⁷¹ Conscious of the reputation of the US government, Knox attempted for some time to persuade the Indians to relinquish their land: 'The favorable opinion and pity of the world,' he wrote to Wayne, 'is easily excited in favor of the oppressed. The Indians are considered in a great degree of this description. If our modes of population and War destroy the tribes the disinterested part of mankind and posterity will be apt to class the effects of our Conduct and that of the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru together.' But, after 'protracted, useless but utterly necessary negotiations', the Northwest Indians refused to concede their lands by treaty,⁷² insisting that the Ohio should remain as the boundary between United States and Indian land. Knox determined that the 'audacious savages' should be taught a lesson, if Wayne felt his forces were now strong enough. He insisted to Wayne that the Indian wars should be over, i.e. that the territory should be seized from the Indians, by the end of 1794. Knox preferred to make legitimate purchases, but when the Indians refused to sell, his paternalism quickly became patriarchal autocracy. The presence of the army in the Northwest was apparently justified by the presence of British forts, although Knox had had intelligence that they would not support the Indians. Wayne's army crushed the Indians, who were indeed locked out of

71. Callahan, *Henry Knox*, p. 318.

72. Richard C. Knopf (ed.) *Anthony Wayne: A Name in Arms: Soldier, Diplomat, Defender of Expansion Westwards of a Nation: The Wayne-Knox-Pickering Correspondence*, University of Pittsburg Press, 1960, p. 285. Francis Jennings points out that even at the Treaty of Greenville of 1795 the Native Americans forced Wayne to acknowledge their rights and to negotiate rather than dictate the peace. *The Founding of America: From the Earliest Migrations to the Present*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1993, p. 304.

the British forts, and 'extirpated' them by the quick, cheap and therefore unobtrusive tactic of burning crops. There are no reports to Congress about this. Crop-burning had in fact been the method Knox had hoped would work in 1790. Harmar had been told to attack the Indians with a 'sudden stroke' so that 'their towns and crops might be destroyed'.⁷³

There are no directives in the State Papers for the 1794 attack, but the report from Major-General Anthony Wayne is clearly a response to an agreed policy, similar to that which Harmar had been directed to carry out. On August 14, 1794, he wrote to Knox:

Thus, Sir, we have gained possession of the grand Emporium of the hostile Indians of the West, without loss of blood. The very extensive and highly cultivated fields and gardens, show the work of many hands. The margins of those beautiful rivers, the Miami of the Lakes, and Au Glaize, appear like one continued village for a number of miles, both above and below this place; nor have I ever before beheld such immense fields of corn, in any parts of America, from Canada to Florida. (ASP1:490)

On the twenty-eighth of the same month, he wrote to say he had destroyed all the corn and the villages on the Miami, and in a few days would have finished doing the same on the Au Glaize.

In his report to Congress at the end of the year, Knox wrote:

To retrace the conduct of the Government of the United States towards the Indian, since the adoption of the present constitution, cannot fail to afford satisfaction to every philosophic and humane mind.

A constant solicitude appears to have existed in the Executive and Congress, not only to form treaties of peace with the Indians, upon principles of justice, but to impart to them all the blessings of civilized life of which their condition is susceptible. (ASP1:543)

However, he does say 'it must be acknowledged that the execution of the good intentions of the public, is frequently embarrassed with perplexing considerations'. It is perplexing by what 'abstract view of the question' Knox saw justice in his policy of destroying the livelihood of the Indians. It clashes entirely with what he has written two years earlier to a clergyman friend, when he claimed he could not 'reconcile it to any scheme of moral rectitude to encroach upon their lands, every inch of which is necessary to them as hunters, unless we teach them the arts and architecture, in exercise of which they may do with less land'.⁷⁴ Not even the claim to benefit the dispossessed is left. But that comment, as well as this defeat by crop-burning – which led to the Treaty of Greenville and the settlement of the Northwest Territories – also raises the question of how a people bound to die out through the loss of their hunting grounds could only be defeated by the wholesale destruction of the most 'immense fields' in America, how these nomads would be discomforted by the loss of their towns and villages.

73. Callahan, *Henry Knox*, p. 318.

74. Callahan, *Henry Knox*, p. 322.

The answer to both questions is perhaps connected with the meaning the words 'hunter', 'farmer' and 'civilisation' had for Knox and his contemporaries. When Knox talks of Indian hunting he is speaking in the rhetorical tradition which placed the Indian firmly outside civility by calling him a savage and nomadic hunter. Jennings has attempted to account for the power of this myth which clashed so strikingly with what the Europeans knew of the Indians.⁷⁵ 'Hunter' signified 'other', 'inferior', and at one level has little to do with literal means of subsistence. In Knox's documents 'loss of game' seems a euphemism for all the other ways in which the white man destroyed the Indian. More importantly at this period, 'farmer' or 'husbandman' was a concept whose reference went far beyond that of a settled cultivator of fields. He was a property-owner, working for no-one but himself to maximise his own returns. As Conkin says, 'The American celebration of property . . . was a celebration of independent artistry. On his own farm a man was not dependent on anyone else in the most critical area of economics. He was his own boss and thus, in the rhetoric of natural rights, *free*.'⁷⁶

In this sense the Indians' common ownership of land and communal farming methods could never be recognised as civilised husbandry; they belonged to a kind of social organisation totally at variance with the American enterprise. When Knox first mentions his hopes for the civilisation of the Indians, he writes: 'Were it possible to introduce among the Indians tribes a love for exclusive property, it would be a happy commencement of the business. This might be brought about by making presents, from time to time, to the chiefs or their wives, of sheep and other domestic animals . . .' (ASPI:53-4). But the irony remains that though it was the corpus of ideas around the hunter that could justify force against the Indian, at this stage the only successful use of force was to burn these *hunters'* fields.

This emphasis on Indians as hunters is one of the most perplexing topoi in the colonists' and US rhetoric, and there is perhaps another element in this strange blindness to Indian farming. The American farmer – as I indicated by my choice of pronouns – was male. In most Indian groups farming was the work of women, while men hunted. The colonists had always expressed great distaste for what they felt was this imposition of unwomanly work, while Indian men slothfully and inappropriately passed their time with what was regarded by Europeans as an aristocratic leisure-time sport. When the Americans say the Indians are hunters, they ignore the (to them) unimportant social contribution of women, as they would do increasingly in their own society. By 1789 the ideal American was a *yeoman* or *husbandman*. Society was expressed as the sum of its male inhabitants, and by that count Indians were all hunters, even if as James Adair unequivocally says in the best-informed account of Indian life of his day, as

75. Jennings, *Invasion*, especially chapter 5.

76. Paul Conkin, *Self Evident Truths*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974, p. 115.

a group they principally subsisted by farming.⁷⁷ While the increasing disregard of the presence of Indian farming in the nineteenth century was clearly part of the racist rhetoric which justified dispossession, it should perhaps be linked as well to the increasing emphasis in American society on the man as worker, the woman as home-maker.

Whatever the cause, it is striking that by the 1830s, de Tocqueville repeats this view in his famous passage on the destruction of the Native Americans, where he comments that 'It is impossible to destroy men with more respect to the laws of humanity'.⁷⁸ For all his immense sympathy for the Indians, for all his sharp attack on the connivance of the government with the illegal western movements, and the legalised exhortation of Indian lands, de Tocqueville does not question the assumption that Indians are entirely dependent on hunting. By 1835, the rhetoric had achieved the status of fact.⁷⁹

In Knox's day the unacceptability of the Indian was not expressed by the educated in virulent language of mid-nineteenth century racism. His contemporaries, however, were equally emphatic in their rejection of the Indian way of life, presented though it was more in sorrow than in anger. General James Wilkinson wrote in 1797:

When we contemplate the Fortunes of the Aborigines of our Country, the Bosom of Philanthropy must heave with sorrow, and our sympathy be strongly excited – what would not that man, or that Community merit, who reclaims the untutored Indian – opens his mind to sources of happiness unknown, and makes him useful to society? since it would be in effect to save a whole race from extinction. For surely – if this People are not brought to depend for subsistence on their fields instead of their forests, and to realise Ideas of distinction of property, it will be found impossible to correct their present habits, and the seeds of their extinction, already sown must be matured.⁸⁰

The line between the paternalistic modes of force suggested here ('brought to depend', 'correct their . . . Habits') and violent eviction was already in practice often breached. De Tocqueville writes:

In one of his messages to Congress Washington said: 'We are more enlightened and more powerful than the Indian nations; it behooves our honour to treat them with kindness and even generosity.'

That noble and virtuous policy has not been followed.⁸¹

It was not followed even in Washington's day.

77. James Adair says that 'corn is their chief produce, and main dependance'. (*History of the American Indian*, p. 437.)

78. Alexis de Toqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835), ed. J. P. Mayer and Max Lerner, trans. George Lawrence, London & Glasgow: Collins Fontana, 1968, Vol. 1, p. 421.

79. Yet he too notes the use of crop-burning as a US technique for driving the Indians from their land: de Tocqueville, *Democracy*, Vol. 1, p. 414.

80. Sheehan, *Seeds*, p. 2.

81. De Tocqueville, *Democracy*, Vol. 1, p. 414. Even Prucha, who insists on Henry Knox's unproblematic goodwill, sees the pattern of future conflict laid down in these years:

Thus the formative years brought into sharp focus the anomalies in relations between the United States and the Indian tribes that would persist through the decades. The

By 1830 the principle of natural rights could be ignored. By then the Committee of Indian Affairs would maintain: 'The fundamental principle, that the Indians had no rights by virtue of their ancient possession either of soil or sovereignty, has never been abandoned either expressly or by implication.'⁸² For Knox, in 1789 and the years immediately following, it was still not so easy to argue away 'rights of soil' for the Indian. But practically and ideologically, albeit 'frequently embarrassed with perplexing considerations', he made it more possible by eliminating the Indian farmer.

The Doubtful Legacy of the American Enlightenment

It is not part of the brief I have set myself to judge the sincerity or hypocrisy of Henry Knox. What I know of his life suggests that he loved comfort. In 1792 the total War Department allocation was \$7,000, \$3,500 of which went towards Knox's salary, which he spent on lavish entertainment and enviable quantities of good wine. Moderate and economical Indian policies would probably have contributed to the comfort both of his body and of his patriotic, if somewhat sentimental, mind. He was subject to special pressures to annexe the Northwest, but what he writes in that final paper probably represents his central belief for the future, even though his motivations were various: 'The United States can get nothing by an Indian war: but they risk men, money and reputation' (ASP1:544). The underlying philosophical question behind Knox's papers is: are Indians capable of change? The certain belief is that the Indian is inferior at the present moment. The underlying political question is: how can the United States move westwards without besmirching their claim to be the most exemplary and idealistic government in the world? The certainty is that they will expand. These questions may have changed by the mid-nineteenth century, but belief in white superiority and the inevitable westward drive remained at the heart of government policy.

One aspect of the legacy of the Enlightenment, in America as elsewhere, was its fusion of the narrative of progress through reason and science with the contradictory vision of a modernity hopelessly corrupted by excesses of power and greed. Our present-day critiques of Enlightenment thought

federal government promoted the expansion of the settlers westward, thus exerting great pressure on Indian lands, while it tried to ease the resulting conflict by regulating the whites and acculturating the Indians. The United States signed treaties with the Indian tribes, recognised an independent nationhood, and in many ways acted as though the Indian chiefs were in fact the rulers of sovereign political entities. Yet it hedged the tribes around with restrictions on their freedom of action, dictated treaty terms to chiefs unable or afraid to reject them, and set about to change the fundamental cultural patterns of the Indians in a self-righteous paternal manner. (*Great Father*, p. 33)

82. Quoted de Tocqueville, *Democracy*, Vol. 1, p. 421.

perhaps too willingly acquiesce with the chronology of Jean-François Lyotard's own influential grand narrative, according to which we have only very recently ceased to be convinced by the Enlightenment's cohesive and unitary 'grand narratives'.⁸³ Uncertainty was there from the beginning. Contradictions have become more obvious, anxieties have deepened, and loss of confidence in western civilisation has grown, but all those factors were present throughout the period of this book. From the very foundation of the United States two conflicting views of history have co-existed for Americans.⁸⁴ One is the idea of history as the march of progress towards an ever more advanced and improved way of life. The second is the idea that history represents the falling away from a purer origin, so that the task of the present is to strip away the corruptions of the past, and rebuild a better future. This latter concept of the historical process had multiple resonances for the revolutionaries. It is, after all, the central myth of Christianity: innocent Adam falls, Christ, the Second Adam, redeems mankind, which may now achieve a higher level of sainthood than was ever possible in the first Eden. Protestantism, and especially Puritanism, reduplicates this view of history: the simple doctrines and practices of the early Church have been overlaid by the ornate and deceiving distortions of Catholicism, Protestantism returns to early purity. More particularly still for the Americans, this was the view of history offered by the mass religious revivals of the eighteenth century (the 'Great Awakenings') which told the Americans they had fallen away from the zeal of the Pilgrim fathers, and must strive to regain their former spirituality. The Whig interpretation of history contains the same pattern secularised: Anglo-Saxon liberty was restricted and manacled ('yoked' was the favourite metaphor) by first the Normans and then the Stuarts. The 'Glorious' Revolution was needed to restore the original freedoms. This element of Whig and Lockean history was adapted by the revolutionaries to argue that the British Hanoverians were now tyrannically taking away the colonists' natural rights.⁸⁵ This argument drew support from other Enlightenment thinkers who held that monarchy, aristocracy and despotic power were the vices of over-civilisation, and called for a return to the original liberty and equality that belonged to natural man. In this reading of history, which was re-invoked at various points during the period covered by this book, the virtues of the Indian could be acclaimed as the forerunner, the type of the new American republican.

83. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984. See also my article on postmodernism in *Red Letters*, No. 25, Winter 1990, entitled, 'Postmodernism: Putting Humpty Dumpty Together Again?'

84. Both these views of history are of course found throughout western thought: here I concentrate on the American versions.

85. Whig history, in the broader sense, does of course also include with equal contradictoriness the belief in progress.

So, of the two views of history, in the revolutionary years the redemptive history was rhetorically the most pervasive, though it always co-existed with the idea of progress: the binary contrast represented by the 'Indian' and the 'European' – nature/culture, origin/decay, and lawlessness/tyranny – was resolved by the 'American', the mediating and superior term. William Bartram, whose *Travels* did not sell well in the States although they were vastly popular in Europe, was one of the very few to suggest that the Indians did not need to be improved in line with American ways.⁸⁶ This redemptive history, like progressive history, privileged the present, when a new redeemed future would begin. Yet primitive Indians were in that scheme admirable in their own way, and their fresh natural virtues a contrast to European decay. In the linear view of history which progress dictates, the primitive is childish, backward, undeveloped, out of place. By the mid-century the linear view was dominant. The Indian would then be gravely inferior to the European – the American remained the privileged term, in this scenario as the pinnacle of Anglo-Saxonism. By the early twentieth century, for intellectuals at any rate, the idea of progress was once more, and more profoundly, in doubt.

I said at the beginning of this chapter that the guilts and desires which structured Knox's actions would remain the subtext for the works that I look at in the rest of this book, and I want here to indicate briefly the way in which the problems of the Founding Fathers and their attempted solutions lie behind these approaches to the Native Americans' poetic and mythic traditions. Firstly, the attempt to use the Native American as a symbol of the New America continued for some time. The idea of the Natural man, Natural rights and the progressive development of society, ideas whose political implications were so important for the new nation, were associated as well with a range of theories about the power of primitive poetry, theories I shall look at in detail in the next two chapters. As in revolutionary propaganda, at first the Indians seemed ripe for literary appropriation, both as subject matter and as the bearers of a primitive poetic tradition which could function as a point of origin for an American national literature. For more than half a century after Knox's resignation, attempts were made in the broader cultural life to evoke the Indian as a symbol of America, and to draw on what little was known about Native American poetic or mythic traditions in the search for a national cultural identity. Eventually, as with the political iconography of the Indian as representative American, the tide of dispossession and denigration disrupted and skewed such intentions. The strategy of identification with the

86. See Henry Savage Jr, *Discovering America: 1700–1875*, New York: Harper & Row, 1979, pp. 65–9 for a discussion of William Bartram's *Travels through North and South Carolina etc*, published in New York in 1791, in London in 1792, which influenced Wordsworth, Coleridge and Chateaubriand. On p. 68 Savage quotes Bartram as writing of the Indians that 'as mortal men they stand in no need of European civilisation'.

Native American became increasingly at odds with the country's mood: *Hiawatha* was its death-song. By then, as Roy Harvey Pearce has so convincingly shown, the civilised American's identity was confirmed, not by any likeness, but by difference from the savage Indian.⁸⁷ Racialism, whose beginnings were present in attempts like Jefferson's to classify Native American culture, had developed into a science, an ideology and a political creed. Though this burgeoning radicalism did not in fact end that desire to identify with the Native American, after this, positive evaluations of Native American culture had to be against, not with, the grain of American national life. If in the eighteenth century the natural virtues of the Indian could be invoked as a rebuke to the corrupt regimes of Europe – and already even then, as chapter two will show, could be used as a rebuke to the wrong sort of Americans – by the early twentieth century Native American virtues, by now rather different ones, were evoked as an alternative vision of what America should be, a critique of a modern America corrupted by greed and power.

Secondly, the Enlightenment rhetoric of the Founding Fathers both before and during Knox's term of office consolidated the assumption that Native American culture was at an early stage of human development. This was their major ideological bulwark against the recognition that expansion with honour was a doomed hope. For the Founding Fathers, Native Americans, whilst in that early stage, might exhibit many virtues, they might (possibly) learn to progress beyond it, but as things were, their place was undoubtedly in the past. There was to be no room for that past in modern America. Even before the legitimating narrative of biological evolution, Americans insisted the Indians were backward, and their culture only the vestiges of a way of life doomed to disappear. Gillian Beer suggests that there is a point when 'a successful model in science . . . moves from the status of an "as if" theory to a real description'.⁸⁸ Among educated Americans, certainly in New England, that shift seems to have taken place at this period. That Native American culture was a thing of the past and would soon be gone, as Knox, Jefferson and Adams repeatedly insisted, was taken as fact, even if, as by Knox, it was represented as a melancholy fact. This view, in one way or another, structures every reading of Native American traditions that I shall look at in this book. It was an essential element in American literary nationalism. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the period I deal with in chapter four, this assumption had an enhanced scientific respectability through the anthropological theory of cultural evolution. Paradoxically, it was in these anthropologists' researches into the nature of this savage stage, which by then they took for granted preceded the development of the arts, that white Americans began to

87. Pearce, *Savagism*, passim.

88. Gillian Beer, quoting Barry Barnes in *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, p. 4.

understand something of the Native Americans' cultural richness. In what George Stocking has described as 'the revolt from civilization' in the early twentieth century, it was as 'primitive', purer souls from a past world ('Dawn Man', as Mary Austen liked to call them) that they attracted the interest of artists and intellectuals.⁸⁹ But it was at this period too, that the possibility that their culture could be allowed to continue, indeed the possibility of American cultural plurality was first envisioned, and the first political steps taken to make this possible.

Finally, in the chapters which follow I am going to refer to two elements I have so far mentioned here only in passing, class and gender, though both are in the interstices of this chapter. Revolutionary America was an élitist, patriarchal world, and already the intersections of class and gender hierarchies with those of race are worth noting. First, class. The language in which the twentieth century speaks of eighteenth-century attitudes to the Native American is often given class implications, through the use of the terms Noble or Ignoble Savage, though even the former was a phrase rarely found in the eighteenth century, certainly much more rarely than in present day discussions of the period. Hayden White has argued that in European developments of the concept, the assignation of nobility to the savage worked not to elevate the savage but to denigrate the aristocrat: both were outworn types, due to disappear.⁹⁰ Perhaps White's interpretation is valid for some European contexts, for powerful cultural images such as this have multiple resonances, but in the examples at which I have looked, as I shall argue in the next chapter, ideas of the Native American as natural man have much more to do with promoting an élitist bourgeois image than deflating an aristocratic one. But in Knox's language the class implications are characteristically wavering. I have pointed out that the language in which the élite spoke of the Indian was very different from that of the frontiersmen, for whom the East Coast had considerable scorn, though, of course, great need. General Anthony Wayne, who goes to the frontier and back, perhaps could be said to mediate between them, just as he satisfies the frontier's open and the Congress's covert hunger for land. Anthony Wayne in his letters to Knox from 1792 to 1794 begins by generally speaking of 'Indians', and ends by almost always speaking of 'savages'.⁹¹ As time goes by, the language of savagism tinges Knox's writing just occasionally too. Significantly when the Indians refused to accept benevolence on his terms, they instantly revert in his texts to being 'audacious savages'. But when he suggests that the dire result of the ravages of 'lawless whites' along the frontier is that they unleash the innate violence of the savage, he is

89. See chapter five for a full discussion of this modernist primitivism.

90. See David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts*, London: Pinter: 1992, pp. 35–6. David Murray quotes this in the context of the publication of Native American oratory, where perhaps this argument can be made.

91. Knopf, Wayne, *passim*.

ascribing to the frontiersmen one of the chief 'savage' characteristics, lack of law. Knox himself certainly does not go so far as to compare the Indians favourably with the frontiersmen, but others do. Native Americans would in the future occasionally be evoked to denigrate other groups unacceptable in class terms, not least the significant numbers of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants who began to arrive in the later years of the century. Of course, the change in Knox's language is indicative of what was the more dominant trend. Unlike in Roger Williams' day, 'savage' and 'Indian' were already no longer quite synonymous. 'Indians' was a term which could incorporate the idea that they were nations with rights. 'Savages' were always inferior, and the use of the word helped to ease the evasion of those rights. By the 1830s, the dominant view would be that, as Francis Jennings puts it, 'democracy meant parity among whites'.⁹² It often of course did not even mean that, but it certainly meant, for most white Americans, that Indians were inferior to all of them. Nevertheless, since most of the texts at which I look are written by those at odds, in one way or another, with hegemonic American culture, this uncertainty over the relation of Native Americans to the overall class system will recur.

As for gender, I have only explicitly touched on that so far in connection with the 'hunter' myth, but what that illustrates so clearly is that in late eighteenth-century America, as in Europe generally, masculinity, in Londa Schiebinger's phrase, was 'the measure of social worth'. I shall leave a discussion of the position of women at this period until the next chapter, in which gender issues play a major role, but I want to mention briefly the gendering of the iconography of the Indian. All the examples I have given here have been traditionally masculine and heroic ones, which is of course what one might expect in revolutionary, martial propaganda. There were feminised images: one of Paul Revere's cartoons was of 'The Able Doctor, or America swallowing the Bitter Draught', which appeared in 1774 in the *Royal American Magazine*, in which a young bare-breasted Indian woman is held down by perruqued British doctors, who are tipping the contents of a tea-pot down her throat.⁹³ This image of Indian/American as feminine victim, could, one feels, be double-edged in a number of ways, but presumably it was meant to stir up manly outrage at the humiliation of the colonists' position. Yet, traditionally, depictions of the American continent had been as an Indian woman and these were frequently invoked; by the nineteenth century what was feminised was more often the Indian-free landscape itself, the Virgin Land waiting for its ravisher and master.⁹⁴ I have argued before that gendered language has always been one element in

92. Francis Jennings, *The Founders of America*, p. 310.

93. See Johansen, 'Mohawks, Axes and Taxes'.

94. For the earlier period see Peter Hulme's discussion of such imagery in 'Polytrophic Man: Tropes of Sexuality and Mobility in Early Colonial Discourse' in *Europe and Its Others* Vol.

western colonial discourse, language which naturalised the inferiority of the non-western by analogy with that of womankind, either through the explicit metaphor of sexual possession (whether rape, seduction or marriage), or more obliquely, metonymically, through the way in which, in the language of colonialism, non-Europeans occupy the same symbolic space as women. In this latter case, both are seen as part of nature, not culture, and with the same ambivalence: either they are passive, childlike, unsophisticated, needing leadership and guidance, described in terms of lack (no initiative, no intellectual powers, no perseverance); or, on the other hand, they are outside society, dangerous, treacherous, emotional, inconstant, wild, threatening, fickle, sexually aberrant, irrational, animal, sensual, lascivious, disruptive, evil, unpredictable.⁹⁵ If this derogatory feminisation is less common in the Revolutionary period, it certainly returns. Already the same theories that were beginning to assert a scientific basis for the inferiority of non-whites were similarly claiming a scientific basis for the inferiority of women, mapping the two inferiorities on to one another in a new and more rigid way. But, although the feminisation of the Native Americans was used, particularly in anthropological theory, to insist on their inadequacies, I shall be more concerned in my later chapters with a counter-move, by which American women used the Native American to defend their notion of womanhood, or used their notion of womanhood to defend the culture of the Native American.

What will emerge, however, as the central legacy of this period to those trying to understand Native American literary traditions is that unanswerable crux: how could a country with a lofty and self-conscious mission trample on the rights of others? If nineteenth-century racial theory could more readily be called on to justify dispossession of the Native Americans, white Americans still found their beliefs about themselves led back to self-questioning – for some at any rate, perplexities and misgivings remained. Slavery could eventually be abolished, though, as it becomes ever clearer, racism was another matter. But the destruction of Native Americans and their culture, once achieved, could not be undone. All the texts I shall look at in the rest of this book could be read as desperate attempts at salvage, not just of the Native Americans and their culture, but of the American mission itself.

2 ed. Francis Barker et al., Colchester: University of Essex, and *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean*, London: Methuen, 1986. For the feminisation of the land, which was far from new in the nineteenth century, see Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land*.

95. I raised this in an article in 1985, 'Woman/Indian: the "American" and his Others in *Europe and Its Others*. Some of that article was a first approach to the material I discuss in chapter four.

2

THE BEGINNINGS OF ROMANTIC NATIONALISM

IN SPITE OF Jefferson's praise for Native American 'proofs of genius' in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he makes it clear that he considers their present culture vastly inferior to the American, even if rhetorically he may suggest that it has advantages over the European. He cites, as so often, their treatment of their women: 'the women are submitted to unjust drudgery. This I believe is the case with every barbarous people. With such force is law.'¹ He grants Native Americans only one artistic excellence in their present condition, one which he also connects with their supposed lack of law in quite another, and somewhat contradictory, way:

The principles of their society forbidding all compulsion, they are to be led to duty and to enterprise by personal influence and persuasion. Hence eloquence in council, bravery and address in war, become the foundations of all consequence with them . . . I may challenge the whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, and of any more eminent orator, if Europe has furnished more eminent, to produce a single passage, superior to the speech of Logan, a Mingo chief, to Lord Dunmore, when governor of this state.²

1. Jefferson, *Notes*, p. 185.

2. Jefferson, *Notes*, pp. 187–8. He does grant that they show an interest in the visual arts, but no real artistic products. Pearce (*Savagism*, p. 79) says Logan's speech was widely distributed, in several versions, after 1775, though its genuineness has been questioned: see David Murray, *Forked Tongues*, p. 40. Logan was a victim of the British, so the patriotic American could comfortably feel indignant on his behalf. For a fascinating account of the vicissitudes of Chief Seattle's famous speech, see Rudolf Kaiser, 'Chief Seattle's Speech(es): American Origin and European Reception', in *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*, ed. Arnold Krupat and Brian Swann, Berkeley

In eighteenth-century accounts of Indian life, admiration like Jefferson's for Indian oratory and a high regard for their power over words are widespread.³ This oratory was best known through Indian treaties, which were orally delivered before being translated and recorded, and then often printed for bookshop trade. Benjamin Franklin printed 200 extra copies of the Lancaster Treaty of 1744 for sale in England, and a printer from Williamsburg, William Parks, reprinted it again, with ethnographic notes, for distribution in the colonies. A tobacco factor from Maryland sent a copy to a friend, writing, with a favourite primitivist paradox, 'I have sent enclosed a Treaty lately concluded with the Indians, which will give you some insight into the Genius of those people we brutishly call savages.'⁴

In each of the next two chapters I examine a poem in depth, in each case a poem drawing on Indian traditions which their authors feel 'give . . . some insight into the Genius of those people . . . brutishly call[ed] savages'. Each of these poems sets out to be an American epic of origin; each is charged with the tensions of its contemporary society, which the poet hopes the epic narrative will resolve. Chapter three will look at Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*; this chapter will consider a much less well-known poem, although one written by the best-known American woman poet of her day, *Ouâbi: or the Virtues of Nature*.⁵ Before I address that poem directly, I want to look at the assumptions about Native American literary traditions that were present in the early days of the United States.

Oratory was the only Native American literary form generally available in translation to Europeans, and the idea of the cohesive force of rhetoric for a democratic society must have had special political resonances in the early United States. The actual subject matter of these speeches and treaties, however, often took the form of reproaches against the injustices of the white, and David Murray has argued that their aestheticisation had the effect of distancing their own political implications. These texts, produced for a white readership who came to them with well-established expectations, are culturally 'framed', Murray suggests, in such a way that 'what they say is actually less important than the fact and manner of their saying it'.⁶ Their melancholy

and London: University of California Press, 1987. On the criticisms of Native Americans' treatment of women, see Lucy Maddox, 'Bearing the Burden: Perceptions of Native American Women at Work', *Women: a Cultural Review*, 2/3, Winter 1991.

3. The theory Jefferson puts forward of its development can be found elsewhere. See, for example, Colden, *History*, p. 14, who writes that the development of oratory 'is ever the consequence of a perfect Republican government. Where no single Person has power to compel, the Art of Persuasion always must prevail.'
4. Lawrence C. Wroth, 'The Indian Treaty as Literature' (1928) in Abraham Chapman (ed.), *Literature of the American Indians: Views and Interpretations*, New York and Scarborough, Ontario: New American Library, 1975, p. 325.
5. Sarah Wentworth Morton, *Ouâbi: or the Virtues of Nature*, Boston: Thomas & Andrews, 1790, hereafter referred to in text as OVN.
6. See Murray, *Forked Tongues*, p. 36. He continues: 'Even as the Indians nobly and eloquently complained, that very nobility and eloquence was confirming the inevitability

– and Jefferson had picked a particularly poignant example in Logan – helped to fix them in an overall narrative of the Native Americans' sad, but inevitable disappearance, the narrative so wistfully evoked by Henry Knox.

Yet travellers in eighteenth-century America were fascinated by the existence of other Native American artistic forms. Indian love of song, music and dance is commented on recurrently in travels and histories, though in varied ways. Jonathan Carver says the Indian use of language is 'extremely poetical and pleasing', but describes a knife dance with some horror: 'it is impossible to consider them in any other light than that of demons'.⁷ In Cadwallader Colden's *History of the Five Nations*, he describes Indian rites very differently:

I have sometimes persuaded some of their young Indians to act these dances, for our diversion, and to show us the manner of them: and even, on these occasions, they have worked themselves to such a pitch, that they had make all present uneasy. Is it not probable, that such designs as these have given the first rise to tragedy?⁸

The idea that Colden expresses here, that in Indian song and dance can be seen the origins of civilised literary art, was to become common in later eighteenth-century discussion of the Indian. A new enthusiasm for primitive poetry was sweeping Europe; its influence was soon to be felt in North America. By the middle of the eighteenth century, neo-classical aesthetic ideals of classical order were questioned, first in Britain and then elsewhere, by a new belief in the uncorrupted vigour and emotional strength of primitive verse.⁹ 'Irregular and unpolished'¹⁰ though it might be, primitive poetry was, according to this new aesthetic, more potent and heart-felt, more in touch and in tune with the true nature of humankind than fashionably ordered verses. Augustan Rome and Periclean Athens lost their unquestioned supremacy. Homer's mythopoeic power challenged Virgil's art. Shakespeare and Spenser were admired for their primitive genius. Following the publication in the 1760s of Macpherson's Ossian poems, which became famous throughout Europe, interest escalated in traditional folk and oral poetry.¹¹

of their disappearance.' Pearce (*Savagism*, p. 79) also suggests that admiration for this oratory is equivocal, because the savage is seen as working through emotion, not reason. He quotes a remark from the 1790s: 'what civilised nations enforce upon their subjects by compulsory measures, they effect by their eloquence'.

7. Jonathan Carver, *Travels to the Interior Parts of America*, (1778–89), quoted Bissell, *American Indian*, p. 171.
8. Colden, *History*, p. 7.
9. See Lois Whitney, 'English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origin', *Modern Philology*, Vol. 21:4, 1924. See also M.H. Abrams' brief but useful account in *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953), Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 78–84.
10. Hugh Blair, *Dr Blair's Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian*, in *The Poems of Ossian*, translated by James Macpherson, London: H.G. Bohn, 1844, pp. 50–51.
11. The first two books of these poems that James Macpherson published were: *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland*, Edinburgh: Hamilton and Balfour, 1760 and *Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem . . . Translated from the Galic Language*, London: Becket and De Hondt, 1762.

Evan Evans' *Some Specimens of Antient Welsh Poetry* (which influenced Gray and Blake) appeared in 1763, and Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (which influenced Wordsworth, Coleridge and many others), in 1765.¹² Like the noble savage, primitive poetry was an important element in the European pre-Romantic cult of sensibility, and in Romanticism itself.

This cult had a powerful effect on American attitudes to Indian poetry, but Indian poetry was also – though this has scarcely been noticed – an important source for the new enthusiasm. Lois Whitney suggests that the cult of primitive poetry goes back to the discovery of the tradition of poets in the New World.¹³ The idea of the 'bon sauvage' as a poet appears in Montaigne, and the descriptions of Indian music and poetry in early travel literature had aroused much interest in Europe. Homer and the Hebrew prophets were seen in a new light as bards, like the Indian poets that Peter Martyr and Philip Sidney describe performing their *Areitōs* or *Arentos*.¹⁴ In addition, I would argue that the very language of Ossian may also have been influenced by (translated) Native American models. Whitney has suggested that the Scottish rhetorician, Hugh Blair, did not, as it used to be thought, build his highly influential views on primitive poetry on his knowledge of Ossian, but that James Macpherson, his pupil and protégé, wrote his Ossian poems in accordance with Blair's ideas of primitive poetry. As she puts it, 'the theories of primitive poetry instead of being formed on the basis of Ossian actually preceded Ossian'.¹⁵

Macpherson must have first met the enthusiasm for primitive poetry while a student at the University of Aberdeen in the early 1750s, where one of the leading figures was Thomas Blackwell, whose popular and influential *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735) was one of the earliest texts to expound the new aesthetics, being a primitivist account of Homer as an impoverished, strolling bard.¹⁶ However, as John Dwyer

12. According to Roger Lonsdale, Gray had seen some of the Evans translations (though into Latin) in manuscript in 1760. See *Thomas Gray and William Collins: Poetical Works*, ed. Roger Lonsdale, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 7 and 69. Gray's own poem 'The Bard' (*ibid.*, pp. 52–58) may well have influenced Macpherson.

13. Whitney, 'Primitivistic Theories', pp. 369–77.

14. Robert Eden's 1585 translation of *The Decades of Peter Martyr*, quoted Whitney, 'Primitivistic Theories', p. 376 and Sidney, *Defence*.

15. Whitney, 'Primitivistic Theories', pp. 346 and 348; Robert Essick argues similarly in *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, p. 73, that 'we can find in the prose poems of Ossian some of the stylistic features that were in part created by Macpherson in response to, and in part helped to shape the primitivist and aesthetic theories of language'. Macpherson had written the very first of his Ossian fragments before he first met Blair, but as Blair was already developing his ideas, and Macpherson knew of them, that does not invalidate Whitney's point.

16. Thomas Blackwell, *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1757) Menston, Yorks: Scholar Press, 1972. Thomas Blackwell influenced both Hamann and Herder. See Lois Whitney, 'Thomas Blackwell: a Disciple of Shaftesbury', *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 5:4, 1926. Fiona Stafford, in *The Sublime Savage: James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988 pp. 28–36 and Robert Crawford, in *Devolving English Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 19, emphasise the role of Thomas Blackwell.

persuasively argues in 'The Melancholy Savage', 'although Blackwell must 'certainly have contributed to the young man's desire to create a distinctly Scottish epic . . . it was Hugh Blair who played the role of literary mentor' during the crucial years of 1759–60.¹⁷ In his *Critical Dissertation on the Works of Ossian* (1763), and in his *Lectures on Rhetoric* – first given in 1759, collected and published in 1783 but circulated in manuscript by enthusiastic students for over twenty years before that – Blair develops his ideas about the nature of primitive poetry through Native American examples.¹⁸ Following ideas put forward by Blackwell, he argues that 'Poetry is more ancient than Prose . . . The style of all Language must have been originally poetical: strongly tinged with that enthusiasm, and that descriptive metaphorical expression, which distinguishes Poetry.'¹⁹ He uses as illustration a treaty from Colden's *History*, which begins:

We are happy in having buried under ground the red axe, that has often been dyed with the blood of our brethren. Now, in this sort, we inter the axe, and plant the tree of Peace. We plant a tree, whose top will reach the Sun; and its branches spread abroad, so that it shall be seen afar off. May its growth never be stifled and choked: but may it shade both your country and ours with its leaves.²⁰

The cadences of Ossian's poetic nature-freighted prose have undoubted affinities with this, though they must also be influenced by Biblical prose – newly recognised as poetry – and Macpherson's knowledge of Celtic poetry itself.²¹ Blair draws on Colden again to develop his arguments about the

17. John Dwyer, 'The Melancholy Savage', in *Ossian Revisited*, ed. Howard Gaskill, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991, pp. 175–76.

18. Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), London: T. Cadell, 1825. I have based my argument here on Blair, in the first instance because he is the most likely direct influence on Macpherson, and in the second, for my later argument, because of Blair's extensive influence in the United States. However in the many studies of primitive language and poetry that appeared in the second half of the eighteenth century, references to Indian examples are frequent. Whitney in 'Primitivistic Theories' mentions their occurrence in works by John Brown, Bolingbroke, Robert Wood and Lord Monboddo (pp. 360, 368–9, 377). Indian examples are also referred to in Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Language* and in Herder's *On the Origin of Language*, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann G. Herder, *On the Origin of Language*, ed. and trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, and in Herder's *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. Thomas Churchill, London: J. Johnston, 1800, in which Herder quotes, among others, Adair, Carver, Colden, Timberlake, Jean de Léry, and deconstructs William Robertson. There is a reference to 'Indians' in Thomas Blackwell's *Enquiry into the Life of Homer*, p. 43, although it is ambiguous: it could refer to East Indians. A complete study is needed.

19. Blair, *Lectures*, p. 72. This idea is similar, of course to Vico's theory of the development of language, but Vico's work was not known in Britain at that time, according to Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1976, pp. xix–xx.

20. Blair, *Lectures*, p. 72.

21. Macpherson must have known of Robert Lowth's primitivist account of Hebrew poetry in *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, 1753, which might have influenced his choice of a prose translation. In addition, as Dwyer writes, 'It is important to remember that Macpherson drew part of his inspiration from genuine Scottish and Irish popular and bardic literature.' ('Melancholy Savage', p. 165). See also the

figurative use of language in another lecture. Colden, himself influenced by Blackwell's notion that primitive languages depend on few words used highly imagistically, seems unusually sensitive for his day to the problems of translation. He had written:

I suspect our interpreters have not done Justice to *Indian Eloquence*. For the Indians having but few words, and few complex Ideas, use many Metaphors in their Discourse, which interpreted by an unskilful Tongue, may appear, and strike our Imagination faintly, but under the Pen of a skilful Representative, might strongly move our Passions by their lively images. I have heard an Indian Sachem speak with much Vivacity and Elocution, so that the Speaker pleased and moved the Auditors with the manner of delivery of his Discourse.²²

Blair takes this up, combining it with the idea that 'the savage tribes' are prone 'to wonder and astonishment', argued both by Thomas Blackwell and by Burke in his treatise on the Sublime.²³

All Languages are most figurative in their early state . . . Language is then most barren; the stock of proper names which have been invented for things is small; and at the same time, imagination exerts great influence over the conceptions of men, and their method of uttering them; so that, both from necessity and from choice, their Speech will, at that period, abound in Tropes. For the Savage tribes of men are much given to wonder and astonishment. Every new object surprises, terrifies, and makes a strong impression on their mind; they are governed by imagination and passion more than reason; and of course, their speech must be deeply tinged by their genius. In fact, we find, that this is the character of the American and Indian Languages; bold, picturesque, and metaphorical; full of strong allusions to sensible qualities, and to such objects as struck them most in their wild and solitary life. An Indian chief makes an harangue to his tribe, in a style full of stronger metaphors than an European would use in a epic poem.²⁴

Blair goes on to suggest that Indian love of poetry and music shows the primal and universal nature of the arts:

It is a great error to imagine, that Poetry and Music are Arts which belong only to polished nations. They have their foundation in the nature of man, and belong to all nations, and to all ages. . . . In order to explore the rise of Poetry, we must

discussion of the influence of the Gaelic tradition on Macpherson in Donald E. Meek, 'The Gaelic ballads of Scotland: Creativity and Adaptation', in Gaskill (ed.) *Ossian Revisited*, pp. 19–48.

22. Colden, *History*, p. xiii.

23. Blackwell, *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*, p. 42; Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. James Boulton, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987 (rev. ed.), p. 176 (see p. xxx for Burke's influence on Blair).

24. Blair, *Lectures*, p. 177. I cannot be sure why Blair here refers to 'American and Indian languages'. This passage from his lectures is almost identical to an earlier passage in the *Critical Dissertation*, pp. 50–51, where he speaks not of an 'Indian' chief, but of an 'American' chief. That change ('American' pre- and 'Indian' post-Independence) is exactly what one would expect. Although Blair's description of Native American languages was deeply influential in the States, one contemporary exception to this view of Indian languages as concrete and limited was, Murray points out, Jonathan Edwards' son, who grew up effectively bilingual while his father was ministering to the Indians at Stockbridge, later publishing an account of the Muhhekaneew language in 1787 (Murray, *Forked Tongues*, p.14).

have recourse to the deserts and the wilds; we must go back to the age of hunters and of shepherds . . . It is chiefly in America, that we have had the opportunity of being made acquainted with men in their savage state. We learn from the particular and concurring accounts of Travellers, that, among all the nations of that vast continent, especially among the Northern Tribes, with whom we have had most intercourse, music and song are, at all their meetings, carried on with an incredible degree of enthusiasm; that the chiefs of the Tribe are those who signalise themselves most on such occasions; that it is in songs they celebrate their religious rites; that, by these, they lament their public and private calamities, the death of friends, or the loss of warriors; express their joy on their victories; celebrate the great actions of their nation, and their heroes; excite each other to perform great exploits in war, or to suffer death and torments with unshaken constancy.²⁵

Blair notes that one of the effects of the development of more civilised societies is not just that poetry becomes a written form but that it is separated from the other arts, for him with greatest loss from music, which is always present in the Indian forms. This sense of the lost wholeness of language and the arts is an important element in pre-Romantic and Romantic thought, as Robert Essick shows in his book on Blake, and remains a recurrent theme in responses to Native American culture, reviving strongly in the early twentieth century.²⁶ The poetry of civilised people achieves greater formal regularity, but, Blair adds:

Poetry . . . in its ancient original condition, was perhaps more vigorous than it is in its modern state. It included then, the whole burst of the human mind; the whole exertion of its imaginative faculties. It spoke then the language of passion, and no other; for to passion it owed its birth. Prompted and inspired by objects which to him seemed great, by events which interested his country or his friends, the early Bard arose and sung. He sung indeed in wild and disorderly strains; but they were the native effusions of his heart; they were the ardent conceptions of admiration or resentment, of sorrow or friendship, which he poured forth. It is no wonder, therefore, that in the rude and artless strain of the first Poetry of all nations, we should often find somewhat that captivates and transports the mind. In after ages, when Poetry became a regular art, studied for reputation and for gain, Authors began to affect what they did not feel.²⁷

Blair's lectures were the single most popular work of literary criticism in the States from the time of their publication until the mid-nineteenth century.

25. Blair, *Lectures*, pp. 505–06.

26. This idea of the lost wholeness of the arts was argued particularly influentially by John Brown, *Dissertation on the Rise, Unions and Power, the Progressions, Separations, and Corruptions of Poetry and Music* (1763): see Essick, *Blake and the Language of Adam* and James Anthony Wittreich, 'Painted Prophecy: the Tradition of Blake's Illuminated Books' in *Blake in His Time*, ed. Robert Essick and Donald Pearce, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978. It appears again in American modernist primitivism, especially in Mary Austin's writing: see chapter five. The idea that early poetry must have been oral is discussed frequently from Blackwell (1735) onwards. It is this association in the primitivist theory of language between orality and authenticity which is critiqued by Jacques Derrida in its Rousseauesque expression: see *Of Grammatology* (1967) trans. Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

27. Blair, *Lectures*, pp. 511–12.

(They were a set text at Yale by 1785, and at Harvard by 1788.)²⁸ If Blair's knowledge of Indian oratory and love of song feeds into his construction of the nature of primitive poetry, there is also no doubt that his work helped to foster the widespread sense among literary Americans of the poetic nature of Indian language and culture, and perhaps even more influentially the sense of an authenticity and wholeness in their traditions that modern writing lacked. That there were no Ossian-like 'discoveries' of Native American poetry was partly due to the inadequate knowledge of Indian languages at that period; by the time these languages were becoming better known, the climate of opinion had changed to one much less sympathetic. The controversy around *Hiawatha's* origins is an example of the change. Judging from Blair's writings, he would have regarded the Finnish oral poetry that formed the *Kalevala* and the Algonkin myths and songs collected by Schoolcraft as poetic productions of similar states of cultural development. By the mid-nineteenth century the Finnish runes are presumed, because European, to be infinitely superior.

But although Blair's views encouraged for a while a more sympathetic attitude toward Native American culture, they embodied two assumptions which would eventually work against the Indians. One was that Indian society represents the earliest form of culture: it was 'primitive' in the same way as earlier forms of European society were 'primitive'. To Blair, Homer, Ossian, American Indian and ancient Oriental poetry are all comparable forms: 'Mankind never resemble each other, so much as they do in beginnings of society'.²⁹ Blair, like so many Enlightenment thinkers, sees those 'in the beginnings of society' as closer to the truth of nature. In their poems we may read 'the history of the human imagination and passion . . . before those refinements of society had taken place, which enlarge indeed and diversify the transactions, but disguise the manners of mankind'.³⁰ Like Vico (though it is unlikely Blair had read him), he believes that although the modern age has gained in 'accuracy' and 'understanding', imaginatively it has lost. Yet that loss is part of growing up:

Human nature is pruned according to method and to rule. . . . The progress of the world in this respect resembles the progress of age in man. The powers of the imagination are most vigorous and predominant in youth; those of the understanding ripen more slowly, and often attain not to their maturity till the imagination begins to flag. Hence poetry, which is the child of the imagination, is frequently most glowing and animated in the first ages of society. As the ideas of our youth are remembered with a peculiar pleasure on account of their loveliness and vivacity, so the most ancient poems have often proved the greatest favourites of nations.³¹

28. See William Charvat, *The Origins of American Critical Thought 1810–1835*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936, pp. 30–31. Blair's *Lectures* appeared in fifty-three editions in the USA before 1835.

29. Blair, *Lectures*, p. 509.

30. Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 49.

31. Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 51.

Even with Blair's warm commendation, it is impossible not to realise that his view implies that modern man, even if world weary, is more adult and knowing than the Indian. Stripped of Blair's romanticism, a similar structuring of the relationship of the Indian to 'modern man' would assume that the Indians compared with civilised races were childish, lacking in understanding and backward. Even Blair, Robert Crawford insists, was in the end on the side of 'improvement', just like the Founding Fathers, whose political, commendatory identification of the Native Americans with Natural Man made possible those Native Americans' later designation as a lower, backward race.

It has been argued (most notably in recent years by Foucault) that the eighteenth century had as its most powerful epistemological paradigm a synchronic scheme of systematisation and classification, not, as in the nineteenth century, a diachronic paradigm of evolution and historical development.³² That diachronic narrative, however, had come into being during the eighteenth century. Lovejoy pointed out in the 1920s that the early eighteenth century had already 'temporalised' the Chain of Being. Ronald Meek has shown the central importance of developmental theories in the Scottish Enlightenment, of which Blair was part.³³ As Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova put it, for the Enlightenment, 'the crucial issue was history'.³⁴ Blair himself makes use of their 'four stages' hypothesis of human development. However, there is a difference: for Blair, as for many Enlightenment figures, the search for origins was certainly central, but origins conceived largely in terms of the true nature within, not the earlier undeveloped foetal form.³⁵ For Blair, primitive poetry is the origin of modern poetry primarily in the sense that it is the heart of poetry, or, 'poetry of the heart'. All the same, Blair exemplifies the beginning of the process, which I pointed to in my introduction, of the collapsing of time and place in anthropological thought, so that the geographically other becomes the temporal other, a fossil left over from an earlier time. As I have already argued in reference to Jefferson, the eighteenth-century paradigm of ordered co-existence is shot through with images and ideas that would form the evolutionary and racist patterns of nineteenth-century thought. Primitivism

32. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (1966) trans. Alan Sheridan, London: Tavostock, 1970 and also Chauncey Brewster Tinker, *Nature's Simple Plan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1922 for the earlier version of the same view. For the contrary view, see Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: a Study in the History of an Idea*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1936.

33. Ronald I. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

34. Hulme and Jordanova, *The Enlightenment and its Shadows*, p. 9.

35. This is a version of the ambiguity which has been much debated in the case of Rousseau's developmental scheme, which he says is looking at a state of nature which 'perhaps never existed' (*Discourse on Inequality*, p. 44). See for example Jay Bernstein, who sees this scheme as 'a phenomenology of mind' ('Difficult Difference: Rousseau's Fictions of Identity' in Hulme and Jordanova, *The Enlightenment and its Shadows*).

in the eighteenth century could contribute to either radical and conservative discourses; it could be libertarian, or it could offer, as in the response to Indian oratory, a pleasantly melancholy evasion of political injustice. By the nineteenth century, the idea of the primitive would be much more powerfully a rhetorical tool of colonialisation. Blair's idea that the primitive stage of society represented the childhood of the race would become a justification for exploitation and expropriation.

Blair's second assumption, again widespread in eighteenth-century primitivism, that primitive culture was closely associated with the natural world, and was indeed closer to nature than to culture, could again be transformed from a virtue to a defect, as it always had been in the Puritan tradition.³⁶ By the mid-nineteenth century, the idea of Indian closeness to the natural world was another confirmation that Indians were backward failures in the evolutionary process, and must disappear along with the buffalo and the forest from whom they could scarcely be distinguished. When nature was red in tooth and claw, it was better to be white and civilised.

The terms of Blair's praise of primitive verse, it should also be noted, do not allow for any formal complexity or subtlety. Although he does not assume it is merely emotional outpouring – he recognises the use of poetic language and figures – he takes it for granted that its virtues will be those of feeling, not of form. The power of this idea was to persist in many instances for two hundred years.

Primitivism in the late eighteenth century, one could argue, played its central ideological role in the period's cultural and political bourgeois revolutions; in the nineteenth century it fed into nationalism and the project of empire-building.³⁷ In the States, bourgeois revolution, nationalism, and a new surge of colonialism all came into being simultaneously as they broke with their role as colony. But for the meantime, European primitivism and its search for oral traditions served the first two rather than the third, and aroused a new interest, at any rate among the east-coast intellectual élite, in the idea of Indian poetry and song in the young United States. The language of Native American oratory was now praised in terms which owed much to the Ossianic cult, and expressions like 'eloquent

36. Sheehan discusses the close association of the Indian and nature in the Edenic imagery associated with the young republic: 'rather than standing aside from his surroundings, as did civilised man, the noble savage blended into the surface of paradise' (*Seeds*, p. 90). However here, as throughout his book, he uses the idea of the noble savage vaguely and all-inclusively. The philanthropists he discusses sometimes use a primitivist rhetoric, but for much more of the time they are not concerned with the notion of the noble savage, but with the idea that the Indian was teachable, a much more limited commendation.

37. Even in the eighteenth century, Robert Crawford has argued, primitivism in Scotland worked in many ways in the service of the English colonisers. There is clearly some truth in this, though overall I would argue its function is more ambiguously over-determined than Crawford suggests. See Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, passim.

figurative language . . . the strength and dignity of the language of Nature' appear in discussions of Indian use of language.³⁸ The influence of this pre-Romantic primitivism did not die away till the mid-nineteenth century, and I will look at it further in the next chapter.

On both sides of the Atlantic poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and Freneau among others) wrote poems not just about Native Americans, but poems presented as Indian songs.³⁹ Unlike Ossian or the other Scottish and Welsh poems, these generally did not have even putative translations behind them. In North America very little verse was recorded by the English colonists before the nineteenth century, though some was taken down in French by the Jesuits in their *Relations*.⁴⁰ Indian songs had to be invented. But it was known that there existed a strikingly exotic genre of Indian poetry, never heard of in European tradition, the death-song, which was sung by warriors when faced by death in battle or from torture.⁴¹ One, written in amazingly bad doggerel, appeared in the first volume of *The American Museum* in 1787: in spite of (perhaps because of) its rollicking anapaests it became immensely popular. Another, slightly more sophisticated, appeared in it ascribed to Philip Freneau in 1788.⁴² Yet another appeared in 1790, in the long poem *Ouâbi*, which although a consciously elegant production, with only five stanzas of its four cantos given to the death-song, was deeply influenced by the new primitivistic appreciation of the poetic richness to be found away from classical and metropolitan traditions.

Sarah Morton and the Ethnographic Imagination

Ouâbi: or the Virtues of Nature. An Indian Tale. In Four Cantos was published in Boston in 1790. It appeared under the name of Philenia, the pseudonym of Sarah Wentworth Morton, the wife of an up-and-coming Boston barrister and politician, Perez Morton, and a friend of Henry Knox and other leading

38. Sheehan, *Seeds*, p. 108.

39. See Bissell, *American Indian* and Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *The Noble Savage: a Study in Romantic Naturalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1928. The song Coleridge wrote first under the name of 'The Wild Indian's Love Chant', he later gave a Circassian setting, and called it 'Lewti', a little exemplum of the change in racial attitude I shall discuss in chapter three.

40. Bissell mentions a very few translations. Krupat in *The Voice in the Margin*, p. 103, quotes the translation of a Cherokee poem from Lt. Timberlake's *Memoirs of his Travels, 1756–65*.

41. See Frank E. Farley, 'The Dying Indian' in *Kittredge Anniversary Papers*, Boston, 1913 for the death-songs. Fairchild says they appear to have become well-known in England by about the 1760s.

42. *The American Museum or Repository of Ancient and Modern Fugitive Pieces*, Vol. 1, 1787, p. 77 and Vol. 5, 1788, p. 190. Fairchild seems to have been confused, or to repeat a previous confusion, about the authorship of the first poem, which he misreads as attributed to Freneau (p. 461).

political figures.⁴³ As 'Philenia' she became the best-known woman poet of her generation in the States. When the first anthology of American poetry was published in 1793, she was the only woman to appear, contributing nine out of its sixty-five poems. (This anthology includes one 'Indian' poem, by William Dunlap, which manages to include *both* the story of Chief Logan *and* a death-song.)⁴⁴ Sarah Morton was in the vanguard of contemporary ideas. Her husband was one of the most progressive of the younger revolutionaries, and much abused for his 'Jacobin' views later in the 1790s. Her biographers describe her as widely read and well informed, which her writing bears out, although she is clearly not in the same league as a polymath like Jefferson, and is self-consciously apologetic for the defects of her female education.⁴⁵ She and her husband were advocates of the then shocking proposal of a theatre for Boston, and warmly supported humanitarian causes, including abolition. One of the poems for which she was best known in her lifetime was 'The African Chief', an attack on the slave trade. It was later much admired by John Greenleaf Whittier, and sixty years later was still, according to the *North American Review*, as familiar as a nursery rhyme.⁴⁶ She believed in religious tolerance, becoming a Unitarian but still writing appreciatively of Episcopalian, Roman Catholic and Quaker devotion.⁴⁷ So it is not surprising that her views of Indians are liberal and sympathetic.

Ouābi is a romantic story of noble and exemplary Indians, but Sarah Morton's poem is significant for the seriousness of its attempt to weave elements of Indian culture into the poem, taken from first-hand reports she had read. She details (with notes) their clothes, food, rituals, dances, war customs and, as I have mentioned, her own version of a death-song. The poem is also self-consciously nationalistic: she has 'attempt[ed] a subject

43. The information on Sarah Morton's life comes from Emily Pendleton and Milton Ellis, *The Life and Works of Sarah Wentworth Morton, 1759–1846*, Orono, Maine: Maine University Press, 1931, the introduction by William S. Kable to *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) by William Hill Brown, Ohio State University Press, 1969, and the introduction by William Botoroff to Sarah Wentworth Morton, *My Mind and Its Thoughts, in Sketches, Fragments, and Essays* (1823), New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975, hereafter referred to in the text as MMT.

44. Elihu Hubbard Smith (ed.), *American Poems* (1793), Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1966, with introduction by William K. Botoroff.

45. See her introduction to *Ouābi* quoted below. For problems of women's education, see Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, New York: Knopf, 1984, pp. 88–94. In 1789, less than half the women in Massachusetts were minimally literate, and public concern was bringing about the opening of many new girls' schools.

46. *North American Review*, Vol. 69, 1849, p. 418. In an article on 'The Female Poets of America', the author writes of 'Mrs Morton, who ranked 50 years ago among the first writers of this country, and whose poem "The African Chief" is as familiar as our nursery rhymes'.

47. Pendleton and Ellis decide she remained an Episcopalian at heart, but their only evidence is that at the very end of her life when she returned to her childhood home at Braintree after her husband's death, she rejoined the Episcopal Church that she had belonged to in her youth.

wholly American' which she hopes will 'entitle her to the partial eye of a patriot' (OVN:viii). 'From an idea of being original,' she wrote in her introduction, 'I was induced to undertake the following tale. The manners and customs of the ABORIGINES of North America are so limited and simple that they have scarcely engaged the attention of the Philosopher or the Poet' (OVN:v). In one sense she was wrong about the philosophers, certainly those of the Scottish Enlightenment, though, as Paul Honigsheim has argued, many other philosophers who used the example of the American Indian in their systems did so in great ignorance of their actual 'manners and customs'.⁴⁸ As for the poets, numerous Indian poems were published in the second half of the eighteenth century. According to Mary Bowden, in the eighteenth century even 'the poetry corners of the newspapers often included poems on dying Indians, various laments and Indian prophecies'.⁴⁹ But these were usually brief lyrics: the kind of extended narrative poem on an Indian subject which included ethnographic details does seem to be something new.

What Morton wants to do here is something very comparable to what Scott was to do fifteen years later for the Scottish past. His preface note to 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' (1805) begins: 'The Poem now offered to the Public is intended to illustrate the customs and manners, which anciently prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland.'⁵⁰ I am not of course suggesting any influence on Scott, though their poetics had similar lineages, only that both poems are representative of a new kind of imagination, which I called in my introduction ethnographic imagination.⁵¹ The change in Sarah Morton's documented account of Indian life from earlier Golden Age or pastoralist pictures is similar to the change in Scott's historicising detail from the Gothic pastiche of someone like Ann Radcliffe, whose Emily drinks anachronistic cups of coffee in the mediaeval setting of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Both Scott and Morton's historical/ethnographic accuracy is questionable, but that is another matter: accuracy is their aim, whether or not they achieve it. Scott's passage to the historical novels for which he is best known today was through primitive poetry. As an adolescent Scott had read with fascination first Percy's *Reliques*, then Evans' Welsh poems

48. See Meek, *Social Science*, for the interest of the Scottish Enlightenment, and also Paul Honigsheim, 'American Indian'. I almost wonder if Sarah Morton was thinking of the words of William Robertson, 'Almost two centuries elapsed after the discovery of America . . . before the manners of its inhabitants attracted in any considerable degree, the attention of philosophers', quoted Meek, *Social Science*, pp. 141–2. However, her attitude is very different from his.

49. Mary W. Bowden, *Philip Freneau*, Boston: Twayne, 1976, p. 160.

50. Walter Scott, *The Poetical Works*, ed. William Michael Rossetti, London: Moxon, n.d., p. 1.

51. Scott did influence later American literary accounts of Indians, most notably Cooper and Longfellow: Sarah Morton refers to him later in her life as 'the great Sir Walter'. Robert Crawford, incidentally, mentions that, as a child, one of Scott's favourite tales was the story of a white man who went to live with the American Indians: *Devolving English Literature*, p. 114.

and Herd's Scottish ballads. He read essays to the Edinburgh Speculative Society in 1792–93 'On the Manners and Customs of the Northern Nations', 'The Origin of Scandinavian Mythology' and 'On the Authenticity of Ossian's Poems'.⁵² His first successful publication, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders*, in 1802, though it contained some of his own imitations of ballads, was largely a collection of hitherto unpublished traditional poems. 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' is, as its name suggests, a poem written as if by a primitive poet, but not one placed in a vague past. He is given a specified culture with its own 'customs and manners'. Scott is generally described as possessing an historical imagination, which of course is true. But that could mean many things – sense of origins, sense of traditions, sense of political change. I would argue that Scott thinks of history ethnographically; he realises that the past, as L.P. Hartley put it, is another country, and they do things differently there. As Robert Crawford puts it, there is an 'anthropological dimension in Scott's thought'.⁵³ Scott is writing as Thomas Warton had suggested, in 1762, one must read an earlier poet (in that case, Spenser):

In reading the works of a poet who lived in a remote age, it is necessary that we should look back upon the customs and manners which prevailed in that age. We should endeavour to place ourselves in the writer's situation and circumstances. Hence we shall become better enabled to discover, how his turn of thinking, and manner of composing, were influenced by familiar appearances and established objects which are utterly different from those with which we are at present surrounded.⁵⁴

This desire to give otherness in its appropriate setting is implicit too in the development of the picturesque, to which I shall later return. But I first want to point out one other similarity between Scott and Morton. Sarah Morton used as the poem's epigraph a quotation from *The Faerie Queen*: 'Fierce Wars and Faithful Loves shall moralise my Song'. Scott continues his prefatory note to the 'Lay' with the sentence: 'The inhabitants, living in a state partly pastoral and partly warlike, and combining habits of constant depredation with the influence of a rude spirit of chivalry, were often engaged in scenes highly susceptible of poetical ornament.' This particular kind of primitivism has to be distinguished from the Golden Age version in

52. Scott's attitude to these poems was always sceptical, according to Crawford, and he later rejected the authenticity of these poems, possibly because of his own researches, possibly because he saw them as rivals. See Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: the Highland Tradition of Scotland' in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 18.

53. Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 112, but see his whole discussion of Scott, pp. 111–34. Geertz refers to this Hartley quotation, commenting that the terms cannot be reversed, but I would argue that, in eighteenth-century primitivism and nineteenth-century cultural evolution, they are reversed all the time. If he had said they *should* not be, he might have been on safer ground. See Clifford Geertz, 'History and Anthropology', *New Literary History*, No. 21, 1990.

54. Thomas Warton, quoted Robert S. Mayo, *Herder and the Beginnings of Comparative Literature*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1969.

which there were no wars and no arms. In psychoanalytic terms this is the return of the Enlightenment's repressed, and is clearly related to Gothic violence. Where primitivism differs from either the Gothic or the usual literature of sensibility is that there is no simple division between good and bad. Fierceness and tenderness co-exist. Marilyn Butler suggests that the childlike simplicity of *Songs of Innocence* shows the influence of primitivism on Blake, but I would argue that *Songs of Experience* marks even more the taking into romanticism of this primitivist fusion of energy and feeling.⁵⁵ The Byronic hero is its heir.

This mixture was an important part of the appeal of the Ossian poems, which very much mingle 'fierce wars and faithful loves'. Hugh Blair, in his *Critical Dissertation on the Ossian Poems*, which Sarah Morton had almost certainly read, described the poems thus:

The two characteristics of Ossian's poetry are, tenderness and sublimity. It breathes nothing of the gay and cheerful kind; an air of solemnity and seriousness is diffused over the whole. Ossian . . . moves perpetually in the high region of the grand and the pathetic . . . The events recorded are all serious and grave; the scenery throughout, wild and romantic. The extended heath by the sea-shore; the mountain shaded with mist; the torrent rushing through a solitary valley; the scattered oaks, and the tombs of warriors overgrown with moss; all produce a solemn attention in the mind, and prepare it for great and extraordinary events. We find not in Ossian an imagination that sports itself; and dresses out gay trifles to please the fancy. His poetry, more than perhaps that of any other writer, deserves to be styled, *The poetry of the heart*. It is a heart penetrated with noble sentiments, and with sublime and tender passions; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itself forth.⁵⁶

It is this 'sublime and tender' tone that *Ouābi* tries to capture. Sarah Morton's story is not told by an Indian bard: though she calls it an Indian Tale, it is a tale about Indians, not one they tell.⁵⁷ But in other respects she too is searching for this 'poetry of the heart' in its wild, untrammelled setting. The beginning of her poem, rejecting both civilisation and pastoralism, evokes the remote wilderness:

'Tis not the court, in dazzling splendour gay,
Where soft luxuriance spreads her silken arms,
Where gairish fancy leads the soul astray,
And languid nature mourns her slighted charms:

55. Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760–1830*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 41. I owe a debt of gratitude to Marilyn Butler, as it was she who made me realise that eighteenth-century theories of primitive poetry could be important to this book, when she gave a lecture on Blake and the French Revolution in which she talked about the radical potential of these theories for Blake.

56. Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 68. Cf. David Herd's introduction to *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs, Homeric Ballads, etc* (1776), Edinburgh & London: Scottish Academic Press, 1973: 'such is the character of the pathetic and sentimental songs of Scotland, which may with truth be termed, *the poetry and music of the heart*,' Vol. 1, p. xi.

57. For her it is important that the speaker of the poem is a European American woman, but even so the absence of an Indian bard is surely significant, and I shall look at this again in my chapter on *Hiawatha*.

'Tis not the golden hill, nor flow'ry dale,
Which lends my simple muse her artless theme,
But the black forest and uncultur'd vale,
The savage warrior, and the lonely stream. (OVN:10)

Like the Gothic, this is a landscape of darkness, isolation and danger. But the dangers of the Gothic are the dangers of the decadently over-civilised (Catholic as opposed to Protestant, French or Italian as opposed to Anglo-Saxon, aristocracy as opposed to bourgeois). In primitivism the dangers spring from the under-civilised, the immediacy and vehemence of the passions.⁵⁸ In many ways Sarah Morton's Indians are Arcadian innocents, admirable in their depth and purity of feeling. But there are 'savage passions' which can erupt in violence.

Perfect physical beauty is, however, common to both Golden Age and the new primitivist versions of the noble savage. The Indians at war are likened to Hector and Achilles. Of Ouâbi, the chief who gives his name to the poem, Morton writes: 'Ouâbi! form'd by nature's hand divine/ Whose naked limbs the sculptor's art defied'. Comparisons of the Indians to Homeric heroes had many precedents, indeed, according to Mary Bowden, they were a cliché in eighteenth-century Indian poems.⁵⁹ Ouâbi's wife Azâkia is (to employ a different cliché) a radiant beauty:

Her limbs were straighter than the mountain pine,
Her hair far blacker than the raven's wing:
Beauty had leant her form *the waving line*,
Her breath gave fragrance to the balmy spring.

Each bright perfection open'd on her face,
Her flowing garment wanton'd in the breeze,
Her slender feet the glitt'ring sandals grace,
Her look was dignity, her movement ease. (OVN:11)

The classicised physical beauty (like that of Benjamin West's magnificent Indian in *The Death of Wolfe*) functions as an indication of virtue. As Ouâbi later describes Azâkia, she has a 'mind as faultless as her face' (OVN:44). I noted in the previous chapter that early accounts of Native Americans stressed their fine physique, but that during the eighteenth century more antagonistic and racist descriptions of Indian physical characteristics were becoming common. (By the 1830s, de Tocqueville, the litmus test of what had become by then unquestioned assumptions even for the most liberal,

58. I am intrigued by the fact that the first Gothic novel was produced by the worldly and suave Horace Walpole, while what is perhaps the first eighteenth-century primitivist poem was written by his shy and withdrawn friend Thomas Gray. That first primitivist poem, 'The Bard' was the first publication at Horace Walpole's Strawberry House press. See Lonsdale, *Gray and Collins*, p. xiv.

59. Bowden, *Philip Freneau*, p. 159. There are numerous earlier examples. Lafitau's influential account of the Iroquois aimed to show they were descended from the Greeks. Hugh Blair similarly spends considerable time on the likenesses between Ossian's and Homer's heroes.

describes the Native Americans as a race without any physical advantages.)⁶⁰ Mary Bowden may suggest that to describe an Indian chief as an Iliadic hero was a cliché, but by 1790 it is clearly one Morton already feels she has to defend if she is to present her poem as a reliable account of Indian life. She may not have known of George Forster's *A Voyage Round the World* published in 1771, but she is clearly aware of the kind of attack he makes on false classicising:

The plates which ornamented the history of Captain Cook's former voyage, have been justly criticised, because they exhibited to our eyes the pleasing forms of antique figures and draperies, instead of Indians of which we wished to form some idea. But it is greatly to be feared, that Mr Hodges has lost the sketches and drawings which he made from NATURE in the course of the voyage, and supplied the deficiency in this case, from his own elegant ideas, which never existed in the South Seas.⁶¹

This new ethnographic consciousness means for Sarah Morton, not yet that she abandon these idealised portraits (Azâkia's 'draperies' certainly flutter in a very Grecian way) but that she needs to support them by reference to her sources. She quotes 'a celebrated French writer', Louis Sebastian Mercier, who described a naked Indian 'having nothing but God and nature above him':

His body was supple and robust, his eye lively and piercing, his ear attentive, in his deportment a kind of haughtiness, of which we have no kind of idea in our degenerate climate. He seems even more graceful and majestic when beside his female companion, his eye is milder, his countenance more serene. (OVN:vii)

She is clearly aware that this 'apostrophe', as she calls it, taken from a novel, may not convince her readers.⁶² Her anxiety on this point suggests she is aware of embracing what is becoming a minority view. So she goes on to say:

But the authority by which I have been influenced, and from which I feel myself justified, is William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, whose manners and principles could not admit of exaggeration, or extravagancy of expression. In his letters to his friends in England, he describes the North-American Indians in the following terms. 'For their persons they are generally tall, straight, well built, and of singular proportion: they tread strong and clever, and mostly walk with a lofty chin: the thick lip and flat nose, so frequent with the East-Indians and blacks, are not common with them; for I have seen as comely, European-like faces among them of both sexes, as on your side the sea. And truly an Italian complexion hath not much more of the white, and the noses of several have as much of the Roman. (OVN:vii)

60. De Tocqueville, *Democracy*. The earlier descriptions of fine physique were of Indians living in traditional ways, while de Tocqueville only appears to have seen deeply demoralised and deracinated Indians.

61. Quoted in Helen Wallis, 'Conclusion', in *Cook's Voyages and Peoples of the Pacific*, ed. Hugh Cobbe, London: British Museum, 1979, p. 134. Helen Wallis points out that Forster was mistaken in criticising Hodges himself, whose drawings had been altered by the engravers.

62. Walter Schramm in 'Hiawatha and his Predecessors', *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 11, 1932, suggests this comes from one of Mercier's novels.

This is very similar to Jefferson's position in his *Notes*, essentially saying that the Indians can probably be considered honorary whites. But William Penn is a significant choice for a mentor, because for all the clear Eurocentrism of these comments, his beliefs as a Quaker made it possible for him to grant the Indians possession of 'Inner Light', which in turn allows for a positive value to be given at any rate to some aspects of their culture. The idea of 'Inner Light' – also known as the 'Candle of the Lord' or the 'Light of Nature' – was fundamental to primitivist thought in the seventeenth century and eighteenth century.⁶³ The savage and the child both possess innate goodness. Sarah Morton refers explicitly to the idea of Inner Light at the end of the poem:

Let not the CRITIC, with disdainful eye,
In the weak verse condemn *the novel plan*;
But own, that VIRTUE beams in ev'ry sky,
Tho wayward frailty is the lot of man.

Dear as ourselves to hold each faithful friend,
To tread the path, which INNATE LIGHT inspires,
To guard our country's *rites*, her soil defend,
Is all that NATURE, all that HEAV'N requires. (OVN:50–1)⁶⁴

In those final lines piety and patriotism become one inseparable virtue sanctioned by natural and divine law, allowing a cultural relativism that is scarcely to be found again for the next hundred years. And yet the reasons why that cultural relativism will be impossible is there in those lines: the defence of the soil.

I shall return to Morton's view of Indian piety later, but I want now to make one more comment on her description of the lovely Azâkia. Morton adds two significantly different notes to this passage. The reference to 'the waving line' has a note which reads 'See Hogarth's Line of Beauty', about 'the glitt'ring

63. See Whitney, *Primitivism*, p. 69.

64. The Indian belief in the Great Spirit appealed to eighteenth-century deists and Unitarians (as Sarah Morton became). Sarah Morton later wrote a hymn which she based on an Indian prayer, appending to it this note:

In this Hymn, the Author has in part attempted to imitate the sublime adoration of the North American Indian, expressed in the following Prayer.

- O ETERNAL, have mercy upon me – because I am passing away!
- O INFINITE – because I am but a speck!
- Oh most MIGHTY – because I am weak!
- Oh SOURCE OF LIFE – because I draw nigh to the Grave
- Oh, OMNISCIENT – because I am in darkness!
- Oh ALL-BOUNTEOUS – because I am poor!
- Oh ALL-SUFFICIENT – because I am nothing! (MMT:280)

She gives no source for this prayer, and which is indeed quintessentially how Burke would understand the awed response to sublimity. The Indians' religious reverence is shown at other points in *Ouâbi* – she has a note on their dances which says: 'the dance is rather an act of devotion, than of recreation, and constitutes a part of all their public ceremonies' (OVN:18).

sandals' she says that they are 'ornamented either with little glistening bells, or with a great variety of shining beads and feathers' (OVN:11). On the one hand ethnographic detail; on the other contemporary notions of natural beauty. It is not surprising she quotes Hogarth whose view that nature's beauties lie in the irregular, the varied and the unexpected paved the way for the picturesque and ideas of romantic wildness. The powerful link between the picturesque and the exotic has been analysed by Bernard Smith in the depiction of the landscape and people of the South Seas. What fuses the picturesque and the exotic – and one might say the ethnographic – is, he suggests, the selection of details which fit the particular location, 'typical' of their own world, but very different from the world of civilisation. It is otherness of a distinct and systematisable kind.⁶⁵ Blair had written in 1763 that: 'Every country has a scenery peculiar to itself, and the imagery of a good poet will exhibit it' and this had rapidly come also to include the artefacts and architecture of a region or period.⁶⁶ The theoretical texts of the picturesque appeared during the nineties, and most of the examples Smith gives date from the early 1800s, though the actual drawings for Cook's voyages – as opposed to the engravings which Forster had criticised – already show this ethnographic appreciation of the particular. So, like those artists, at any rate in her view of the aesthetic and picturesque merit of ethnographic detail, Sarah Morton is again in the vanguard.

***Ouâbi*, 'Azakia' and Colonial Politics**

Ouâbi, like so many primitivist texts, is politically and emotionally ambivalent. I want here not so much to offer an interpretation of the poem as to suggest what unresolved problems may lie behind those contradictions. *Ouâbi* can be read in terms of its colonial politics, its sexual politics or its poetic theory, and I shall look at each of these aspects by examining its relation to three other texts, two of them certainly pre-texts for the poem, one of them probably. The first is the source of the plot, an ironic, cynical, and in Sarah Morton's opinion, somewhat indecent story, 'Azakia, a Canadian Tale', which appeared in September 1789 in *The American Museum*, a politically and culturally liberal journal subscribed to by such people as Henry Knox and Sarah Morton's husband Perez, as well as George Washington, Rufus King, Benjamin Rush, Alexander Hamilton and other luminaries of the new republic.⁶⁷ *The American Museum* was a mixture of didactic and entertaining

65. Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768–1850: a Study in the History of Art and Ideas*, Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 148–59.

66. Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 114.

67. 'Azakia, a Canadian Tale' in *The American Museum*, Vol. 6, Philadelphia: September 1789 pp. 193–9. These subscribers' names are quoted in Vol. 1, 1787.

writing, carrying pieces on American farming, manufactures, and politics, but also publishing anecdotal material, and poetry. Virtually every poem it printed was explicitly American, eulogy, history, exordium and the occasional Indian poem, including Freneau's 'The Indian Student' and 'The Indian Burial Ground'.⁶⁸ The journal was fiercely pro-Abolition, even printing an article on how Negro virtues exceeded those of Europeans: when it printed an extract from de Crèvecoeur it chose the agonising account of the dying slave.⁶⁹ But although it had only one view of the slavery question, Indians were another matter. Indian items ranged from lurid tales of naked white girls burnt by Indians at the stake after just escaping a fate even worse than death, to Freneau's nature-loving Indian student, and other melancholy stories of noble Indians bereaved and grieving. 'Azakia' is somewhere in the middle; the Indians are good-natured ingénu, but they are scarcely noble.

This range of attitudes was probably representative of the contemporary uncertainty among the educated élite in the new republic about their relation to the Indians. Philip Freneau, for example, has very varied depictions of Indians in his own work. Before he wrote his more romantic Indian poems, he had included in an earlier poem an apostrophe to the American landscape which described the Indians skulking off in disgust:

What charming scenes attract the eye
On wild Ohio's savage stream!
Here nature reigns, whose works outvie
The boldest pattern art can frame –
Here ages past have roll'd away,
And forests bloom'd but to decay

From these fair plains, these rural seats,
So long conceal'd so lately known,
Th'unsocial Indian far retreats,
To make some other clime his own –
Where other streams, less pleasing flow,
And darker forests round him grows.⁷⁰

The idea that the Native American would willingly retreat – and indeed have somewhere, even insalubrious, to retreat to, was a hope possible in 1787

68. The few exceptions, interestingly, included a poeticised version of Charlotte's lament for Werther and a Runic Ode (*The American Museum*, Vol. 1, pp. 87 and 169).

69. *The American Museum*, Vol. 1, p. 240.

70. *The American Museum*, Vol. 1, p. 157. See Bowden, *Freneau*, pp. 160–62, for the range of different treatments of the Indian in Freneau's poems. In the early 1790s, Freneau began writing newspaper columns about a Creek chief, Tomo Cheeki (in spite of the fact that his name sounds too good to be true, a historical character who was taken to England in 1734). Tomo Cheeki is presented as another of the naïve good-hearted Indians who serve as a critique of civilised excesses. But he is comic, rather than noble. He does contemplate suicide, but is introduced to brandy in the nick of time and decides life is worth it. Freneau became increasingly, though perhaps ambivalently, convinced of the need to civilise the Indians along Jeffersonian lines. See Sheehan, *Seeds*, p. 104.

that would vanish. What Freneau presents as love of nature in 'The Indian Student' is here seen as misanthropy and indifference. The emotive and moral weight given to Indian characteristics at this period is highly unstable.

In 'The Indian Student', Freneau follows the European pastoral by making the Indian a shepherd. Sarah Morton eschews such inappropriateness. She says that she has modified 'Azakia' by 'introduc[ing] a variety of customs', which are picturesque details of Indian life, 'the description of battles, and many other circumstances, which appeared essential to *poetry* and necessary to the plot' (OVN:vi). These 'other circumstances . . . essential to *poetry*' include general elevation of language and content, the incorporation of declarations of love, the death-song, eulogies of the natural life, diatribes against the evils of society, and elegant circumflexes added to Ouâbi and Azâkia's names, which together turn the brisk short story into a refined four-canto poem. Although Morton follows the outline of the plot in most respects, the changes are significant. The Indians are of a different timbre from those in *The American Museum*, who are easy-going innocents, in contrast to the decadent French. Fairchild in his book on *The Noble Savage* included such satiric accounts of innocent naïveté as one version of the noble savage. But in that tradition, naïve savages are not in any sense thought of as noble, even if less corrupt than Europeans. They are certainly very different from the high-minded creatures, full of sensibility, whom Sarah Morton describes.

The authentic Indian customs that Morton adds to the text, and the annotations to give them authority, suggest a serious and attentive interest and respect for the Indian. But in common with many Europeans, she is cavalier about her distinctions between Indian cultures, mingling heterogeneous Indian traits together with little regard for their origin. The story in *The American Museum* is about the Hurons. Morton transforms them into Illinois, perhaps through the influence of William Penn, who, like Heckewelder and Fenimore Cooper, saw the Hurons as bad savages as opposed to the admirable Delaware. (Indeed, bad Hurons appear in Morton's poem.) But neither Illinois nor Hurons are taken into account when Morton looks for picturesque colour. She relies to some extent on Penn's comments on the Delawares, but draws mainly on the customs of the Cherokees and Creeks.

Acquainted with some interesting ceremonies from tradition, I became desirous of gaining further intelligence, and gratefully acknowledge myself indebted to the obliging communications of General Lincoln, for most of the local rites and customs alluded to, which I have not quoted any other authority. The opportunity his public commission in the late negotiations between the United States and the Southern Indians, has afforded him to acquire the best information, added to the respectability of his character, will render his authority unquestioned. (OVN: 12)

She also incorporates information from Jefferson's *Notes* on contemporary Indians in Virginia and his conjectures about the Mound-Builders. I suspect she did not take all of her unreferenced notes from Lincoln, as the information which they offer is often fairly well known, or might have more likely sources – burial customs (Freneau's poem) or burying the hatchet (Blair) or some details taken directly from 'Azakia'. In addition she draws on her knowledge of Indian artefacts in the Museum of Cambridge, without reference to any particular group.⁷¹ In many cases her observations specifically emphasise her respect for the Indians. She comments on their knowledge:

These people are perhaps the first botanists in the world: and from their knowledge of the properties of plants, according to William Penn, have a remedy for every disease, to which they are subject. They have certain antidotes to all venomous bites, and it is said, an infallible cure for cancers . . . (OVN:20)

Celario will not be considered as addressing the savage in too philosophical language, when it is remembered that people in a *hunting state* are necessarily acquainted with the different stars and planets, to aid their course in their excursions from, and returns to, their places of residence. (OVN:43).

She emphasises the picturesque artistry with which they adorn their possessions:

The *calumnet* is a highly ornamented pipe, which the Indians smoke as a type of peace and harmony on all public occasions. (OVN:18)

Their bows are stained with a great variety of flaring colours, and otherwise ornamented. (OVN:19)

Yet she takes it entirely for granted that *all* Native Americans share *all* characteristics. So while appearing to attend to actual historical Indians, she in fact creates an ahistorical amalgam. At the same time she removes from the poem what was historically most significant in her source, the relationship between colonised and coloniser. 'Azakia' begins with a discussion of the French penetration into Canada. When the French failed to subdue the Indians by force, the narrator describes how they 'found means to create in them wants, which made their yoke necessary to them. Their brandy and tobacco easily effected what their own arms might have operated with greater difficulty' (ACT:194). The story itself starts with a French soldier's attempted rape of the beautiful Indian girl, Azakia, and her rescue by a young French officer, St Castlins, later named Celario by the grateful Indians. The story has a strong anti-French bias: the US (like the British) were very ready to see the faults of other colonisers. But in Morton's version, previous colonisation vanishes altogether: a Huron has 'rais'd his threatening arm', and is about to tomahawk Azakia, who, never

71. My notes from my first reading of the poem in 1981 say 'Cambridge' (OVN:19). The British Library copy has since been to the paper-restorers, and the word is now illegible.

having seen a European before, mistakes her rescuer for a god. (Celario is now 'Europe's fairest boast': which part of Europe is not mentioned (OVN:10)). So from the beginning Morton's poem erases the issue of colonial expropriation. The European rescues the Indian from internecine violence, rather than violently ravishing her (or her land).

Like Cooper and Longfellow, Morton restructures Indian history and geography.⁷² Professional ethnography, when it emerged later in the nineteenth century, did not make the mistake of treating all Indian groups as interchangeable, but until after the Second World War it continued (with a few exceptions) to ignore the colonial presence. Paul Bonte has argued that to treat cultures as discrete and isolate, occluding historical interaction and rendering colonialism invisible, reveals anthropology as an apologia, conscious or unconscious, for imperialism.⁷³ Such an apologia is perhaps what this poem is. When to this evasion of history is added the death of Ouâbi, Morton's most dramatic innovation in the plot, the poem begins to appear as a version of the contemporary myth which formed the basis for expansion with honour, the myth of the inevitable disappearance of the Indian which the white man is powerless to prevent. As I argued in the last chapter, for politicians like Knox, the belief that Indian lands would become redundant as the Indians died away, and therefore available to white Americans, made it possible to assume a gradual and legal westward movement. A similar trajectory appears in this poem. Morton's poem, intended as propaganda for the Indian as her much shorter poem on the slave trade, 'The African Chief', was so successfully for abolition, in the end reads as a poeticised statement of one of the reiterated formulae of Henry Knox's papers: 'It is . . . painful to consider, that all the Indian tribes, once existing in those States now the best cultivated and most populous, have become extinct . . . In a short period the idea of an Indian this side the Mississippi will be found only in the pages of the historian' (ASPI: 53). The poem is set on the banks of the Mississippi: significantly, on which side is unclear.

Yet as in Knox's writings, there are many ambiguities. The Indian Ouâbi appears as more admirable in every way than Celario. In both versions of the story, Celario, who as an exile is given a home by the Indians after his

72. See Gordon Brotherston, 'The Prairie and Cooper's Invention of the West' in *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, London: Vision and Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1985, ed. Robert Clark. Although she is not explicit about her time period, I do not think that what Morton sees herself as doing is literally setting her tale before colonisation. There is a reference to a soldier who has previously visited this area, from whom Celario had heard of the Indians. Morton places her poem in the kind of unsullied Indian territory that George Catlin would later search for. Frontier Indians, like frontier whites, were not always easy to find admirable.

73. Paul Bonte, 'From Ethnology to Anthropology: on Critical Approaches in the Human Sciences', Part 1, in *Critique of Anthropology*, No. 2, Autumn 1974. The attack on the idea of separable cultures was, according to Maurice Bloch, first made by Edmund Leach. See Maurice Bloch, *Marxism and Anthropology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 143.

rescue of Azâkia, falls in love with her. She, being a loyal wife, rejects his less than honourable advances. In spite of a reference to Azâkia's mistaking Celario for a god – a common European myth – in Morton's poem descriptions of Celario are much less striking than those of Ouâbi, who assumes the role of a 'manly', powerful father figure to Celario's 'gentle youth'. In the poem Celario continually extols the virtues of native life. In a rhetorical set piece, Ouâbi asks Celario what vices are present in his 'realms'. Celario offers a catalogue of civilised corruptions, concluding that in contrast with Europe, 'Ev'ry Boon of Life is Here' in this savage paradise. Yet although, even in Morton's bowdlerised version his behaviour – trying to seduce his host's wife – is far from admirable, the European takes not only the wife but the future from the Indian.

In the original tale in *The American Museum*, the dubiousness of Celario's actions is mockingly pointed out:

'But' said St Castlins, arguing the case with himself, 'the good-natured Ouabi is but a savage, and he cannot be so scrupulous herein, as many of our good fellows in Europe.' This reason, which was no reason in fact, appeared very solid to this amorous Frenchman. (ACT:195)

Morton's Celario is no less immortal in action, but much more anguished in spirit, and confesses his guilt with distress. In 'Azakia' the story ends when Ouabi gives up Azakia to Celario, recognising their love for each other, and he himself marries another beautiful Indian girl, Zisma. This also happens in Morton's version, Ouâbi there too forgiving Celario his disloyalty and abuse of hospitality. Celario's faults, Ouâbi says, are the product of the corrupt society from which he has come, but his truthfulness in confessing them shows that he, like the Indians, has innate goodness – 'Native Virtues', as he calls them here.⁷⁴ David Murray has pointed out that although Native American oratory was so famous, Indians were rarely represented as simply talking – silent stoicism was more in order.⁷⁵ (*The Last of the Mohicans*, where stony taciturnity and spell-binding eloquence alternate, is a prime example of this combination.) So Morton's depiction of Ouâbi in dialogue, and indeed making the telling judgments, is perhaps the more striking. Yet in the poem, immediately after Ouâbi marries, he abruptly and without narrative warning commits suicide. Ouâbi, as he dies appointing Celario chief in his place, offers the explanation that he has lost face by having been a captive. But shortly before this he was unconcernedly planning a war of revenge. In the introduction another explanation is hinted at – that he was insincere about the ease with which he could give up Azâkia, and is therefore presumably dying for love. Die Ouâbi must:

74. Whitney rebukes Sarah Morton for this, saying she is mistakenly attributing primitive virtues to the civilised. But this is quite deliberate in the American context, and, as I shall argue in the next chapter, becomes an important strategy in the creation of a guiltless American Adam.

75. David Murray, *Forked Tongues*, p. 35.

reasons are optional. It is perhaps significant that one of the central features of the latter part of the poem is Ouâbi's death-song, though it is actually sung just before Ouâbi is rescued from a death by torture at the hands of the cruel Hurons. This death-song was the feature of the poem that attracted most attention. It was set to music in Boston in 1791, and was reproduced in its entirety because so 'justly admired for the excellency of its composition', in a play, *The American Indian*, adapted from the poem and written in London in 1795 by James Bacon.⁷⁶ The poem ends with an elegiac description of the Illinois' yearly visits to Ouâbi's grave.

The main stanza form of the poem is, in fact, that of Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. Morton's poem, on one level at least, is an elegy for the untouched, untutored Indian, so admirable in his own way, who must fade away when the European appears. It is a model increasingly used in the nineteenth century, most famously or notoriously in *The Song of Hiawatha*. In Morton's American epic of origin the evils of Europe are left behind and America is born out of the marriage of the regenerated European male and the Indian woman. But there is more ambivalence here about the value or the absoluteness of the disappearance of the Indian than will appear in later versions. The image of colonialism as marriage is a rare one in the North American context, and suggests at least some kind of mutuality.⁷⁷ Morton's version of the American myth of origin differs from others in the father/son structure she gives to the Native American/white relationship, rather than the more derogatory and common child of the human race/mature European man. The suicide is a more troubled and troubling acquiescence in the European future, than Hiawatha's resigned prophecies.

Morton, as a devout believer both in the new republic and in humanitarian causes, was of course well aware of the frontier conflicts and Indian resistance to surrendering their land. But even when elsewhere she approached that subject directly, she evades the political realities involved. Her concern is couched in terms that exonerate but also sentimentalise the Indians, putting the blame on individual debased whites, not on American policy or the facts of colonisation. Frontier whites were regularly regarded by East-Coast liberals as a lower form of life than Indians (as I pointed out in the last chapter, even Knox seems to see them at best as pretty equal)

76. James Bacon, *The American Indian, or Virtues of Nature: a Play*, London: Harrison, 1795. Bacon also uses the Spenser epigraph. According to Pendleton and Ellis, Bacon's play was not actually ever produced.

77. For this image in Latin American fiction, see Doris Sommer, 'Irresistible Romance: the Foundations of Fictions of Latin America' in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha, London and New York: Routledge, 1990. There is a marriage, followed by the surrender by the Indian husband of his white wife in Linda Maria Child, *Hobomok* (1824) a novel which must surely have been influenced by *Ouâbi*: see Lucy Maddox's discussion of *Hobomok* in *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 89–130.

and Morton writes very much from her class position as one of the eastern élite. After the American army's disastrous defeat by the Miamis in 1791, Morton wrote 'A Monody: To the Young Heroes who Fought and Fell under General St Clair'. She entirely exculpates the Indians, whose attack had 'been instigated by the rapacious cruelty of the *more Savage White Settlers*, who encroaching upon the Indian territory, carried Desolation and Death even to the Habitations of their Women, finally exasperating the Sufferers to deeds of reciprocated Violence' (MMT:280). Although St Clair's principal task as governor of the Northwest Territories was to encroach on Indian land as rapidly as possible, albeit in a more orderly way, there is no hint of this purpose in the poem. The soldiers are 'blameless victims', but there emerges an uneasy sense that guilt could besmirch the new country. 'Columbia' must refuse to

... clasp her murders to her bleeding breast,
 Shall we with impious hand, and ruffian knife
 From her *first offspring* snatch the claims of life,
 To nature's sons with tyrant rage deny,
 The woody mountain, and the covering sky! (MMT:250)⁷⁸

And the soldiers' ghosts beg the frontiersmen:

No more with blood the blushing soil deface,
 And space the patient, suffering, injured race. (MMT:250)

Suffering and injured the Miamis may have been, but patient the poem itself has shown that they are not. That Columbia's very name demands that no aboriginals be considered her offspring is a paradox too painful to be faced. It seems that, just as in this 'Monody' she must defend both the Indians and the 'Young Heroes' (the accusations that Knox had to deal with of their ill-discipline and drunkenness are not mentioned) so in *Ouâbi* she was only able to register both her concern for the Indian and her faith in the new United States by giving the poem its ahistorical form. The conflict between her humanitarianism, her melancholy primitivism and her loyalty to the American ideals cuts off *Ouâbi* from its imperialist context. Her poem justifies on one level expansion with honour, but at the same time it reveals that honour as somewhat stained. It allows *Ouâbi* to say defiantly in his death-song:

Think not with me my tribe decays
 More glorious chiefs the hatchet raise. (OVN:37)

I shall return to that prophecy later.

78. The difficulty in convicting white aggressors is one of the problems Knox anguishes over (ASP I:53).

Ouâbi, *The Power of Sympathy* and Sexual Politics

If, on the level of contemporary land politics, Morton's use of the topos of the noble savage leads her to condone rather than condemn United States policy towards the Native American, she also employs it to point out the vices of a different section of 'the more Savage White[s]'. *The American Museum* story's satire was strictly limited to a light-hearted attack on French corruption. Sarah Morton's poem is a critique of Bostonian sexual attitudes. A set of problems about sexuality and marriage attempt to organise themselves in the sub-text of this poem. Morton is the first of several women I shall look at in this thesis who make use of the idea of the Indian to deal with their own complex and contradictory feelings about their position as women. One of the passages Morton may have found indecently frank in *The American Museum* is the statement that Indian women

have a strong propensity to love: a propensity, which a maiden, in this country may yield to, and always indulge without scruple and without feeling the least reproach. It is not so with a married woman: she must entirely devote herself to him she has married, and what is not less worthy of notice, she punctually fulfils this duty. (ACT:194)

The savage's supposedly innocent and free sexuality had been and still was often part of the critique of the civilised, and *The American Museum* is offering a carefully moderated version of it. Morton certainly does not mention this directly, except for emphasising Indian women's marital fidelity, but that she is aware of and attracted by this topos is suggested by the sensuous, half-suppressed eroticism of some of her descriptions of Azâkia, as she is 'Striving to move him with her matchless form', as 'her flowing garment wanton'd in the breeze', as she 'wander'd from her sultry home/. . . her languid limbs to lave' and 'her light body curls the shining wave'. Her writing here has much in common with the language of novels of sensibility, which in England were already being criticised for their dangerous implicit eroticism.⁷⁹

Sexual relations among the Illinois in this poem are based on devotion, fidelity and unselfishness, yet ease in changing marriage partners is clearly an important motif. In fact, on the question of marriage Morton is more daring than *The American Museum*, which suggests Celario found some missionaries to put his marriage on a Christian footing. But the sexual exchanges in *Ouâbi* have another reference. Morton acknowledged her debt to *The American Museum*, but her poem is also an unadmitted reply to her other main pre-text, the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy: or the Triumph of Nature* (1789) written by her neighbour William Hill Brown, though ironically ascribed to Sarah Morton herself for most of the nine-

79. See Janet Todd, *Sensibility: an Introduction*, London: Methuen, 1986, pp. 137–8.

teenth century.⁸⁰ *The Power of Sympathy* was partially an attack on the Mortons, and Perez tried unsuccessfully to suppress the book by buying and destroying all available copies. This novel, a readable enough pastiche of Richardson and Goethe, presents itself as a moralising work of sensibility, claiming its aim is 'to expose the Fatal Consequences of Seduction', but also reproducing the gossip of Boston. One lengthy episode gives a thinly veiled account of a scandal concerning the Mortons which was already being used by Perez's political enemies. Sarah's sister Fanny (Ophelia in the novel) came to stay with the Mortons, and then had an affair with, and a child by, Perez. The sisters' father, Charles Apthorp, discovered what had happened. Determined to blame someone – both Perez and Fanny blamed each other – he insisted on a family court. Fanny, by this time desperate, committed suicide the night before the court was to meet.

The novel does not mention that the Boston coroner implicated Perez in the guilt for the death, but Perez (Mr Martin) comes off badly, condemned for his 'diabolical appetite', though he is portrayed as only slightly worse than the father, whose 'resentment' is 'implacable'. A debate about which should be regarded as the more culpable for Ophelia's death concludes (just) that Martin is the more guilty. Sarah (Mrs Martin) is said to have treated her sister with great kindness, and to have been deeply stricken by these events, though described as rather desperately trying to maintain a public 'face of vivacity'. The frontispiece in the original edition highlighted the scandal with a woodcut depicting Ophelia in her death-throes, her distraught parents rushing belatedly to her side. An empty glass stands on the table. The caption reads, 'O Fatal! Fatal Poison!'⁸¹

Perez's attempts to suppress the novel were in themselves immediately satirised in a contemporary political skit, which hinted that Sarah Morton's morals were as loose as her husband's. At least one other play was produced and a pamphlet published re-telling the scandal, and the affair became the talk of Boston. Perez called in his influential friends to staunch the gossip, but a statement by John Adams and John Bowdoin assuring the public of their confidence in his rectitude provoked yet more scurrilous satire. The links between the novel and Morton's poem seem complex and intriguing, and I shall look only at the most central. The tone and characterisation of Morton's narrative poem is, as I have pointed out, much closer to that of the novel of sensibility than it is to the worldly insouciance of its *American Museum* source. *Ouābi's* most direct allusion to the novel (apart from the subtitles) is an answer to a poem, written by the novel's

80. See Brown, *Power of Sympathy*, pp. xxiii–vi. Pendleton and Ellis (*Philenia*, p. 39) seem to think the suppression was more successful than William Kable's evidence suggests it was.

81. The fictional version appears in *Power of Sympathy*, pp. 59–70. The biographical information is given *ibid.*, p. xvi, and *Philenia*, pp. 32–9. The original frontispiece is reproduced in *Power of Sympathy*, facing p. 8.

hero, Harrington, a pale imitation of Lovelace, who reforms by Letter Six after he has heard of Ophelia's tragic death. His poem castigates Vice, Pride, Intemperance, Theft, Murder, Avarice and finally, worst of all, Seduction ('With thee, SEDUCTION! are ally'd/ HORROUR, DESPAIR and SUICIDE').⁸² In Morton's poem, when Ouâbi asks Celario what crimes exist in the civilised world, cowardice being the only fault he can imagine, Celario replies that his compatriots are brave enough at war. Their crimes are domestic:

'Tis at home their vices grow,
There they yield to ev'ry foe;
There unnumber'd demons reign,
Led by TERROR, GUILT and PAIN.

He goes on to cite Revenge, Malice, Duplicity, Envy and Slander:

JEALOUSY with bitter sigh,
Low SUSPICION's jaundiced eye,
Lying FRAUD, with treach'rous smile,
Hard REPROACH and MEANNESS vile,
AFFECTATION'S sick'ning form,
PASSION, always in a storm;
These are foes I leave behind,
These the TRAITORS of the mind. (OVN:17)

The phrase 'at home' in this context is of course ambiguous. In contrast to war it means peace-time society, such as post-revolutionary Boston was, but it could also mean private life. However there seems no doubt that, whatever else, this is a bitter attack on Brown and the vindictive gossips of Boston, shaped in Brown's own couplet form. This is Morton's most obvious textual rebuff to the novel, but *Ouâbi* as a whole reshapes the humiliating experience recounted in the novel, which had centred on a man loved by two women, into the tale of a woman, a faithful married woman at that, adored by two men: one, a wise and loving father figure, the other an adoring and penitent lover – reversals of the villains in the novel. In this light, the narcissistic eroticism of Morton's descriptions of Azâkia take on a new significance. But Morton also identifies herself with Ouâbi, the one betrayed. In her introduction she defends 'Ouâbi's insensibility . . . to the love of Celario'. 'The mind,' she writes, 'unpracticed in deception, can never be capable of suspicion' (OVN:v).

The Triumph of Nature in Brown's title is Harrington's love for a girl he then discovers to be his half-sister, whose mother his father seduced and abandoned years before. Nature's triumph here is the punitive bringing to light of past sins through this instinctive attraction, with disastrous and cruel consequences. Puritan darkness enters and clouds the enlightened nature-loving sensibility of the first part of the novel. *The Virtues of Nature* in *Ouâbi*

82. *Power of Sympathy*, pp. 72–6.

are kindly, forgiving and benign. Morton's Indian setting is solace for her wounds, and a protest at the malignant scandal-mongering of Boston.

Morton's Indian setting enables her to attempt to regain her self-respect at another level, making through it a much suppressed protest at her woman's lot in the America of the late eighteenth century. The position of women and the nature of marriage was much debated in the immediate post-revolutionary years.⁸³ The rhetoric of natural rights was empty for them in the face of their lack of financial and political equality: 'I cannot say,' wrote Abigail Adams to her husband (one of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence), 'that I think you are very generous to the ladies, for, whilst you are proclaiming peace and goodwill to men, emancipating all nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over your wives.'⁸⁴ Legally, women gained nothing from the revolution, but they questioned their status a good deal more. Londa Schiebinger talks of the two possible attitudes to the sexes in this period being on the one hand that of the radicals, like Mary Wollstonecraft, who demanded equality, to be achieved through legislation and education, or on the other the much more pervasive idea, encouraged by Rousseau and supported by the medical profession, of complementarity. In the theory of complementarity the sexes are essentially different, though both are necessary: man's vigorous, rational, courageous nature is complemented by woman's gentle, affectionate, emotional being.⁸⁵ Already in the eighteenth century, according to Ludmilla Jordanova, the language of nature was fundamentally dichotomous, its principal binaries being Female/Male, Nature/Culture, Private/Public, Family/Society, Inside/Outside.⁸⁶ By the 1820s in the States the philosophic and political debate over the relation of the sexes had reformed itself as a social theory of the different spheres of men and women. A few radical articles on the woman question had appeared in *The American Museum*, in the three years of its existence preceding *Ouábi*, but on the whole even at this period most were arguing that the sexes were complementary. The belief in different spheres for men and women was in the process of evolution: this was a journal for the educated vanguard. Its publisher, Matthew Carey, was an activist for women's welfare, and in the 1820s published the *Ladies Magazine*, probably the most influential single journal in popularising the idea of the different spheres.⁸⁷

Morton's comments on her own position as a woman writer show her fundamental ambivalence towards the contemporary argument. In her introduction to *Ouábi* she writes:

83. See Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, pp. 80–4.

84. Carroll and Noble, *The Free and The Unfree*, p. 115.

85. Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science*, Camb., Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989, chapter 8, 'The Triumph of Complementarity', pp. 214–44.

86. Jordanova, *Languages of Nature*, pp. 91–2.

87. Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, pp. 137–8.

The liberal reader will, I trust, make many allowances for the various imperfections of my work, from a consideration of my sex and my situation; the one by education incident to weakness, the other from duty devoted to domestic avocations.

On the one hand this seems quite egalitarian: there is no suggestion of innate incapacity, only of the defects of women's education, much argued about at the time. But, on the other hand, Morton here apparently unquestioningly accepts the obligations of a woman's role. In 1795 in her introduction to her poem *Beacon Hill* she refuses to use her sex at all to deflect criticism. Here she writes:

Impressed with the idea, that an author should be considered of no sex, and that the individual be lost in the writer, I solicit unprejudiced criticism and invite candid censure; for in presuming to meet the public eye, I am sensible it is necessary to resign all personal considerations and that neither my avocations nor my incapacity will be suffered to plead for me.⁸⁸

In writing a poem about a contemporary battle, she has certainly moved on to traditional masculine territory, though *Ouâbi*, with not just its warfare but its depiction of the Sublime, could already be seen to shift beyond the traditional feminine concerns.⁸⁹ Her greater confidence in this preface may perhaps be borne out of *Ouâbi*'s success, but she remains equally defensive on the question of womanly duty:

I know, my fair friends, that with many, who do not write, application to literature in a female is imagined to imply a neglect of appropriate duties . . . It is only amid the leisure and retirement, to which the sultry season is devoted, that I permit myself to hold converse with the Muses; nor does their enchantment ever allure me from personal occupation, which my station renders obligatory; but those hands, which might otherwise be lost in dissipation, or sunk in langour, are alone resigned to the unoffending charms of Poetry and Science.⁹⁰

In her later writing the tension between her conventional acceptance of womanly duty and her bitterness at her woman's lot resolves itself, in as far as it does, through the different qualities she assigns to men and women. Women's lives are painful. Writing on the sexes she says:

Man was sent into this *breathing world* for the purpose of enjoyment – woman for that of trial and suffering. In how many instances are the best years of her existence marked but by sorrows, and by sacrifices . . .

To man belong professions, dignities, authorities, and pleasures: for women, there remain only duties, domestic virtues, and perhaps, as the result of these, the happiness of tranquil submission. (MMT:219–20)

She goes on to emphasise, not entirely convincingly, that woman in the end achieves a greater moral felicity. Her comments on how to cope with an unhappy marriage are equally sure of the importance of womanly morality, if rather less of the likelihood of happiness:

88. Sarah Wentworth Morton, *Beacon Hill: a Local Poem*, Boston: Manning and Loring, 1797, p. viii. (Morton's name does not actually appear, not even her pseudonym.)

89. In both Burke and Kant, the sublime is associated with masculinity, and the beautiful with femininity.

90. *Beacon Hill*, p. ix.

Yet should the donation of that honour which regards, and the possession of that happiness which rewards, be denied to her virtues, when her pure and sensible heart awakes to hope, and animates to reciprocation; is it harrowed by disappointment, and distressed by dissimilarity? is it defrauded of that protection, and refused that fidelity, which she sought, in which she trusted, and would gratefully and eternally have cherished; does she find herself pitied by the affectionate, and possibly admired by the presumptuous; at once pursued and repulsed – pure in conduct, perhaps beautiful in person – yet left to coldness, neglect and desertion – what remedy remains?

Even that of her own approving conscience! with the high estimation of the good, who can understand her feelings and her fate; and the tender and applauding sentiment of the benevolent, who are willing to sympathise with every sufferer.

THE MILLION – blending the penalties of misfortune with those of misconduct, may, in their ignorance, mistake the true meaning of such a mind, and seeing her surrounded by attractions and followed by injuries, even think it possible that sacredness of principle would not rise above the united influence of both; as if the Almighty had not endowed the guileless with strength apportioned to their trials. (MMT:181)⁹¹

The specificity of this suggests she is talking of herself. Gossip about her continued. Although her cleverness went unquestioned in Boston, her reputation did not.⁹² But elsewhere she stresses an idealised picture of womanliness rather than its hardships. While some of Sarah Morton's comments in the 1790s' prefaces suggest she is attracted by ideas of equality, in her emphasis on women's domestic duties she already appears to reject them: later she has no doubts. In an essay on 'Rights and Wrongs', she attacks Mary Wollstonecraft, the most famous proponent of equality.⁹³ A woman cannot be a leader in war or politics, she says,

Yet her station is high and important; her influence and her duties, lasting and mighty; the enchantment of beauty, the delight of kind and healing conciliation, the world of literature, the fine arts, the eloquent superiority of conversation, with the homage of admiration, respect and attachment, are supremely her own. Also the first ideas of filial infancy, the early impressions of maturing youth, and the late consolations of departing age, are her particular attributes.

What is man, deprived of honourable, affectionate women? A brutal sensualist, or a gloomy misanthropist, whom individuals do not respect, and the best portion of society derides and deserts. (MMT:158)

Women's sphere (as it would later be called) is here, as always, that of the family and personal feelings, but it is striking that before Morton mentions motherhood, she insists the women's sphere in the young republic is, as it would not so obviously be in England, that of literature and the arts.

91. Cf. the contrast of herself and THE MILLION with Blair, who says of Ossian that his sublimity is too much for most people; Ossian is 'perhaps the only poet who never relaxes, or lets himself down into the light and amusing strain; which I readily admit to be no small disadvantage to him with the bulk of readers' (*Critical Dissertation*, p. 68).

92. Pendleton and Ellis, *Philenia*, p. 76.

93. By this time condemnation of Mary Wollstonecraft need have nothing to do with her views; she was largely denounced unread for her scandalous life. Whether Morton has read her or not, she certainly does not agree with her.

Men's world is that of power, violence and business. Her scorn for this emerges elsewhere:

The value which mere MEN OF THE WORLD place upon each other, is neither founded on just esteem, nor built in kind affections; but rather grounded upon the cold calculations of selfish advantage, in mercenary gains, or in frivolous pleasures.

Thence their individual opinions, fluctuating as the weather gauge, may be said to form a true thermometer, which is seen rising and falling with the price of stocks, the rents of estate, and the trade winds of the Indian Ocean. (MMT:116)

This concern with money is associated particularly with her husband, in a poem she wrote about her family 'mansion'. Perez had taken over her family house – perhaps because her father supported the wrong side in the War of Independence – and to Sarah's outrage, turned the ground floor into the premises of the Union Bank, of which he was a shareholder and director. 'The Mansion of my Ancestors', she writes in her notes,

was *then*, that is, about the middle of the Eighteenth Century, said to be the scene of every elegance, and the abode of every virtue. *Now*, its beautiful hall of entrance, arches, sculpture, and base-relief; the grand stair-case, and its highly finished saloon, have been removed, or partitioned off, to accommodate the bank and its dependencies. (MMT:271)

Now 'Plutus builds a throne/Enriched by fortune's gifts alone' and 'wealth is worshipped there' (MMT:30).

In these passages, I would argue, Sarah Morton builds a powerful series of antinomies around the woman/man distinction: Suffering/Oppressive; Spiritual/Materialist; Artistic/Money-making; Feeling/Achieving; Warm-hearted/Cold-hearted; Beauty-loving/Success-loving; Domestic/Worldly. These antinomies are a variation on the more common version on the complementary differences between the sexes. What comes out most strikingly in Morton's emphases in the contrasts she sets up (apart from her deep hostility to men) is that the qualities she ascribes to women as opposed to men are, firstly, very similar to the kind of qualities ascribed to the person of feeling in the tradition of sensibility as opposed to people of the world; secondly, very similar to the basic differences that the romantics and their descendants saw between the poet and the industrial society; and thirdly almost entirely the qualities she ascribes to the Indians as opposed to the Europeans.⁹⁴

She is not alone in thinking this way about the first two of those, though these associations between sensibility, romantic poetry and the female were more often expressed negatively. Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* might have

94. Again, a similar linkage of the poetic, the Indian and the feminine takes place in *Hobomok*: as Lucy Maddox points out, the heroine, Mary Conant, has 'a "poetic imagination" that is especially responsive to the "influence of nature" . . . this romantic, spontaneous side of Mary draws her into friendship with the Indian Hobomok . . . The "untutored" Hobomok . . . speaks almost entirely in metaphors . . . Mary listens with fascination to his "descriptions of the Indian nations, glowing as they were in the brief, figurative language of nature".' Maddox, *Removals*, p. 98.

been the *locus classicus* of sensibility in 1745, but by the 1790s sensibility was identified as a feminine weakness rather than a male strength. John Barrell has demonstrated how the fear of association with 'effeminacy' is always present in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory.⁹⁵ Within the domain of poetry, of course, women were always assumed to be less able than men, as Morton knows. But when poetry is seen in relation to society as a whole then it is conceived of in disparagingly womanising terms of emotionality and unworldliness. This was particularly the case in the States at this period, when literature was so often seen as a diversion from the real business of establishing the Republic. Emory Elliott points out that 'an attitude emerged that literary and religious activity belonged to the domestic world of women.'⁹⁶ Charvat interprets Longfellow's whole project as a writer as the successful attempt to make the 'poet' once more a respectable and acceptably manly figure, to free literature from its effeminate confines.⁹⁷ It is this effeminate world and these qualities that Morton transvalues so that they become moral and spiritual ideals.

So it is not just chance that Morton has chosen the Indians to transform the story of her humiliation; she chooses them because the Indians, understood in terms of eighteenth-century primitivist sensibility, provide the setting of a society whose values, she believes, are like hers, and in which she would be of value. Added to this, her knowledge of the Indians as suffering and oppressed echoes her sense of her own suffering and oppression as a woman. She sees herself, like Ouâbi, as one whose 'life was Virtue and whose fate was Pain'. The passages from which I have quoted were published in a book of essays and poems Morton published in 1823, entitled *My Mind and Its Thoughts*. They make very clear her resentment towards her husband. The book was published in his lifetime; she may have been, like her Indians, suffering and injured, but no more than they was she as patient as she liked to suggest.

Already at this period the medical profession was beginning to discuss the physical differences between men and women, and between the white races and others, in terms that in nineteenth-century evolutionary theory would be taken to establish the common inferiority of all women and all non-whites.⁹⁸ Complementarity was in fact always hierarchical. The ethical

95. John Barrell, 'The Dangerous Goddess: Masculinity, Prestige and the Aesthetic in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *Cultural Critique*, No. 12, 1989. I have written elsewhere about the often very problematic association of poetry and feminine qualities for the Romantics and post-romantics. See 'Poetic Licence' in *From My Guy to Sci-Fi: Genre and Women's Writing in the Postmodern World*, ed. Helen Carr, London: Pandora, 1989.

96. Emory Elliott, *Revolutionary Writers: Literature and Authority in the New Republic, 1725–1810*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. See also David Leverenz, *Manhood in the American Renaissance*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989, p. 168: 'to be a man of culture had become an effeminating oxymoron in America well before the Civil War'.

97. William Charvat, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800–1870: The Papers of William Charvat*, ed. Matthew Bruccoli, Ohio State University Press, 1968, pp. 120–22.

98. Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?*, chapter 7, 'More than Skin Deep: the Scientific Search for Sexual Difference', pp. 189–213.

superiority Morton ascribes to both women and Indians is claimed at the price of accepting, not protesting against, their victimhood, by sublimating resentment into a '[self-]approving conscience'. Ouâbi dies *because* he is morally superior to Celario. Azâkia finds him unbearably good; she prefers the blemished Celario:

E'en to his faults her doting heart inclin'd
Ouâbi was too godlike to be loved. (OVN:46)

A victim with an ideal character is, unfortunately, an ideal victim. Morton's strategies are self-defeating.

I shall develop this identification between women, Indian and artists further in the later chapters of this book. But there is something else going on in Morton's version of this fusion: even in the poem her resentment is not entirely sublimated. In her 'Monody' Morton laments for the 'patient, suffering, injured race' abused by the white frontiers people. This view of Indians as contemporary political victims is rather different from their warlike representation in her de-colonialised poem. One quality ascribed to the noble savage by eighteenth-century poetic (as opposed to the earlier philosophic) primitivism does not fit the feminine side of the binaries: their fierceness in war. Lois Whitney distinguishes between the 'rational' and 'sentimental' noble savage.⁹⁹ The idea of the good savage as natural man as presented in Locke or Shaftesbury or Rousseau drew on a long tradition which George Boas dates back to the Stoics, where the 'law of nature . . . stand[s] for a kind of ethical norm antecedent to all political law . . . there is a way of life which is more deeply rooted in human nature and better than custom or statute'.¹⁰⁰ In this tradition, as in the myth of the Golden Age, one of the virtues of the natural life was that it was more peaceful than that of civilised society. Rousseau, for example, specifically commended his third stage of society as the best because in it violent conflict was least likely. But, as I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, this was not the case in the Blair, Ossian, or Scott tradition. Here what is important is what Lois Whitney calls 'vehemence of emotion', similar to the intensity of feeling so essential to the literature of sensibility in general, but including also fierce, warlike heroics. For Blair, in fact, this is perhaps one of the qualities that ensures that primitive society and therefore its poetry is free from 'covetousness and effeminacy' to which, he points out, 'Longinus imputes the decline of poetry'.¹⁰¹

How these two views operate when they are applied to Indians, who, unlike the ancient Gaels or Scots or Welsh, have a contemporary political presence, becomes complex. Vengefulness was regularly ascribed to the

99. Whitney, *Primitivism*, p. 118.

100. George Boas, *Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1948, p. 7.

101. Blair, *Critical Dissertation*, p. 62.

Indians in the eighteenth century. Whether springing from guilt or fear, such an attribution implies at any rate an unconscious sense both of the Indians' view of themselves as wronged, and of them as dangerous to wrong. Vengefulness, as with all putative Indian qualities, bore very varied moral and emotional connotations. To those antagonistic to the Indians it was proof of their brutishness. For Knox, it was a dangerous potentiality only too easily provoked into being. In Morton's 'Monody' it is the justified resistance to overwhelming persecution. To Cadwallader Colden, for whom the Indians are the 'living images' of 'our earliest Progenitors' in 'remote Antiquity', it is their only vice, but even then one in which the Europeans are implicated. After describing their bravery and endurance he writes: 'They sully, however, these noble Vertues, by that cruel Passion Revenge; for this only they deserve the name of Barbarians. But what have we Christians done to make them better?'¹⁰² In *Ouâbi*, however, revenge (here inter-tribal) is presented without blame, in fact as a preserver of moral rectitude:

Revenge is a principle, in which they are careful to educate their young warriors, considering it one of their first virtues; yet this revenge is rather a deliberate sentiment of the mind, than a rash ebullition of passion; for they suppose that a man who always feels a disposition to punish injuries, will not be readily inclined to commit them. See Wm. Penn's Letters. (OVN:29)

Celario does try somewhat feebly to restrain this 'firm, unconquer'd, unforgiving race' from massacring the villagers who have captured and are torturing Ouâbi, but in vain. It is clear that Indian revenge based on moral outrage is presented as something very different from the malicious revenge of so-called civilised society, so condemned by Celario. Morton is doing more than using her version of Indian culture as solace: their world of virtue, beauty, love and reprisal is certainly the setting for a healing reshaping of her personal trauma, but it also provides a scenario in which her own vengeful emotions can find a place. Her Indians are not entirely feminised; they give her the opportunity (as the Gothic novel so often did to others) to deal with emotions quite unacceptable for a woman. In the examples I look at later in this book, the Indians are feminised more thoroughly.

In this context, I want to look again at the final and climactic suicide. Ouâbi's suicide again reverses the roles in the novel and Morton's life, the self-destruction of the betrayed man not of the betraying woman, of the father not the daughter. Structurally it resembles that of Harrington, found 'weltering in his blood', his last letter lying beside his copy of *The Sorrows of Werther*. (The complex interaction between primitivism and other forms of sensibility is illustrated by the fact that Harrington, just before he dies, quotes Werther, just before *he* dies, quoting the words uttered by Ossian just before *he* dies: so there is here another circuitous route from *Ossian* to

102. Colden, *History*, p. vi. Lucy Maddox describes revenge as 'that Ur-quality of the racist's Indian since at least the days of Cotton Mather', *Removals*, pp. 109–10.

Ouâbi.¹⁰³) Earlier in this chapter I suggested a political interpretation of that suicide, but it is, in the text, so abrupt, so ill-explained, it seems multi-valent in its reference. It could simply be that the tug of Wertherian morbidity is too strong to resist, but I think it is more than that. The sudden striking down of this heroic masculine figure, so much more sexually potent than Celario, is at one level a recoil of anger and an act of castration. Leslie Fiedler interprets the central brother/sister relationship in *The Power of Sympathy* as a transposed oedipal relationship.¹⁰⁴ Brown does in fact refer to Martin's relationship with Ophelia also as incestuous, as legally it was at that time. Morton has moved the story back to a much more directly oedipal situation. The son brings about the death of the father, but the son is tainted with guilt: only the mother/wife remains in her purity:

No daring vice could e'er control
Azakia's unpolluted soul. (OVN:44)

***Ouâbi*, 'The Bard', and Primitive Poetry**

I want finally to look at what Morton has to say about the Indian as primitive poet. It might seem that she has two sources from which to structure this, her ethnographic knowledge of what is specific to Indian culture in North America, and the more general theories about primitive poetry. In practice, as I have indicated with Blair's lectures, the ethnographic information about Indians had influenced and in turn was influenced by the general theory. Morton, aware of the new demands of primitivist authenticity, has a note about the language which is appropriate for her Indians to use: 'as no images can be with propriety taken from culture or civil society in the dialogues, I am under the necessity of frequently repeating the most striking objects of nature' (OVN:43). This is of course the most remarked feature of Indian oratory, as well as the central supposed characteristic of primitive language which Blair himself identifies and illustrates from his Indian example: it is part of the cluster of ideas associating primitive language with nature rather than culture that Derrida deconstructs in western metaphysical tradition.¹⁰⁵ Morton's Indians speak neo-classical verse, hardly natural or authentic, though I am sure she thought it appropriate to their nobility of spirit. She, like her contemporaries, had very little knowledge of the content or structure of Native

103. See *Power of Sympathy*, pp. 172–3 and *Poems of Ossian*, p. 419. James Bacon removed the suicide altogether from his London play adaptation, also substituting a panegyric of English monarchs for the catalogue of corruption.

104. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960, rev. ed., 1966), Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin, 1984, p. 120.

105. See the discussion of the relevance of Derrida's ideas in Murray, *Forked Tongues*, especially pp. 16–17.

American poetry, just a sense of them as poetic and poetry-making people. She knows their music seems strange, and would have probably been as baffled and confused by any actual Native American song as Fanny Burney was when she heard the South Sea Islander Omai sing.¹⁰⁶ She stresses the frequency with which music and songs appear in Indian culture, telling her readers that 'the music of the Indians, tho' of a wild and inharmonious kind, is introduced at all their public festivals and solemnities' (OVN:46) and that, before the Indians go into battle, 'The songs of vengeance ev'ry breast inspire'. Her centre piece however is Ouābi's death-song. She introduces a note about these death-songs at the beginning of the poem with a certain relish:

The American Indians, after exhausting every species of cruelty and torture upon their most distinguished prisoners, burn them by a distant fire; who expire singing songs of glory and defiance. (OVN:10)

Writing the death-songs of Indians was not unusual at this time: as I noted earlier, two had already appeared in the first three years of *The American Museum*. Some death-songs aimed more at evoking frissons of horror than admiration for the stoic heroes, and are scarcely primitivist in the Ossianic sense (terror, yes, sublimity, no). But songs at the point of death were more generally a feature of primitivist poetry. The woman in Wordsworth's 'Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman' has been left to die in northern wastes, separated from her child. Ossian's final poem 'Berrathon' (quoted by Werther and Harrington) foresees his impending death. Sometimes such poems were in fact called 'death-songs'. Percy published 'The Death-Song of Ragnar Lodbrog' as one of his *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* in 1763. This Danish saga had in fact first been translated by the elder Thomas Warton, and then re-worked as an Indian poem by his son Joseph.¹⁰⁷ So Percy's title may reflect this evolution. But the most famous primitivist 'death-song' of the eighteenth century (excluding perhaps 'Berrathon') was undoubtedly Gray's 'The Bard'.

Gray's poem is the second of two Pindaric Odes he first published in 1757. The first, 'The Progress of Poetry' was not in itself a primitivist poem, being a general account of the development of poetry, but it has one stanza in which Gray displays the kind of interest in primitive poetry that was to become much more common in the next decade, and which his poem fostered:

In climes beyond the solar road,
Where shaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam
The Muse has broke the twilight-gloom
To cheer the shiv'ring Native's dull abode.

106. Tinker, *Nature's Simple Plan*, pp. 81–82.

107. Fairchild, *Noble Savage*, p. 445. According to Brian Swann, Joseph Warton also wrote a verse adaptation of the 'amorous canzonet' quoted by Montaigne in his essay 'On Cannibals': see Brian Swann (ed.), *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992, p. xix.

And oft, beneath the od'rous shade
 On Chili's boundless forests laid
 She deigns to hear the savage Youth repeat
 In loose numbers wildly sweet
 Their feather-cinctured Chiefs, and dusky loves.
 Her track, where'er the Goddess roves,
 Glory pursue, and generous Shame,
 Th'unconquerable Mind, and Freedom's holy flame.¹⁰⁸

Gray added notes to these odes on their republication in 1768 – he says because his friends have asked him to explain their obscurities, but clearly also following the fashion introduced by Macpherson, who annotated his Ossian poems liberally. His note to this stanza reads:

Extensive influence of poetic Genius over the remotest and most uncivilised nations: its connection with liberty, and the virtues that naturally attend on it. [See the Erse, Norwegian, and Welch Fragments, the Lapland and American songs.]

This linking of primitive poetry and liberty is an important theme in primitivism (again closely akin to the linking of speech and liberty analysed by Derrida), and primitivism's disturbance of conventional moral categories is implied in the way Gray predates Blake in evoking Milton's Satan and 'th'unconquerable mind' on the side of Liberty.

Liberty of the artistic spirit is the theme of 'The Bard'. The poem is based on an account (which Gray later realised was apocryphal) of Edward I's execution of all the Welsh bards. In the poem the last bard comes to meet the king, denounces him, prophesies disaster for his descendants, foretells the coming of other bards in his own place, most notably Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, and finally and triumphantly commits suicide before he can be killed. This was one of the most widely acclaimed poems of the century (it was the Victorians who elevated the *Elegy*) and was repeatedly illustrated by artists. It is one of the earliest and most striking embodiments of the Romantic artist's sense of alienation from the power-structures and values of contemporary society, and, as Roger Lonsdale points out, marks the virtual end of Gray's own career as a poet.¹⁰⁹

I have already argued that Morton's poem is itself, in spite of its overt patriotism, on some levels deeply oppositional to her society. 'The Bard' is, I would suggest, one of the influences on Morton's poem as a whole and on the death-song within it. Her epigraph, though ostensibly quoted direct from Spenser, is much more likely to have been suggested by 'The Bard', where it appears paraphrased and annotated as the line that encapsulates Spenser's poetry. (Her use of notes is more likely to stem directly from Ossian.¹¹⁰)

108. Lonsdale, *Gray and Collins*, p. 49.

109. Lonsdale, *Gray and Collins*, p. xv.

110. As far as style is concerned, I pointed out earlier that the main stanza form of the poem is that of Gray's *Elegy*, and Morton's poetic language aims much more at the polished lucidity of the *Elegy* than at the densely allusive profundity of 'The Bard'. She also eschews the prose poetry of Ossian – she was, I suspect, too conventional to take

Ouâbi's death-song opens with a conceit on the idea of fire, this time in one of Isaac Watts' favourite stanza forms. It is in fact a deistic hymn:

REAR'D midst the war-empurpled plain,
 What *Illinois* submits to PAIN!
 How can the glory-darting fire
 The coward chill of death inspire!

 The sun a blazing heat bestows
 The moon midst pensive ev'ning glows,
 The stars in sparkling beauty shine,
 And own their *FLAMING SOURCE* divine.

 Then let me hail th'*IMMORTAL FIRE*,
 And in the *sacred flames* expire; (OVN:37)

Where the song is like 'The Bard' and unlike other Indian death-songs of the period, is in Ouâbi's prophecy, which I quoted earlier, that others will come in his place:

Think not with me my tribe decays,
 More glorious chiefs the hatchet raise;
 Not unreveng'd their sachem dies,
 Nor unattended greets the skies. (OVN:37)

In fact by the end of the poem, Ouâbi has appointed Celario to succeed him as chief. The poem gives very contradictory messages. The Indians are endlessly defiant; the Indians bestow their land. The Indians are 'virtue's favour'd race'; the Indians are too good to live.

Every primitivist poem has, one might say, an implied Edward I. Primitive virtues always exist in relation to a more brutal and powerful force which threatens their existence. In *Ouâbi*, it is the corrupt world Celario has left behind. When I was contrasting the poem with 'Azakia' I suggested Morton was employing the conventional rhetoric by which the Americans attacked European corruption, which would leave Azâkia and Celario at the end of the poem to create a new world without that contamination – the American Republic. But in contrasting the poem with *The Power of Sympathy*, it becomes clear that the corruption is already in that new American Republic. This is perhaps one more reason why the poem cannot end by looking forward to a new world, to a future for Celario and Azâkia, but only with an elegy for the passing of Ouâbi. America, Morton realises, however she constructs it, will leave no place for Ouâbi and his 'native virtues'. The structure of 'The Bard', the defiant self-destroying poet, provides a possible model, not to resolve, but to draw her unresolved poem to its end.

All forms of poetic primitivism at this period are essentially elegiac. They deal with loss, most often presented as the loss of a former world of greater purity, simplicity and intensity; a world in touch with the sublime in its terror and power. In my introduction I argued two complementary ways of

'loose numbers wildly sweet' quite that far – although she keeps very closely to a similar use of natural imagery.

looking at elegy. Firstly elegy can be read as mourning for the self: in poetic primitivism the writers or the constructed readers share with the noble primitive their strength and depth of emotion; they can understand and respond to this poetry of the heart. They can shudder in awe at violence of feeling but they can also recognise its grandeur. They insist that the modern world, except for themselves, no longer appreciates these qualities. The noble primitive must be poetic because he is the double of the primitivist poet or reader of primitivist poetry. The paradox of the primitivist movement, as of the cult of sensibility in general, is that its immense popularity was dependent on its construction of its followers as rare examples of true depth of feeling.¹¹¹ Yet the primitivist elegy can also be seen as making reparation; it creates the world in which those virtues reside. As more generally in the Romantic movement, primitivist writing mourns the loss of a Nature which it itself is in the process of creating. It constructs a set of values as it regrets their disappearance. It makes present what it says is no more. It fixes what it says is passing.

It is not surprising, perhaps, that two of the best recent essays on the revival of interest in early Welsh and Scottish poetry and customs (often of dubious historicity) appear in a collection called *The Invention of Tradition*.¹¹² The enthusiasm for Scottish and Welsh primitive poetry played a vital role in creating a sense of nationality for those countries, in search, like the Americans, for an identification, even if spurious, *away* from the over-civilised English. On the other hand, particularly combined with the picturesque cult of the scenery, this primitivist enthusiasm could also be, it has been argued, a containing and depoliticising aestheticisation of that nationality by their English colonisers, or by those within their culture who felt the need to come to terms with not just biculturalism but English supremacy. There are more likenesses certainly between the Scottish and American situation than might appear at first. When Robert Crawford describes Macpherson as 'collaborating with the eighteenth-century literati to translate the Highlands through elegiac tones into a model that could be accepted by the British state whose imperial aims he later served',¹¹³ there are clearly similarities with what I have suggested Morton does here. But there are crucial differences too. Firstly, Macpherson was a Highlander: his elegiac regret is not compromised to the extent that Morton's is. As a child, he had seen with his own eyes the brutality afflicted after Culloden on his own family. Much of the putative works of Ossian may have been his invention, but he had earned the right to mourn. Secondly, and conversely, Morton belongs to the imperial power herself: to support the United States was ultimately to collude, however unhappily, in the destruction of the Native Americans. Thirdly, while the Highlanders were no longer a

111. Cf. note 84.

112. Prys Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period' and Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Highland Tradition of Scotland', in Hobsbaun and Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*.

113. Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p. 118.

threat to the English, the Native Americans still were to the States. There, the consolations of primitivism were inevitably premature and fragile – there was much brutality to come. In the American tradition, primitivist texts were always more problematic; they are fantasies compounded of guilt and desire.

In the last chapter, I looked at the political implications earlier in the eighteenth century of the primitivist discontent with civilisation; the construction of the natural man implied that worth was innate, all men were equal, all men should be free. The sentimental primitivism of the latter part of the century substitutes an aristocracy of feeling for an aristocracy of position. These feelings, as in all forms of the cult of sensibility, are manifested in intensity of bodily sensation. Foucault has argued of this period (though not specifically of primitivism) that what has come about is a bourgeois self-affirmation through the body and sexuality as opposed to the aristocrat's affirmation through blood and descent. In other words, one might say, while the 'rational' savage justifies bourgeois political ascendancy, the 'sentimental' savage authenticates bourgeois subjectivity.

But 'bourgeois' is a wide term. In Sarah Morton's case I think the class implications take on further refinements. To return to her feelings about her husband, and to her rhetorical question 'What is man, deprived of honourable, affectionate women?' her answer was, perhaps revealingly, 'A brutal sensualist, or a gloomy misanthropist, whom individuals do not respect, and *the best portion of society* derides and deserts' (my emphasis). Sarah and her husband did not always agree politically. He was a supporter of the French Revolution. She wrote a couple of poems condemning its excesses. He was a member of the Democratic Republicans, who wanted to move (slowly) towards greater democracy. Everything she writes suggests she supports the Federalists, who wanted government to remain within the hands of the educated élite. Although her poem 'The African Chief' was immensely widely read, and included in school readers, her other works, it seems likely, circulated mainly among that élite, and mainly within Boston and its environs. Although within that circle, she was acclaimed by 1791 as the 'Sappho of America', her work was reviewed largely within the magazines subscribed to by those of her class, and indeed her own work, *My Mind and Its Thoughts* was issued with a distinguished subscription list, headed by John Adams, the former President, and other Federal and Massachusetts State leaders. Her husband was involved in the busy and vulgar world of money; she looked back to elegance and refined leisure of her earlier home, which, it appears, had come to represent for her 'the best portion of society'. As with Cooper, I think she may have felt she found in the Native Americans, with their noble-spirited but not necessarily hereditary chiefs, an ideal political analogue for her belief in a republic governed by the best.¹¹⁴ That she took the part of the Native

114. John McWilliams, *The Last of the Mohicans: Civil Savagery and Savage Civility*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995.

Americans against the 'more Savage', lower-class whites, was to be a pattern repeated into the modernist period. Yet one cannot analyse her work without becoming aware of the contradictions and splits within the category 'bourgeois'. If one was to try to express her position in Raymond Williams's terms, she is obviously critical of the 'dominant' masculine world of the United States. Her poem helps to forge a discourse for a subaltern or 'emergent' group – bourgeois women – who in the States in the nineteenth century were to develop their own, and in limited ways, empowering domestic ideology, even if their actual political impact or power would for long be very restricted.¹¹⁵ But in more conventional class terms, it is her husband who represents the 'emergent' group of small entrepreneurs and businessmen, the capitalist base of the present United States. She supports what is soon to be a 'residual' group, the old established mercantile or land-owning bourgeoisie.

It is true in very general terms that primitivism often represented bourgeois, and particularly genteel bourgeois interests, but it is not quite all of the truth. Its imagery still takes on its own implications. Primitivism could, as has been frequently argued of the picturesque with which it was so closely identified, obscure the political realities of poverty and dispossession. But it could also imply and evoke questioning, sometimes radical questioning, of the values of a Eurocentric, utilitarian capitalism. It could acknowledge that there is a price to what western society defines as progress.

Morton's primitivism cannot enable her to see a political future for the Indians. Her attempt to portray their culture faithfully is commendable, but she fails. In *Ouâbi*, Morton's personal investment in the qualities she depicts is implicit throughout, from the self-identification in the very first verse in which 'nature mourns her slighted charms'. When she speaks of her 'artless' theme, using the term that evoked primitive poetry, she is speaking both of her Indian subject and her own poetry. Her poetry, as I have said, is formally quite sophisticated, but 'artless' at this period paradoxically does not mean 'without art' so much as 'without artifice'. It sums up the primitivist aesthetic of feeling before form, truth rather than affectation, in short, poetry of the heart. With its evocation of the natural, the authentic, the feeling, it is the form of verse that Morton feels is appropriate to her as an American patriot, as an admirer of the Indians, and as a woman of sensibility. But perhaps her poem remains so evasive because she cannot come to terms with what was most powerful in eighteenth-century poetic primitivism, a psychology that admitted the dark places of the soul. Consciously she cannot admit faults in the new republic, the Indians or herself. In the end, in spite of *Ouâbi*'s outburst of radical defiance, she assigns the Indian, like herself, to the role of pained martyr.

115. See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 114.

3

THE MYTH OF HIAWATHA

AT THE BEGINNING of Matthiessen's famous study of the birth of American literature, he hesitates for a moment, awkwardly aware of the anomaly of his title. *American Renaissance*? The American writers he celebrates are in his terms no rebirth, but nativity itself – or rather, he suggests, American literature sprang into being in the 1850s like Athene in 'first maturity', fresh from the head of the American 'new man'. This puzzle slips unresolved from sight; it is unquestioned in the works of Matthiessen's many and influential followers.¹ *American Renaissance* appeared in 1941, but its reading of American literature has until very recently remained a paradigm for literary and intellectual historians. Its emphasis on the singularity of the American experience and on the power of the artist as 'myth-maker' burgeoned into a search for what R.W.B. Lewis called 'native American

1. See F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1941; R.W.B. Lewis, *An American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955; H. Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American Frontier as Symbol and Myth*, Camb., Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1950 and 1970; Richard Poirier, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Fiction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1966. For a rigorous deconstruction of the 'myth of the innocent in the garden' see Robert Clark, 'History and Myth in United States Fiction', 1823–1852, PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1981, and his subsequent book, *History, Ideology and Myth in American Fiction, 1823–52*, London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984. See also David Leverenz's comments on the concept of the 'American Renaissance' in *Manhood in the American Renaissance*, p. 10, and David Simpson's comments in *The Politics of American English, 1776–1850*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 257.

mythology'.² Students of nineteenth-century American culture are now familiar with what Lévi-Strauss would call the mythemes which made up the new nation's Genesis story: the American Adam fronting a Virgin Land, the Nation of Futurity without a past, and the Rising Empire whose Manifest Destiny was to take Freedom and Democracy across the continent and to the world.

Myth is a Janus-faced concept; the word is used of the deepest insights and the most deluding lies. For critics like Matthiessen and Lewis, this mythology was an enabling vision, an imaginative truth, which made possible the flowering of American artistic greatness. Matthiessen explicitly sites his work in a purely literary dimension, the work of art in itself, but implicitly affirms this myth of the innocent Adamic American as an historical truth. Henry Nash Smith, in his in many ways immensely valuable study, *Virgin Land*, published in 1950, does not even point out that America was never actually a Virgin Land; he too is held by the myth, even though he wants to explore, as he says in his preface to the 1970 edition, the complicated relation between 'imaginative constructions' and 'history'. In *The American Adam* (1955) R.W. B. Lewis has come to realise that this myth cannot be separated from its effects on action, but he remains torn between his understanding of the dangers of the myth and his entrancement by it. Since then the dialectical exchange between the political and the mythic has become a central concern for American intellectual history. Cultural historians as well as literary critics – Pearce, Slotkin, Fiedler, Horsman, Kolodny, Krupat, Maddox – have in a variety of ways thrown this apolitical reading in doubt: they argue that these nineteenth-century mythic constructs, which also included the savages of America, the empty continent, the vanishing race, legitimised nineteenth-century racism and imperialism.³ This mythic discourse was essential for the western movement, the displacement of the Indians and American expansionism.

2. Lewis, *American Adam*, p. 1.

3. Pearce, *Savagism and Civilisation*, p. 194. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier 1600–1860*, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973. (Slotkin presents his work as a Jungian rather than as a historical reading, but in practice it is both.) Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, and *The Return of the Vanishing America* (1968) London: Paladin, 1972; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*; Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, Arnold Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*, Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989. and Lucy Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. See also Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian*, New York: Knopf, 1975, and, for the earlier period, Francis P. Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Colonialism and the Cant of Conquest*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1975

These two views on American myths are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and without doubt very different aspects of this mythology appear in Thoreau and, say, the scientific defender of slavery, Josiah Nott. The innovative mythic cartography and existential insights of critics like Matthiessen and his followers should not be undervalued, but after Barthes and Foucault it is impossible to remain innocently unaware of the political power of a culture's myths. Nor can it be ignored that these re-tellings of the past are not simple discoveries of 'how it was', nor even of 'how it was thought to be', but are in themselves significant myths for the present. As Slotkin says,

Even scholarly critics who address themselves to the problem of the 'myth of America' have a marked tendency to engage in the manufacture of the myth they pretend to analyse in an attempt to reshape the character of their people or to justify some preconceived or inherited notion of American uniqueness.⁴

Slotkin is not, I think, necessarily right to impute conscious pretence. Yet it remains true that these critics' construction of an Adamic, vigorous, manly, individualistic American literature became the received view for the Cold War period: American cultural studies as the celebration of Americanism. The critiques of this literary viewpoint and the radical rereadings of American history which emerged during the counter-culture days of the late sixties and seventies, became fewer (apart from the new feminist criticism) as the Cold War chill set in once more in the Reaganite years.⁵ More recently – and how far this has been affected by the demise of Americanism's chief ideological enemy, the Soviet system, has still to be analysed – the climate has changed again. There has emerged not just a new critique of the occlusions of the past but, in addition, new accounts of literary history which recognise American heterogeneity, most notably an extraordinarily rich outpouring of works on African American writing, but also a new recognition of Native American literature.⁶ Though neither American deconstructionists nor even new historicists have yet paid much

4. Slotkin, *Regeneration*, p. 4.

5. But see Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Robert Clark, *History, Ideology and Myth* and the collection of essays edited by him, *James Fenimore Cooper*; also *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986 (which includes an essay, 'Symbol and Idea in *Virgin Land*' by H. Nash Smith, regretting his omission of the issue of North American dispossession in his book, *Virgin Land*), and *Reconstructing American Literary History*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986; David Simpson's work on language (*The Politics of the American Language* and 'Destiny Made Manifest: the Styles of Whitman's Poetry', in Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration*, pp. 177–96) provides a powerful critique of earlier attitudes.

6. See for example, on African American writing, the work of such critics as Henry Louis Gates, Houston Baker, Barbara Smith, Val Smith, Barbara Christian, Eric Sundquist, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, and on Native American, Arnold Krupat, David Murray, Gerald Vizenor and Brian Swann.

attention to US cultural history, anxiety over the present US world role has produced, following in the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, some powerful post-structuralist critiques of past and present domination.⁷

Matthiessenian critics, in their search for a 'native American mythology' had one central question: what was it to be an 'American'? As feminist literary critics have pointed out, the 'American' whose definition these critics sought⁸ was always male: in addition, particularly relevant here, he was inevitably white.⁹ 'American', as so often, is in this context a highly selective and ideological term. To return to Matthiessen's uncertainty over his title, 'American' literature can only be thought to begin in the 1850s if one grants the quality of 'Americanism' Matthiessen's own metaphysical meaning. I drew attention in the last chapter to the appearance as early as the late 1780s of self-consciously 'American' writing which his definition disowns. There were numerous histories and anthologies of American literature produced in the nineteenth century which do not share Matthiessen's assumptions. They took it to be, more simply, literature produced in the United States of America, very often, though not always, with American historical or geographical subject matter.¹⁰

Sanford Pinsker wrote in the early 1980s:

Nineteenth-century American literature – and especially that portion we call the 'American Renaissance' – was as much a product of twentieth-century criticism, as it was of writers like Hawthorne, Whitman, Poe and of course Melville.¹¹

Pinsker was talking of the hazards of the 'literary stock exchange' – the disappearance from critical view of writers like Henry Cuyler Bunner and James Whitcomb Riley, the eclipse of Lowell, Holmes and Whittier. But Matthiessen and similar critics did not simply argue that they were defining

7. See Louis Montrose for the reluctance of US new historicists to look at their own culture in 'Professing the Renaissance: the Poetics and Politics of Culture' in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veesser, London and New York: Routledge, 1989. Arnold Krupat is one of the critics influenced by Said: see, *For Those Who Come After: Native American Autobiography*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985, and *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*, Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989, and *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992. David Murray is also influenced by post-structuralism, particularly by Derrida: *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts*, London: Pinter, 1991.

8. See for example, Nina Baym, 'Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 33, 1981 and Judith Fetterly, *The Resisting Reader: a Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978.

9. See Nina Baym on the Anglo-Saxonism of the conventional construction of American literary history, in 'Early Histories of American Literature: a Chapter in the Institution of New England', ed. Gordon Hutner in *The American Literary History Reader*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

10. This was not of course unproblematic in itself. As I said in an earlier note, the use of 'American' as a synonym for 'pertaining to the United States' already plays an ideological sleight of hand. See Introduction, note 1, p. 1.

11. Sanford Pinsker, 'Literature', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 35, 1983.

the correct canon, America's 'great tradition'. For them, what makes this writing valuable is its genuine 'American' essence. Their narrative of literary history describes the 'American writer' striving for his own voice distinct from that of England, the heroes of the story being Emerson, Whitman, Melville, Hawthorne, and Thoreau, and the villains the quisling collaborators Longfellow, Lowell, Bryant, etc. The introduction to an anthology of nineteenth-century American poetry rebukes Bryant, who theoretically understood the need to free American poetry from European traditions, because 'when it came to writing rather than talking about poetry . . . [he] preferred to imitate European models'. Longfellow was even further from grace: his 'deliberate strategy was . . . to deny the existence of a problem. The European forms and legends had been good enough for the European poets, so why should the American poet reject them?' But, this critic continues, in Emerson 'we sense . . . that . . . we are listening for the first time to something which sounds like a genuinely American voice'.¹²

Yet the kind of writing which is now 'sensed' to be 'genuinely American' – most often energetic, organic, at once concrete and symbolic – did not necessarily seem, in the nineteenth century, to be the natural American mode. The issue of 'separateness from Europe' was clearly vital to American nationalism: a fundamental definition of the American was that he was not a European. In the nineteenth as opposed to the eighteenth century, although establishing the difference American/European was still by no means simple, it was by now not as complex and disturbing as establishing that of American/Indian, even though white/Indian were terms which already had their distinctive otherness. If, as Arnold Krupat succinctly puts it, 'to be an American was no longer to be a European without yet becoming an Indian', how was that to be guaranteed?¹³ The term 'American' is historically a split and fissured one. During the course of the eighteenth century its meaning changed from that of aboriginal inhabitant to a European coloniser. Ironically, for example, in the work of Herder, one of the principal theorists of national literature to whom the American writers and critics turned in the early nineteenth century, 'American' still has the former meaning. This division within the word has recently become apparent once more – if R.W.B. Lewis were writing now he could not use 'native American mythology' for the ideas of Melville and Thoreau; that phrase 'Native American' has been reclaimed.

I am not arguing that the compulsion to find an American identity, to invent a self, was any less central to these writers than critics such as Gray and Poirier have argued. Indeed, perhaps the anxious search for an American

12. Richard Gray (ed), *American Verse of the Nineteenth Century*, London and Totowa, N.J.: Dent, 1973, pp. xvi, xvii, xix. Longfellow was always opposed to an isolationist cultural nationalism.

13. Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, p. 236.

identity was an even more painful one than has been suggested. But these critics' partial account of the debate over a national literature erases the problematic by which the United States became a nation. A principal tension has vanished: the problem of the relation of the settler American to the Indian. If that is ignored, the underlying anxieties and drives of that American 'Renaissance' cannot be fully understood.

Herderian Nationalism

This ambiguity within the identity of the 'American' was a crucial element in the debate over a national literature which preoccupied American *belles-lettres* between 1815 and 1850. In the last chapter I looked at Sarah Morton's nationalist poem, 'on a subject wholly American', and her primitivistic evocation of a poetic Indian world. The theories of Romantic nationalism in the period 1815–1850 are prefigured to a large extent in her attempt – and failure – to fuse the European-American and the Native American heritage through her poem. Here again I want to show how this quest for a self-consciously American literature affected the production and reception of one poem, this time *The Song of Hiawatha*, the poem which set out to be at same time the great American epic and an Indian Edda.¹⁴

Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* was the most popular poem of the nineteenth, or indeed of any, century; most popular at any rate if sales are taken as a guide. Published in November 1855 both in Boston and London, it sold 4,000 copies the first day in Boston alone; 100,000 in the first two years. After eighty years a million copies had been sold, but long before then, as the poem went into numerous editions and adaptations it was hailed as the 'literary triumph' of the century.¹⁵ *The Song of Hiawatha* tells the story of a gentle doomed Indian in a vanished pre-colonial world, accepting and acknowledging the rightness of his people's fate. The poem gave to its readers, especially the liberal and humanitarian, a myth which helped to make possible, for America, the acceptance of the displacement and destruction of the Indian, and for Europe, the ravages of imperialism.

Its reception was not entirely adulatory; not only were there those who mocked and parodied the poem, but from the beginning the question of its sources was a matter of recurrent and acrimonious debate. This relationship between Longfellow's text and its pre-texts is the nexus of the racial and

14. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Song of Hiawatha*, London: David Boyne, 1855 (3rd ed.). Future references to the poem (hereafter SH) in the text will be to that edition.

15. Figures on the sales are given by Samuel Longfellow (ed.), *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, with Extracts from his Journals and Correspondents* (2 Vols.), Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1886 (hereafter HWL1 and HWL2 in the text), p. 263 and Eric S. Robertson *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (1887) Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1972, p. 150. 3

political problems inherent in the poem. Lévi-Strauss has said that every myth is a transformation of another myth. I would argue that just as the idea of a fresh, vigorous, masculine 'American voice' was a myth for post-war expansionist America, transformed from the nineteenth-century myths of the new American man, so *The Song of Hiawatha* created a myth for one culture (Euro-American) from the myths of another (Native American).¹⁶ Longfellow's reshaping of the Native American elements of his story mediates an assuaging resolution of the conflicts that lay behind American attitudes to the Indian. The finished poem was acceptable, on one level or another, to nearly all his readers, whatever the apparent differences between their view of the Indian, sympathetic, antagonistic, pitying or analytical. As Roy Harvey Pearce has said, 'he was able to create a noble savage who accommodated his readers', his culture's, and his own needs'.¹⁷

Longfellow himself saw his poem as a contribution to a truly American national literature. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, American nationalist thought was closely patterned after European models. Nationalism was a crucial issue for Germany, Italy, the Scandinavian and Central European countries at this period, and like them Americans were much influenced by Herder and his followers' emphasis on national language and traditional folk culture. Eighteenth-century British enthusiasm for primitive poetry had itself had a powerful influence on Herder, who wrote himself about the works of Ossian, and drew on the ideas of many of the rhetoricians whom I quoted in the last chapter.¹⁸ In their writing he found the association of national characteristics with primitive poetry which was to become so central to his thought. Even though Blair, for example, saw all primitive poetry as the product of a similar state of society, he ascribed different characteristics to different traditions, according to the 'spirit' of its nation, which is itself the product of environment:

Diversity of climate and manner of living will, however, occasion some diversity in the strain of the first Poetry of nations; chiefly, according as those nations are of a more ferocious, or of a more gentle spirit; and according as they advance faster or slower in the arts of civilisation. Thus we find all the remains of the ancient Gothic Poetry remarkably fierce, and breathing nothing but slaughter and blood; while the Peruvian and the Chinese Songs turned, from the earliest times, upon milder subjects.¹⁹

16. One could say the mythic transformations are more complex than that: although the constituent parts, the story elements, of Longfellow's myth are taken from Indian culture, the poem's structure and message is a re-formulation of other contemporary American myths about Indian-white relationships, as I will explain later in the chapter.
17. Pearce, *Savagism and Civilisation*, p. 194.
18. For the influence of British writers (mainly Scottish) on Herder see Mayo, *Herder, Berlin, Vico and Herder*, p. xxi, and Lois Whitney, 'Thomas Blackwell: a Disciple of Shaftesbury', *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 5:4, 1926. According to Steve Rizzo, Herder 'awaited the German translation of Blair's *Critical Dissertation* more eagerly than that of the Ossianic poetry': 'A Bulky and Foolish Treatise? Hugh Blair's *Critical Dissertation* Reconsidered', in *Ossian Revisited*, ed. Gaskill, p. 129.
19. Blair, *Lectures*, p. 503.

David Herd in his introduction to his collection of *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs, Heroic Ballads, etc* (1776) expressed a similarly environmentalist view:

Every nation, at least every ancient and unmixed nation, hath its peculiar style of musical expression, its peculiar mode of melody, modulated by the joint influence of climate and government, character and situation, as well as by the formation of the organs.²⁰

For the Scots, this re-discovery and/or invention of their poetic traditions was, as I mentioned in the last chapter, important for creating a new sense of national particularity and identity.²¹ Herder developed much further such ideas about the diversity and specificity of different cultures. Folk literature was 'the original and spontaneous expression of the national soul'. 'A poet', Herder wrote of Ossian, 'is the creator of the nation around him. He gives them a world and has their souls in his hand to lead them to that world.' Just as Blair had seen primitive poetry in a universal sense as the creative expression of the childhood of human society, Herder believed that each nation and its literature grew organically, by analogy with the human life cycle, from the childhood days of the primitive folk to the maturity of civilisation. What for Herder formed and enriched a later national literature was the spiritual power of these early traditions. For him, as Isaiah Berlin puts it, 'human groups . . . are made one by common traditions and common memories, of which the principal link and vehicle – indeed, more than vehicle, the very incarnation – is language'. 'Has a nation', Herder asked, 'anything more precious than the language of its fathers? In it dwell its entire world of tradition, history, religion and principles of existence; its whole heart and soul.'²² For Germany and the Scandinavian countries, with ample heritages of traditional literature like the *Nibelungen Lied*, the *Eddas*, and the *Sagas*, and a strong sense of their national language, this was a fruitful and rewarding focus. For others it was more problematic. According to H. Mumford Jones, some countries – Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary – forged whole national folklores in an attempt to cope with their deficiency. But Jones says, 'happily . . . no such problems trouble American literary history'.²³

I would argue the reverse: American writers found the Herderian paradigm for cultural nationalism particularly bewildering. They shared their

20. Herd, *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, p. ix. This is an early example in this context of physical characteristics being associated with race: his stress on the 'unmixed' nation is another early pointer to what was to become a powerful construct of racial purity.
21. Fiona Stafford, in *The Sublime Savage*, interprets Macpherson's motives as those of patriotic pride in Highland culture, but Robert Crawford, in *Devolving English Literature* argues Ossian's refined primitiveness played a part in the construction of a new improved, Anglified Scotland.
22. Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, p. 165. See also on organic metaphor in Herder, Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, pp. 193–4.
23. H. Mumford Jones, *The Theory of American Literature* (1948), Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965.

language with England, but the only likely candidates for 'folk' were the Native Americans. Walter Channing expressed the problem at some length in his 'Essay on American language and literature' in the first year of *North American Review*, 1815. 'National literature,' he wrote, 'seems to be the product, the legitimate product, of a national language.' America lacked literature 'because it possesses the same language with a nation totally unlike it in almost every relation'. America would have been better off if England had taken her effete and decadent language and left them with a confused Babel of tongues. The country's only national literature is 'the oral literature of its aborigines': the sole language appropriate to the American land is the Indian's which is

as bold as his own unshackled conceptions, and as rapid as his step. It is now as rich as the soil on which he was nurtured, and ornamented with every blossom that blows on his path. It is now elevated and soaring, for his image is the eagle, and now precipitous and hoarse as the cataract among whose mists he is descanting.²⁴

At this stage, of course, oratory would be the only 'oral literature' Channing would be likely to know, and his romantic enthusiasm is a continuation of the earlier primitivist aesthetics – even the ever-present mists on Ossian's sea-cliffs reappear here, thrown up by North American waterfalls. His praise of the Indian languages reiterates the much repeated assertion that the Indian use of words was inherently poetic because of their closeness to nature, a closeness which the white American had lost.

Channing's was an extreme and pessimistic statement of the settlers' alienation from both the language of nature and the language of England, an alienation which is for him a powerful symbol of the impossibility of American creativity. Others followed him in arguing repeatedly in the coming years that white American society was too new, too democratic, too utilitarian and too mercenary to produce poetry. It had neither England's cultural continuity, nor the Native Americans' natural spontaneity. Many nineteenth-century studies of Native American languages, which the very policy of attempting to civilise the Indian necessitated, described them in terms of an Adamic language, where the word and the thing are one, unlike the artificial fallen language of the modern world, where words and meaning had only arbitrary relationships.²⁵ Discovering the polysynthetic structure of Indian languages, David Simpson says, 'many . . . linguists enthused over the apparent absence of distinct verbal elements in the Amerindian languages, seeing [them] as expressive of paradisaical integration, of a oneness with the world that their own culture had probably lost'.²⁶

24. *North American Review*, Vol. 1, 1815, p. 313.

25. The idea of an Adamic language was a very old one, but it had a resurgence at the romantic period, being particularly important for Blake's work, as Robert Essick has demonstrated. Essick, *William Blake*, passim.

26. Simpson, 'Destiny Made Manifest', pp. 190–1.

When linguists like Du Ponceau and Pickering discovered that even the sense of the verb 'to be' was always incorporated within acts or feelings, they were convinced, according to Simpson, that

they speak forth a primary, integrated state of being in which the self–other and verb–noun differentiations so prominent in other languages never come into being . . . [and] reflect a society in which the anxieties of alienation and exploitation are minimal or even absent.²⁷

Americans, on the other hand, were deeply troubled by the alienations within their own culture. All the same, the hope of a national literature which would create wholeness out of these fissures persisted, and was a favourite subject for Phi Beta Kappa orations, essays, and lectures, which would call for writers to use the American landscape and the Native American as subject matter. Friedrich Schlegel's *Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern*, published in translation in Philadelphia in 1818 and widely read, echoed Herder's evocation of a national literature based on 'a plentiful store of those national recollections and associations, which are lost in a great measure during the dark ages of infant society, but which it forms the great object of the poetical art to perpetuate and adorn'. H. Mumford Jones comments that

The wide diffusion of this doctrine explains why a thousand poets struggled to turn Indian legends and colonial tales into verse; why Hawthorne complained that America was too lacking in dim and picturesque antiquity; why even as late as 1879, Henry James wrote that American sunshine was too raw, American landscape too juvenile, and American architecture without manors, country houses, thatched cottages, cathedrals and ivied ruins!²⁸

In the first half-century and more of the republic, the Indian was the obvious route to a past, and therefore the most important literary symbol of the American. Yet although the Native American, as my first chapter argued, had been a visual icon of revolutionary America from the 'Mohawks' of the Boston Tea-Party onwards, it was in the period 1815–35 that what Jones calls the Great Debate on a National Literature was at its height. Sarah Morton, in *Ouâbi*, and Philip Freneau, whose Indian poems remain his best known, were among many in the late eighteenth century to use Native American themes to produce 'American' poetry, but in the years following the American Revolution few writers did well, and interest in these works appears to be largely limited to the élite upper bourgeoisie, who formed *Ouâbi*'s main readers. Matthew

27. Simpson, *Politics of American English*, p. 221.

28. Mumford Jones, *Theory of American Literature*, p. 64. As Jones points out, many American men of letters spent time at German universities. Herder's *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* was translated in 1800, *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* in 1801 and *The Treatise on the Origin of Language* in 1827. Herder's influence, as Wolf Koepke points out in *Johann Gottfried Herder: Innovator Through the Ages*, Bonn: Bouvier, 1982, has not yet been properly charted. *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, from which Emerson derives the idea of the Poet as Prophet, is often the only one of his works cited in the context of American nineteenth-century writing.

Carey, publisher of *The American Museum*, was one of the few literary entrepreneurs to be successful. According to Emory Elliott, there was too much sense of cultural fragmentation in the post-Revolution for writers to establish much of an audience:

Patriotic American poems were left unbought in the bookstores, magazines began to fold after only a few issues, and critics grew impatient and condemned American literary work as weak imitations of English or classical models or as unpolished products of the forest.²⁹

It was after only three decades and the bitter 1812 war with England, that the quest for a definitively 'American' literature gained a new urgency. A whole series of long poems were published on Native American subjects, with such names as *Yamodyen*, *Yonnonديو*, *Escalala* and even more dramatically, *Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak*, or *Black Hawk*, and *Scenes in the West*.³⁰ Cooper's *Leather-Stocking* novels attempted to do for America what Scott had done for Scotland. Plays about Indians became the rage.³¹ For twenty years after Channing's melancholy exordium, East-Coast literati continued to see the Indian as noble savage, primitive poet and national symbol, although how such images would forge (so to speak) a national literature remained problematic.

As the westward expansion gained momentum the climate changed. Public sympathy for the Native American diminished. In the 1830s Catlin's 'Indian Gallery' of portraits of heroic and handsome chiefs had been a runaway success. In the 1850s he went bankrupt. In the 1840s there were still those like Walter Gilmore Simms and Cornelius Matthews³² who felt the Native American must be the centre of a true American literature, but by 1852 Francis Parkman, writing on Cooper's novels in the *North American Review*, could say complacently:

Civilisation has a destroying as well as a creating power. It is exterminating the buffalo and the Indian, over whose fate too many lamentations real or affected have been sounded for us to renew them here.³³

In fact, the enthusiasm for the noble savage had always been fragile. In 1838, a earlier sceptical reviewer of Cooper had written:

He has presented the aborigines of this continent in far too flattering colors. The naturally grave and taciturn manners of the Indians have won them credit for far more heroic qualities of mind, than any they really possess. We do not believe,

29. Emory Elliott, *Revolutionary Writers: Literature and Authority in the New Republic, 1725-1810*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 45.

30. See Schramm, 'Hiawatha and its Predecessors', *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 11, 1932.

31. See Walter J. Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment: the Drama of the American People to 1828*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971, pp. 247-51.

32. See Lucy Maddox, *Removals*, pp. 38-41, and on Simms, William Clements, "'Tokens of Literary Faculty": Native American Literature in Euroamerican Translation in the Early Nineteenth Century', in *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, ed. Brian Swann, pp. 37-8.

33. *North American Review*, Vol. 74, 1852, p. 151.

that magnanimity is a common trait among them, and to the virtue of self-denial they can certainly lay no claim.³⁴

This reviewer represented a growing scorn for both Indians and primitivist thought. Primitivist language had in any case always described the Native American in deeply equivocal terms. In 1805, Amos Stoddard, for example, was expressing, in a passage which is largely a paraphrase of Blair, his ambivalent praise for the natural poetry of the Native Americans:

They speak from nature, not from education. They utter what their subject inspires and never advert to approved models as their standard. Their language is barren; and hence they are obliged to resort to metaphor, or to use much circumlocution in the expression of their sentiments. This is doubtless the practice of all illiterate nations. All languages are figurative in proportion to their barrenness: and this is more pleasing and powerful than the smooth harmony of studied periods. Art will do much but nature much more. Perhaps a profound knowledge of Roman and Grecian literature would have obscured the genius of Shakespeare. Who at this day, except the untutored sons of nature, can utter the language of Ossian and Homer? What man, trammelled with the forms of modern art, can speak like Logan, mentioned in the notes on Virginia? The language of nature can alone arrest attention, persuade, convince and terrify; and such is the language of the Indians.³⁵

Commenting on these words of Stoddard's, David Murray points out that when Jefferson praised Logan's speech, it was in the context of his rebuttal of Buffon's arguments for the debilitating environment of the New World, that is, Jefferson was speaking of Logan as an inhabitant of the American continent like himself. For Stoddard, as Murray says, 'what is implicitly in Jefferson a continuity between primitive and civilized in America, becomes an opposition'.³⁶ That the opposition is not solely in terms of civilised loss. Stoddard, whose praise for the poetry of the untutored sons of nature is tempered by his repeated emphasis on the deficiencies of their language, believed firmly that Indians should be educated to be farmers, 'to wipe away their savage manners' and 'restore them to the dignity of human nature'.³⁷ As with their 'barren' language, their picturesque virtues grew out of their practical deficiencies, and needed correction.³⁸ Implicit in his romantic evocation of primitive is the conviction of their inferiority: when the romantic cult began to fade, the Indian policy of the American nation would still be based on that conviction.

34. *North American Review*, Vol. 46, 1838, p. 11.

35. Sheehan, *Seeds*, pp. 108–9. Sheehan himself dismisses these claims somewhat superciliously: 'Prolix to the point of exhaustion and painstaking in the care with which they unfolded an argument of seemingly immense complexity, the natives larded their speech with repetition and couched it in stereotyped metaphors. . . . To many . . . this pictorial language sounded like profound eloquence' (p. 107). Sheehan accepts on its face value the eighteenth-century theory that the Indians could not express abstractions, apparently not realising this idea was refuted by Sapir and Whorf in the 1920s.

36. Murray, *Forked Tongues*, p. 41.

37. Sheehan, *Seeds*, p. 109.

38. Cf. Murray's comment on this notion of 'barren' yet 'poetic' language: 'In terms of language it is its very limitations which both chain it to the concrete and, put in a different context, allow it to be figural and poetic.' *Forked Tongues*, p. 36.

If representations of the Indian in the late 1780s, even among east-coast liberals, had been unstable and shifting, between 1800 and 1850 attitudes to the Indian (and the black) in general hardened. This particular cult of the noble savage was perhaps (partly at any rate) what Foucault might call a tactic in the overall ideological strategy of establishing the distance between the Euro-American and the Indian. According to Lucy Maddox, the writings about Native Americans that appeared in school readers and literary magazines emphasised the “melancholy” destiny of the “red man”, presenting ‘the individual Indian’s death as a synecdoche for the extinction of all North American Indians’.³⁹ Even if Cooper’s good Indians with their ‘red gifts’ are more virtuous than corrupt whites, they are still inferior to those whites who use their ‘white gifts’ well. Natty Bumppo, the white frontiersman, is the hero, with all the bravery and wilderness skills of the Indian, but a white soul as well. The tragic, doomed figure of the noble savage was always less popular and prevalent than the horror-heavy captivity story; Cooper’s skill was to combine the two. The idea of the vanishing Indian is implicit in these novels: Cooper’s novels are historical, and Chingachgook is a creature of the past. A new future must be constructed without him. Like Ouâbi, and Hiawatha, his passing may be mourned, but not prevented.⁴⁰

The Growth of Racism

If Cooper’s vision ultimately confirmed the inferiority of the Native American, it was not so thoroughly derogatory as the wilful and blatant racism of many of his contemporaries. The imagery that identified the Indian as a symbol of American liberty was disappearing or at best etiolated. What began to act much more powerfully on what film studies calls the ‘social imaginary’ was the idea of the Manifest Destiny of the nation, spreading out westward over a Virgin Land. In this scenario a very different view of the Indian was needed from that of the natural man of the revolutionary rhetoric, when the young United States saw itself as the standard-bearer of a new libertarian era for mankind.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Reginald Horsman has argued, ‘many Americans were less concerned with the liberation of other peoples by the spreading of republicanism than with the limitless expansion of a superior American Anglo-Saxon race’.⁴¹ No longer did it appear, as it had

39. Maddox, *Removals*, p. 30.

40. See Clark, *History, Ideology and Myth* and James Fenimore Cooper for critiques of Cooper but for a defence see McWilliams, *The Last of the Mohicans: Civil Savagery and Savage Civility*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995.

41. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 6.

in the heat of Revolutionary enthusiasm . . . that the American mission was to be a mission for all mankind, but the practical realities of both slavery and expansion soon made it apparent that the mission was to be more parochial, and that nationalistic and personal desires were to overwhelm universal hopes.⁴²

This process, as I have argued, had begun in the very first years of the new republic, but then racial attitudes were contradictory and confused, sometimes idealistic, more often antagonistic in a pragmatic, unsystematic way. By the 1850s there was a widespread fixed belief in the superiority of the white Anglo-Saxon, a racial theory which played an important part in stiffening the ideology that justified Manifest Destiny.

In his book, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, Horsman suggests two main ideological supports for this mid-century racialism: firstly, an already established belief, inherited from Europe, in the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon branch of the Caucasian race, and secondly, the newly emerged 'scientific racism' of the American school of ethnology. Although the origins of scientific racism were also largely European, and some of those European manifestations had earlier been resisted strongly by the Revolutionaries, American ethnologists in the nineteenth century were in the forefront of the development of this new racialist science. Influential exponents of its doctrines like Samuel Morton and Josiah Nott popularised the claim that anthropometry, the study of the relative sizes of skulls, forearms, penises, etc., could establish a hierarchy of races, whose hereditary and unchanging differences proved their totally separate origin, and the superiority of the white races to all others.⁴³

Anglo-Saxonism, on the other hand, first entered America as part of the Whig tradition, where it took the form of an idealising admiration of Anglo-Saxon institutions, not, as it later became, of Anglo-Saxon blood. In this form it became part of revolutionary ideology: the Americans claimed to be returning to Anglo-Saxon liberty which the tyrannical British denied them. In the first half of the nineteenth century more specific notions of race, blood and nationhood, and the myth of the vital, potent, liberty-loving Anglo-Saxon or Germanic breed came to the States, sometimes directly from post-Herderian German romantics, but more often through such writers as Coleridge or Carlyle.⁴⁴ These ideas were pervasive in Britain too, and an important element in British Imperialism, but in the States they took on a new mythic dimension by coalescing with the images of the Providential Nation and the Chosen People tropes that had remained

42. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 115.

43. See John S. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859–1900*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971 and William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Towards Race in America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

44. According to Horsman, Herder himself warns against excessive German nationalism, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 27. Berlin also argues that Herder's nationalism was not political: see *Vico and Herder*, pp. 180–1.

alive since the days of the Pilgrim Fathers, and which too had played their own part in the Revolutionary rhetoric.⁴⁵

Americans, unlike the English or other Europeans in the nineteenth century, lived alongside the races that paid the price for the white expansion. Horsman has suggested that this was one of the most potent reasons for the efflorescence of racialism in the United States: 'in America,' he points out, 'the dramatic proximity of different peoples gave immediacy to what was a general problem of European culture'.⁴⁶ The Enlightenment ideals of the Revolution, particularly the defence of natural rights, were at odds with the continuation of slavery and the dispossession of the Native Americans, as radical Americans continued to argue. Herein lay the importance of scientific racism, the other ingredient in the formation of the new repressive and rigid orthodoxy, for it offered justification for American actions in these fields. Although many disagreed with the polygenetic arguments of scientists like Morton, Nott and Gliddon, their views mapped equally easily on to the more widely acceptable belief in the development of separate varieties within the single human species.⁴⁷ Certainly, until the end of the century no-one seriously challenged their view that anthropometry proved the inferiority of the non-white races, even though it depended on evidence taken from ludicrously small and unbalanced samples, relying on totally inconsistent ways of taking measurements which in any case proved nothing. The corollary of this 'scientifically' established inferiority was taken to be, as the *Southern Quarterly Review* put it in 1851, that 'slavery . . . or extermination, seems to be the fate of the dark races, when invaded by or otherwise brought into juxtaposition with the white'.⁴⁸ There was a law of nature, the southern defender of slavery George Fitzhugh argued, 'that enables and impels the stronger race to oppress and exterminate the weaker. . . . The Indian, like the savage races of Canaan, is doomed to extermination, and those who most sympathise with his fate would be the first to shoot him if they lived on the frontier.' Slavery was a kindness as black slaves were growing in number while the Indians dwindled. As property, black slaves were treasured by Anglo-Saxons; merely as black *men*, they would vanish.⁴⁹

45. Ronald Takaki's study, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, New York: Knopf, 1978, deals illuminatingly with the fusion of traditional religious and new racial ways of thinking.

46. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 97.

47. See Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion*, London and New York: Routledge, 1988, and George W. Stocking, 'The Dark-Skinned Savage: The Image of Primitive Man in Evolutionary Anthropology', in his collection of essays, *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (1968), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, for the pervasive presence of racial hierarchies in later nineteenth-century theories of unilinear evolution.

48. Quoted Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 156.

49. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 273.

These ideas had their most vocal and insistent proponents in the South, but the pervasiveness and complexity of scientific racism is shown by the apparently surprising fact that it was accepted by many abolitionists, people like the scientist, Louis Agassiz and the writer and sage, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who believed in the blacks' innate inferiority, but still thought slavery was an injustice which demeaned the whites who practised it. The Indians too were now seen by many in the north and in the south as inherently racially inferior, and therefore incapable of improvement: it was, Nott and Gliddon wrote, 'vain to talk of civilising them. You might as well attempt to change the nature of the buffalo'.⁵⁰ The arguments put forward earlier by Jefferson, Knox and their successors, that the Indian could progress and be assimilated, were overwhelmed by those who insisted that 'you might as well expect the red man to change the colour of his skin as his habits and pursuits . . . if he cannot be emigrated he should be exterminated'.⁵¹ Indians could not be allowed to impede the American mission.

The shift towards this new doctrine of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority was wide-spread, but while some seized upon it opportunistically to justify the Indians wars, others were more perplexed. Francis Prucha argues that the leaders within the government Indian service were always high-minded evangelicals, who could not have accepted the polygenetic scientific racism, and never lost their commitment to the 'civilisation' of the Indians.⁵² It is true that between warfare and removals those in charge of Indian affairs consistently returned to a norm of attempted Americanisation, always the official policy. But that gentler way of eliminating Indians was constantly under threat at this period. Evangelicals believed as much as any in the American destiny, which could not often wait. Andrew Jackson, planning the removal westward of Indian tribes, asked as early as 1830:

What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization and religion.⁵³

Maintaining the high moral tone of the Founding Fathers, though without their niggling doubts about Indian rights, Jackson here insists it is the 'good man', happy with the blessings of American religion, who understands that Indians must not prevent the westward movement. The tension in Knox's day, between concern to act in a humanitarian way towards the Indians, and pressure from the frontier and the army, in the mid-century resolves itself into the belief that the westward movement was morally right. Luke Lea, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1850–53, wrote in a report:

50. Nott and Gliddon, quoted Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 136.

51. *Annals of Congress*, 1842–3, quoted Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 205.

52. Prucha, *The Great Father*, pp. 334–8.

53. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 202.

When civilization and barbarism are brought in such relation that they cannot coexist together . . . it is right that the superiority of the former should be asserted and the latter compelled to give way. It is, therefore, no matter of regret or reproach that so large a portion of our territory has been wrested from the aboriginal inhabitants and made the happy abodes of an enlightened and Christian people.

According to Lea, conflict was largely due to the 'Indians' own perverse and vicious nature'.⁵⁴

The contradictions and power of the new racialist ideology emerged with particular clarity in the move to annex the Spanish-American territories. For Anglo-Saxonism, the Celts formed an inferior branch of the white race, an argument used in England to justify the oppression of the Irish. In the States, the considerable admixture of Celtic blood in the population was ignored for the most part in patriotic rhetoric, but in the language that justified the Mexican War much was made of the inferiority of the Celtic Spanish, as well as of their intermarriage with the Indians, and of the regeneration that Anglo-Saxon blood and institutions would bring. But annexing the 'mongrel races, half-savage and half-civilized' of Mexico, or the 'indolent, mixed race of California' also posed problems. Some argued that this mixed race would simply fade away like the northern Indians, but many were less sanguine, and depicted with horror the undesirability, indeed, impossibility, of 'converting the black, white, red, mongrel, miserable population of Mexico . . . into free and enlightened American citizens, entitled to all the privileges which we enjoy'.⁵⁵

This horror at miscegenation can hardly be said to be new, but it certainly was a potent revival.⁵⁶ Intermarriage was much less common in North America than in Latin America. Even Sarah Morton's central image of the new America as that of the marriage of the Native American woman and the European man was unusual. According to Louise Barnett, in the popular US fiction of the late eighteenth century beautiful Native American women were always saving the lives of American men, but they never ever married them.⁵⁷ The man went back to a pure white woman waiting patiently for him. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cora, the daughter of the Governor Monroe, and Uncas, Chingachgook's son, may be attracted to one another, but on the one hand nothing comes of it, and on the other we discover Cora has some black blood, which could explain the whole thing. Jefferson himself when President, had indeed advocated intermarriage as a means of assimilating Indians,⁵⁸ and Knox had

54. Prucha, *The Great Father*, p. 324.

55. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, pp. 210, 240 and 242.

56. The nineteenth-century obsession with miscegenation is discussed at length by Robert J. C. Young, in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London: Routledge, 1995.

57. See Louise R. Barnett, *The Ignoble Savage: American Literary Racism, 1790–1890*, Westwood, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1975, p. 113.

58. Sheehan, *Seeds*, pp. 174–6.

cautiously suggested the same thing, but with equivocations that betrayed his unease. In a letter he wrote in 1792 he wondered if a government bounty could be paid to induce

sober young men to intermarry (with Indians). . . . Some females who have in the large cities strayed from virtuous paths and have seen the errors of their ways, might be married to the sons of the wilderness and have good pensions. . . . The intercourse of the white man's world would in a period of 20 to 30 years, tame whole tribes and bring them into the character of husbandmen.⁵⁹

His instinctive racist (and sexist) abhorrence of chaste white women mating with the Indians, to say nothing of the fact bribes would be necessary, already weakens his argument that the Indian could through this 'intercourse' be reborn as American. By the mid-nineteenth century for many Americans such ideas were inconceivable. The natural history of the red races and black races, for which Jefferson had called, had apparently 'proved' not only, as he had suspected, or perhaps wished, that the blacks were inferior, but that so also were the reds, and assimilation was not to be contemplated. Nott, who unequivocally believed that the 'ruling races of the world' should be kept 'pure', argued quite simply that the Indians' natural fate could not be averted:

Do what we will, the Indian remains the Indian still. He is not a creature susceptible of civilization; and all contact of him with the white race is death. He dwindles before them – imbibing all their vices and none of their virtues. He can no more be civilized than the leopard can change his spots. His race is run, and probably he has performed his earthly mission. He is now gradually disappearing, to give place to a higher order of beings. The order of nature must have its course.⁶⁰

The Indian, unchanging like the leopard, but vanishing along with the buffalo, was caught in a mesh of metaphors and metonyms that once more meant only one thing: there was no room for the Indians in America. The syntagmatic association of the Indian and nature, which in primitivist language had exemplified their virtues, had become in the evolutionary language of the nineteenth century proof that westward expansion and the laws of nature were one.

In first half of the nineteenth century those in any way part of the literary world were a small, privileged but liberal élite, mainly based in the New England area. They were the last to be touched by this tide of racialism. Yet even so, by the 1840s and 1850s a national literature on Herderian lines seemed to most no longer possible or even desirable. All that continued to play any part was the celebration of the American landscape, less problematic than its inhabitants. The transcendentalists rejected ideas of nationalism for a concern with the subjective and individual, or saw

59. Callaghan, *Henry Knox*, p. 322.

60. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, p. 155.

American literature as the expression of liberty and republicanism rather than of a national soul. As Margaret Fuller put it: 'America, if awake to the design of Heaven . . . [will] become the principal exponent . . . of the new Idea of republican liberty and justice which agitates the sleep of Europe'.⁶¹ James Russell Lowell in 1849 could declare: 'Mere nationality is no more nor less than so much provincialism, and will be found but a treacherous antiseptic for any poem.' There is nothing primitive about America: 'Intellectually, we were full-grown at the start.'⁶²

Lowell's view prefigures the attitude that was to remain for the rest of the century. That first uncertain postcolonial quest for national validity was over. The 1850s saw the widespread establishment of these ideas of Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy, with America as the foremost point of the evolutionary chain, a way of thinking smoothly grafted on to the still present pre-romantic paradigm of eighteenth-century American thought – the belief in Progress. America in each case was its crown. Race became more important than Nation. Mainstream American writers could once more claim their roots in England, while maintaining that the Americans had evolved onwards to a superior and separate identity. In the latter years of the century the quality of American difference was seen to be an ethical one. Whitman could be repudiated on moral grounds for a spurious Americanism, and be told by Henry James: 'This democratic, liberty-loving American populace, this stern and war-trying people, is a great civilizer. It is devoted to refinement.'⁶³

The earlier notion of a national literature had been posited on the possibility of unifying the different elements within American society, a marriage of Indian and American culture, as in Sarah Morton's *Ouâbi*. By the 1850s the belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority, and in the savage Indian as the antithesis of the civilised American, made such hoped-for unity not just unnecessary and undesirable, but impossible. The national literature debate was a version of the conflict present from the founding of the nation between the Republican ideals of liberty and natural rights and the pragmatic, political restriction of those rights for various groups, an extension of the conflict faced by Henry Knox. Manifest Destiny and scientific racism politically resolved and removed this contradiction by making liberty the preserve of the highly evolved, but inappropriate to the lower races.⁶⁴ In the same way, the development of literary Anglo-Saxonism resolved the implacable problem posed for Americans by cultural nationalism, and freed them from the impossible effort to graft American literature on to an Indian past.

61. Margaret Fuller, quoted Benjamin Spencer, *The Quest for Nationality*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1957, p. 173.

62. *North American Review*, Vol. 69, 1849, p. 200.

63. Quoted Pinsker, 'Literature'.

64. John Stuart Mill argues the same in *On Liberty*, in *Three Essays*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Longfellow and his Indian Edda

If Herderian Romantic nationalism had faltered in the States well before 1855, Longfellow, seemingly oblivious to this, remained interested in the possibility of an American literature constructed in what many of his contemporaries felt was an out-of-date form. As his biographer, George Austin, said, he lived among the Transcendentalists without being one of them.⁶⁵ Although his close friend Louis Agassiz was an important early exponent of the theory of scientific racism, Longfellow himself appears to have remained quite unaware of the changing climate of racial attitudes around him.

Longfellow had always had a sympathetic interest in the Indians. Even at school he had written a speech for King Philip in terms of most melancholy compassion: 'Alas the sky is overcast with dark and blustering clouds . . . our race . . . fall like withered leaves when Autumn strips the forest. Lo! I hear singing and sobbing: 'tis the death-song of a mighty nation, the last requiem over the grave of the fallen.'⁶⁶ He admired Herder, and those writers who followed his precepts. The Scandinavian poet, Bishop Tegnér, whose *Frithiofs Saga* he reviewed for the *North American Review* in 1837, made a deep impression on him. Tegnér's poem was a model for any aspiring national poet in the Herderian tradition. Based on Scandinavian legend, this was 'an epic poem, composed of a series of ballads, each describing some event in the hero's life . . . written in the spirit of the past; in the spirit of the Old North'. Tegnér has invoked the spirit of the early Scandinavian bard, 'The sky-lark in the dawn of years/The poet of the morn'. Through the poem one can 'converse with the Genius of the Place . . . the primeval simplicity . . . solitude and stillness of this Northern Lane'.⁶⁷

At this stage Longfellow had no knowledge of Native American legends that he could have similarly adapted, but the principles on which Tegnér had built his saga were those Longfellow was to follow when he wrote *The Song of Hiawatha*. Tegnér believed in refining the tales of the past to suit them to the civilised present:

In the saga appears much, magnificent and heroic, which is valid for all times, and therefore both could and ought to be retained; but, in addition, one thing or another, raw, savage, barbaric, which either ought to be entirely cut out, or at least softened. . . . On the one hand the poem ought not to strike too much against our more refined habits and milder way of thinking; but on the other, the national, the vigorous, the natural ought not to be sacrificed.⁶⁸

65. George Lowell Austin, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: His Life, His Works, His Friendships*, Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1883, p. 284.

66. Cecil B. Williams, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, New York: Twayne, 1964, pp. 36–7.

67. *North American Review*, Vol. 45, 1837, p. 151.

68. Quoted Andrew Hilen, *Longfellow and Scandinavia. A Study of the Poet's Relationship with Northern Languages and Literature*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947, p. 62; Robert Crawford sees much the same process going on in Macpherson's production of the 'primitive' Ossian (*Devolving English Literature*, p. 35).

This version of romantic nationalism was an invaluable model for Longfellow. It fitted well with his prudish Boston gentility, and was in tune with his own concept of an American poem – not verse that was ‘shaggy and unshorn’ but an epic which, while drawing on native subject-matter, would prove through its civilised refinement America’s cultural coming of age.⁶⁹

However it was not till the early 1850s that Longfellow began to see the possibility of an ‘Indian Edda’. He came across the work of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who had collected a wide range of American Indian legends, as well as information on their customs and lifestyle. Professional ethnographers scarcely existed then, although in later life Schoolcraft was employed by the government to collect information about the Indians, and so can perhaps be so described, even though his work was always unsystematic and fragmented. Schoolcraft had begun accumulating information about the Indians, when, as a failed business man, he joined an expedition with Cass to find the source of the Mississippi. He wrote a successful account of this journey, became an Indian agent, married a half-Ojibway wife, and finally obtained the job of collecting data on Indian tribes for the government. Schoolcraft himself had very contradictory attitudes towards the Indians, at one moment lyricising about their closeness to nature, the next censoriously pointing to their indolence and vice. He was converted to fundamentalist Presbyterianism, and his wife became a drug-addict, both of which experiences darkened his view of the Indian character. But, even so, he continually returns to the poetic possibilities of their traditions, and saw in his material a solution to the Herderian problem of an American folk literature.⁷⁰

In one of his publications, *Onéota, or Characteristics of the Red Race of America*, published in 1845, Schoolcraft included a chapter called ‘A Prospective American Literature superinduced upon Indian Mythology’. Here he wrote:

In bringing forward his collection of the historical and imaginative traditions of the Indian tribes, the writer has been aware, that he might, herein, be at the same time the medium of presenting the germs of a future mythology, which in the hands of our poets, and novelists, and fictitious writers, might admit of being formed and moulded to the purposes, of a purely vernacular literature . . . Germany has, to a great extent, reinvigorated ancient literature, and made it national and peculiar, by an appeal to her own myths and popular legends, while our writers, for the most part, are yet endeavouring to re-do, re-enact, and re-produce, what the bards and essayists of England alone have forever settled, and rendered it

69. Longfellow rejected a ‘shaggy and unshorn’ poetic mode of American poetry in his novel, *Kavanaugh: A Tale*, London: George Slater: London, 1849.

70. For biographical information on Schoolcraft, see Robert Bieder’s PhD dissertation, ‘The Development of Anthropological Thought in the United States, 1780–1851’, University of Minnesota, 1972, his book, *Science Encounters the Indian: 1820–1880, the Early Years of American Ethnology*, Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1986, and John Finley Freeman, ‘Religion and Personality in Anthropology of Henry Schoolcraft’ in *Journal of History of the Behavioural Sciences*, Vol. 1, 1965.

hopeless to eclipse. Originality of literature, if it can be produced in the West, as the critics of Europe leave us room to think, must rely on the scenes, associations and institutions of the West.⁷¹

Then in his role as natural scientist, Schoolcraft followed this piece of romantic nationalism with a plea for accuracy, castigating the crude versions of the Indian in the popular press, and urging fidelity to the detail of Indian life. Although this contiguity may seem surprising now, it is another example of the close association of early ethnography and the romantic cults of the primitive and picturesque which I looked at in the last chapter. This romance of the exotic in all its precise particularity finds its way into *The Song of Hiawatha*.

Unlike Sarah Morton, who had no access to anything more than the occasional poetically sonorous word, striking metaphor or the tradition of the death-song, Schoolcraft gathered a rich horde of Native American materials. Yet although he stressed the poetic potential of the Indian language and Indian myth as conduits for the beauty of nature, he does not often grant much to the Indian poet:

The great store-house of Indian imagery is the heavens. The clouds, the planets, the sun, and moon, the phenomena of lightning, thunder, electricity, aerial sounds, electric or atmospheric, and the endless variety produced in the heavens by light and shade, and by elemental action, – these constitute the fruitful themes of allusion in their songs and poetic chants. But they are mere allusions, or broken descriptions, like touches on the canvas, without being united to produce a perfect object. The strokes may be those of a master, and the colouring exquisite; but without the art to draw, or the skill to connect, it will still remain but a shapeless mass.⁷²

The use of single evocative imagistic phrases in their songs, to which Schoolcraft refers rather disparagingly here, is ironically the quality in Indian poetry that appealed so strongly to the modernists seventy years later.⁷³ As for the chants, it was not until the end of the century with the work of Washington Matthews, Frank Hamilton Cushing and Alice Fletcher that their complex symbolic patterning was perceived. To Schoolcraft they are all alike disjointed and unformed. Schoolcraft's praise of the vivid natural poetry of their language echoes the primitivist aestheticians, but he differs from the European tradition by refusing to admit the possibility of a native bard. A white American will be needed to transform the material:

There is poetry in their very names of places; Dionderoga, the place of the separation of waters; Saratoga, the place of the bursting out of waters; Ontario, a beautiful prospect of rocks, hills, and waters; Ohio the beautiful river – these, and a thousand other names which are familiar to the ear, denote a capacity for

71. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Onéota, or Characteristics of the Red Race of America*, New York and London: Wiley & Putnam 1845, pp. 246–7. Spencer's in many ways useful book on *The Quest for Nationality* gives a very mistaken account of Schoolcraft, though that is easy to do, as he is so inconsistent. He suggests Schoolcraft must have been appalled by *Hiawatha*, where in fact he was flattered and delighted.

72. Schoolcraft, *Onéota*, p. 248.

73. See chapter 5.

and a love of harmony in the collocation of syllables expressive of poetic thought. But the great source of a future poetic fabric, to be erected on the framework of Indian words, when he himself shall have passed away, exists in their mythology, which provides, by a skilful cultivation of personification, not only for every passion and affection of the human heart, but every phenomenon of the stars, the air, and the earth.⁷⁴

A white man will have to shape the 'future poetic fabric'. This, Schoolcraft is convinced, an Indian could not do. He knows that there exist shamans, although he does not use the term. They evoke his fundamentalist ire, and he speaks dismissively of

the hieratic chants, choruses and incantations of their professed prophets, medicine men and jugglers – constituting, as these men do, a distinct order in Indian society, who are entitled by their supposed skill, wisdom or sanctity, to exercise the offices of a priesthood. Affecting mystery in the discharge of their functions, their songs and choruses are couched in language which is studiously obscure, often cabalistic and generally not well understood by any but the professed initiates.⁷⁵

Schoolcraft, we now know, was accurate in ascribing hermetic archaisms and special vocabulary to shamanic poetry. But for him they are the equivalent of the African witch-doctor in the annals of British mythology of the dark continent. He sees them as agents of the devil much as the earlier Puritans did. 'All North American Indians know that there is a God,' he writes, 'but their priests teach them that the devil is a God'.⁷⁶ The figure of the shaman has fascinated more recent researchers into Indian poetry – I shall mention Mary Austin and Ruth Underhill's responses in later chapters – but to Schoolcraft they are abhorrent.

Schoolcraft's difficulty in believing that there are *real* Indian poets, as well as Indian poems, is partly conditioned by his low estimation of what he calls 'the mental condition of the tribes'. But there are other reasons why he was unable to think in those terms. The European notion of the primitive bard who sings the exploits of his king or chief does not map on to Indian culture. Blair was aware of this, and indeed was particularly impressed by the idea of the poet-warrior-chief; Baudelaire was entranced, almost in the same year as Schoolcraft wrote *Onéota*, by the figure of the Indian 'dandy' who was at once poet, priest and warrior.⁷⁷ But Schoolcraft's more limited

74. He continues in explanation of this use of personification: 'The Indian has placed these imaginary gods wherever in the geography of the land, reverence or awe is to be inspired. Every encounter, lake and waterfall is placed under such guardianship. All nature, every class of the animal and vegetable creation, the very sounds of life, the murmuring of the breeze, the dashing of the water, every phenomenon of light or electricity is made intelligent of human events, and speaks the language of a god.' Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History Conditions, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1853, Vol. 3, p. 328.

75. Schoolcraft, *Onéota*, p. 48.

76. Schoolcraft, *Onéota*, p. 49.

77. Baudelaire was responding to an exhibition of George Catlin paintings.

imagination and education was confounded by the way song in Indian culture is so often part of communal or religious or healing processes, without a specific 'composer' playing the western role. It is not surprising he liked best the love-songs, 'the little domestic chants of mothers, and the poetic see-saws of children', which have more in common with the western tradition of the lyric.⁷⁸ Again, the European notion of the primitive bard was most often that of a narrative poet, singing traditional 'lays'. Schoolcraft, as we have seen, could find no structure to Indian poetry, let alone a narrative. The myths he recorded seemed to him rather formless prose tales. In recent years there has been much new research into the poetic structure and performance of Indian traditional narratives, but it does not appear to have occurred to Schoolcraft that they could be seen as a form of poetry. (Charles Leland in 1882 is the first in North America I have discovered who realised this.⁷⁹) Schoolcraft's command of Indian languages was weak, and much of what he recorded he had at second-hand, most often through his wife and her family. But there is too, perhaps, a political hesitation: as in so much later ethnography, Schoolcraft insists that it is the white observer of the native traditions who alone can master and make sense of the material. Indians cannot be granted the status of poet, of the originator of the meaning of their own culture.

The Search for a Poetic Form

The liberal and cosmopolitan Longfellow, impatient though he was at times with Schoolcraft's bursts of under-educated narrow-mindedness, found in his accounts the answer to his needs. He read several of Schoolcraft's vast, ramshackle publications, stuffed with myths, poems, and miscellaneous comments on Indian language and life. When he came to write his poem he produced what perhaps managed to be both the most faithful and the most faithless of the nineteenth-century versions of the Native American. Longfellow drew more than any previous writer on proto-ethnographic and first-hand accounts of Indian life; like previous writers on Indian themes, such as Sarah Morton and John Greenleaf Whittier (who had drawn on Roger Williams for his poem *Mogg Megone*), Longfellow cited in notes added to the poem what he refers to as his 'authorities'. But what he produced radically changed the significance of much of what he had read.

78. Schoolcraft, *Onéota*, p. 48. See also pp. 60 and 212–15.

79. Charles G. Leland, *The Algonkin Legends of New England, or Myths and Folklore of the Micmac, Pasamaquoddy and Penobscot Tribes*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1884. He collected these legends in 1882, and says that 'the old people declared that they had heard from their progenitors that all of these stories were once sung; that they themselves remembered many of them were poems', p. iii.

From the time of the poem's first publication there were sceptics who felt the stories were too elegant and pleasing to be authentically Indian, and this sense that such a superior poem must be essentially European soon found a particular focus. Likenesses between *Hiawatha* and the Finnish epic the *Kalevala* were noticed; accusations of plagiarism were made, which Longfellow indignantly denied. In a private letter and his journal, he admitted his indebtedness to the *Kalevala* for the metre and general aim. In public he reiterated that the legends were genuine and aboriginal, and to be found in the writers mentioned in his notes. The controversy over the sources has revived periodically, although in this century Longfellow has mainly been criticised for his attenuation and bowdlerisation of the Indian legends, rather than for improving them.⁸⁰ In general there is now agreement over the poem's sources: for general organisation and metre the unacknowledged *Kalevala*, but for his Indian materials, as Longfellow had claimed, Schoolcraft, Catlin, Heckewelder, Tanner and other European recorders of Indian life and culture. I have found one directly Indian source, George Copway's history of the Ojibway. What I want to look at here is the process by which those texts are absorbed and transformed within Longfellow's poem.

Longfellow's attempt to deal with the Indian material was bound to be problematic. One can express the difficulty in two different ways. One was the conceptual, cognitive dilemma of making sense in nineteenth-century western terms of an alien culture, the same dilemma as Schoolcraft faced in describing their poetry at all. Just as in the seventeenth century de Bry could only depict Virginian Indians by giving them classical shapes, so Longfellow needed the imaginative structure of the romantic cult of the folk to give him an order, a syntax for his poem. Sarah Morton's *Ouâbi* had used a mixture of the novel of sensibility and primitivist picturesque, though she had only attempted to deal with a European tale of Indian-white history, not with Indian traditional myths. Whittier's attempt to adapt aboriginal details, though in a historical subject, in 'Mogg Megone', had been greeted with distaste even in the more tolerant days of 1837, when he was implored to find a 'less revolting theme'.⁸¹ Schoolcraft's works provided the elements that Longfellow could use, but since Schoolcraft himself found the structure and form of Indian poetry and myth artistically incomprehensible, Longfellow had to look elsewhere for an organising structure. Although the process of reconstruction of Indian material in European terms of course began in Schoolcraft's own collection, Schoolcraft was able, in his 'huge quartos, ill-digested, without any index' as Longfellow described them (HWL2:248), to leave his work heterogeneous, discon-

80. See Stith Thompson, 'The Indian Legend of Hiawatha,' *PMLA* Vol. 37, 1922, pp. 122-40.

81. *North American Review*, Vol. 44, 1837, p. 549.

tinuous, and what he himself called 'gross'.⁸² To write his Indian Edda, Longfellow had to find some kind of unity.

But besides this *formal* problem, Longfellow also faced the *political* problem of dealing with the literature of a people who were currently being dispossessed and killed with the assent of his readership. The relationship between the Anglo-American and Native American, between settler and aboriginal, coloniser and colonised is quite different from that between bourgeoisie and peasantry of one country, problematic as that might be in its own right. Seamus Heaney has suggested that a similar unacknowledged rift prevented Yeats from grafting Anglo-Irish onto Celtic traditions. The relationship in each case between colonist and colonised precludes cultural continuity. This radical discontinuity underlies the whole poem, though the rupture perhaps forces itself most abruptly with the arrival of the Europeans at the end of the poem. Even Longfellow knew something was wrong here: as he wrote to his German translator:

What you say . . . is very true. The contact of Saga and History is too sudden. But how could I remedy it unless I made the poem very much longer? I felt the clash and concussion but could not prevent it. (HWL2:293)

In the 1850s the real westward thrust of the States was in some ways at its height. The founding fathers' ideal of Americanising and domesticating the Indians had failed to produce 'expansion with honour'. The Cherokees, whose removal in the 1830s to Oklahoma was bitterly criticised by east-coast liberals, were removed yet again, to general indifference, as the railroad went west. In the newly acquired territories of the Southwest and California the 'pacification' of the Indian was a prime objective; in California this was achieved by harshly repressive laws which were to reduce an aboriginal population of 150,000 to 17,000 by 1890. The Plains Indians had yet to be defeated. Longfellow was wishfully premature to write as he does at the end of his poem when it enters 'history' that the Indians were nothing but a 'nation Scattered . . . Like the withered leaves of Autumn'. By placing all conflict in the past, the poem obscured the contemporary political realities.

But it is unlikely that Longfellow was consciously manipulating his material for political ends. He saw his poem as apolitical, and was in no conscious way creating an apologia for the US Indian policy of the 1850s. His evasion of the political situation obfuscates contemporary injustices, but in ignoring the dubious morality and legality of the treatment of the Indians beyond the frontier, Longfellow was typical of his fellow Easterners. In a decade of intense philanthropic activity, no organisations existed to defend the rights of Indians. In any case, as far as Longfellow was concerned, with the sole exception of the question of abolition, he avoided

82. This is a word Schoolcraft also uses of the legends he collects as *Alcic Researches*, New York: Harper & Bros., 1839, which, along with his *Historical and Statistical Information* formed Longfellow's main source for *Hiawatha*.

thinking about current issues. In one entry to his journal he wrote: 'Dined with Agassiz to meet Emerson and others. I was amused and annoyed to see how soon the conversation drifted into politics. It was not till after dinner, in the library, that we got upon anything really interesting . . .' (HWL2:276).⁸³ Among his Boston circle Longfellow insisted on being, as far as politics were concerned, like Dickens' Mr Skimpole, a perfect child. It is in *The Song of Hiawatha's* 'innocent' evasions, omissions and transformations, not in its intentions, that the political message lies.

How the politics enter the poem, then, is not through any direct comment on the westward movement, but in the poem's mythic view of the Indian, a development of the melancholy myth clung to by Henry Knox, which its narrative unquestioningly endorses. The two difficulties, the conceptual and the political, were in practice inseparable: Longfellow's form reproduces current politically necessary preconceptions about the Indians, even when they are at total variance with his sources. The Indians were assumed to be unable to make use of God's providential land, which it was incumbent on the Anglo-Americans to cultivate. This was the assumption by which the early colonists legitimised their appropriation of Native American land, though for the nineteenth-century Native American failings were attributed to their childish nature more often than to their devilishness. The Puritans evoked God's Providential arm to scatter the tribes. So did many nineteenth-century Americans, but they also confidently believed that one way in which that Providence worked was through an immutable and impersonal 'law of Nature' by which the Indians would inevitably disappear in the face of the white advance. Both religion and science proclaimed the rights of the white man. As the childhood of mankind the Indians must give way to mature growth.

These assumptions of Indian childlike deficiency form the perceptual grid by which Longfellow patterned his sources. Longfellow consistently altered his material so that he infantilised, de-historicised, and, through excessive idealisation, de-humanised the Indians. Even his borrowings from the *Kalevala*, that European model for which he has been so denounced, underwent transmutation. Longfellow had, he said, pored over Indian materials for three years, but it was only when he first read the 'charming' *Kalevala* in a German translation in 1854, that he was 'able to hit on a plan for a poem on the American Indians, which seems . . . the right and the only one. It is to weave their beautiful legends together in a whole' (HWL2:247–8). As Longfellow knew, the unity of the *Kalevala*, such as it is, was given to it by its editor, Elias Lönnrot, a folklorist, who, influenced by Herder, spent many years collecting Finnish runes. These oral poems from the remote peasant communities in the Karelia district tell a variety of legends about pre-Christian folk-heroes. Lönnrot organised these into a

83. See also Williams, *Longfellow*, p. 54, for his avoidance of political questions.

loose, episodic epic structure, selecting poems connected with three inter-related figures, most frequently with the singer Väinämöinen, whose life story gives the collection its overall shape. All this Longfellow adopts, and like Lönnrot, makes the central pivot of his poem a wedding feast (not an Indian custom) at which are told other stories, ending with the coming of Christianity and the departure of the hero.⁸⁴

Longfellow's indebtedness to the *Kalevala's* metre was first confirmed by his German translator, Freilgarth, with whom he had read some Finnish runes in a German translation in 1842. Parallelisms, an important characteristic of Finnish verse, were apparent in the translation. Longfellow knew they were also present in Indian poetry⁸⁵ – in fact they appear in a rather different form – and this he used as a justification for his adoption of them, though he may also have been influenced by Herder's praise of parallelism in *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*.⁸⁶ Schoolcraft, who was very conscious of the problem of translating Indian poetry into an appropriate form, had recommended the use of Hebraic-like parallelisms:

Most of the attempts to record poetic sentiments in the race have encountered difficulties, from the employment of some form of Grecian metres; or still less adapted to it, English laws of rhyme. They have neither. It is far better suited, as the expression of strong poetic feeling, to the freedom of the Hebrew measure, the repetitious style of which reminds one of both the Indian sepulchral or burial chants and eulogy. There is indeed in the flow of their oratory, as well as songs, a strong tendency to the figure of parallelism.⁸⁷

Although Longfellow avoids rhyme, he does not take up Schoolcraft's idea of 'freedom of . . . measure'. *Hiawatha's* metre is famous for its fixity. Finnish poetry is quantitative rather than stressed, and in Finnish this metre allows for many subtle modulations, so the characteristic jerkiness of *Hiawatha* is not present in the original Finnish *Kalevala*, although it is there in the German translation on which Longfellow drew. What is most striking about the resultant verse form of *Hiawatha* is its insistent naïveté, its refusal to make possible any complexities or subtleties, its efficiency in conveying the picture of the childlike Indian. As one early admirer showed, it matched the expectations of his readers:

84. *The Kalevala: or Poems of the Karelia District*, compiled by Elias Lönnrot, trans. Francis Peabody Magoun Jr, Camb. Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960. For a discussion of the relationship between the two works, see Ernest J. Moyné. *Hiawatha and the Kalevala: A Study of the Relationship between Longfellow's Indian Edda and the Finnish Epic*, FF Communications No. 192, Vol. 80, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1963. Also see Wayno Nayland 'Kalevala as a Reputed Source of Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*', *American Literature*, Vol. 25, 1953. A long, naïve attempt to disprove the part played by the *Kalevala* is to be found in Chase, S. and Stellanova Osborn, *Schoolcraft-Longfellow-Hiawatha* Lancaster, Pa: Jacques Castell, 1942.
85. Samuel Longfellow, *Final Memorials of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1887, p. 47.
86. See Herder, *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, London 1833, pp. 37–40. See Simpson, *Politics of American English*, for the closeness of Herder's comments on Hebrew to the descriptions of Native American languages – which in the light of the history I have outlined in chapter two must be far from coincidental.
87. Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information*, Vol. 3, p. 328.

The measure is monotonous . . . but it is truly Indian. It is childlike and suited to the savage ear . . . the great thing is not the pleasure the poem gives to those who know how to read it but the boldness with which you have walked lyre in hand among those poor painted children of the western forest, and learned and taught us their simple melodies. (HWL2:267)⁸⁸

The *Kalevala* is very different from Longfellow's poem. Its unpredictability, grotesque comedy, and sometimes terrifying mythopoeic power often make it seem nearer to Longfellow's Indian sources than the bland, homogenised, melancholy *Hiawatha*.⁸⁹ Eighteenth-century primitivism's acceptance of the fusion of war and love, tenderness and sublimity, violence and poetry is no longer present in Longfellow's writing. For example, the original of Longfellow's Chibiabos, the 'sweet singer', was Lord of the Regions of Death, and elements of his myth are curiously like one of the most famous and powerful parts of the *Kalevala*, Ilmarin's visit to Tuonela, land of the dead, which Sibelius's *Swan of Tuonela* evokes. Yet Longfellow ignores that aspect of Chibiabos, whose story in his poem has a gentle melancholy, but is never disturbing. Longfellow takes the idea of Minnehaha's death from the *Kalevala*, but there the comparable death of Ilmarin's wife is brought about by obstinacy and bad-temper (even Blair might have had problems with *that*) in a fight where she only just fails to give as good as she gets; no comparison with Minnehaha's beautiful decline. The Christian elements in *Kalevala* have been absorbed into the myth; the virgin Marjetta conceives from a whortleberry, and when her son is crowned, Väinämöinen leaves in dudgeon. No awkward inclusion of colonial history there. Longfellow took from the *Kalevala* only what he needed for his primitivist threnody.

Anxiety of Influence

Longfellow's suppression of the influence of the *Kalevala* is just one symptom of his anxiety about the poem's distance from its Indian sources. A similar unease lies in the erudite notes, which are often misleading (without actually being untrue), concealing more than they reveal. One of Longfellow's techniques in his notes is to cite some quite random detail, when the actual relation to the source is important in quite different ways. (There is a striking similarity with the bizarre irrelevancy of Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land*.) His anxiety at times emerges within the very language of

88. Bancroft also wrote to Longfellow to congratulate him on his success on conveying the 'infantile character of Indian life' (HWL2:267).

89. Longfellow himself recognised the likenesses (HWL2:268). If one follows the analysis of shamanism in Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1951) trans. William Trask, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, one might argue that both Ilmarin and Chibiabos are shamans, the visit to the land of the death being a central shamanic symbol.

the poem. In the final canto Longfellow coalesces the Indian myth in which Hiawatha floats upward in his magic canoe, soaring away from his people to 'celestial regions', with the *Kalevala*'s account of Väinämöinen's final departure, sailing out to sea, with which Lönnrot ends his poem. Longfellow's verse seems uncertain in which direction the boat should go – in which direction perhaps the poem is moving:

Westward, westward Hiawatha,
Sailed into the fiery sunset,
Sailed into the purple vapours,
Sailed into the dusk of evening.
And the people from the margin
Watched him floating, rising, sinking,
Till the birch canoe seemed lifted,
High into that sea of splendor,
Till it sank into the vapours
Like the new moon slowly, slowly,
Sinking in the purple distance. (SH XXII:164)

This uncertainty is present even in the opening lines. In his 'Introduction' Longfellow follows Lönnrot more closely than anywhere else; understandably so, for Lönnrot's 'Prologue', which was not an original rune but his own work, expresses a sentimental romanticism close to Longfellow's own, where the folk fuse into an idyllic version of the natural world. Longfellow begins his poem: 'Should you ask me, whence these stories?' Is that 'should' related to 'if' or 'ought'? Perhaps his readers *ought* to ask him, but he knew he would only give them half the answer.

Although Longfellow felt the need to reshape and rework his material, he clearly wanted his readers to accept the authenticity of his Indian epic. By giving his poem its Indian setting he knew he aroused the nineteenth-century fascination with just how other people lived. The power of what I have called the ethnographic imagination was infinitely more pervasive than when Sarah Morton had been writing. The realist novel (and *Hiawatha* appeared not just in the century but in one of the greatest decades of the realist novel) is, as I suggested in the introduction, essentially an ethnographic form. It claims to show its readers things as they really are in a particular society, the way we live now, or the way they live now, or the way they lived then. Realist novels often dealt with unfamiliar parts of the reader's society, like Dickens' criminals, Gaskell's Northerners, or Flaubert's provincials. Historical novels were enormously popular, but popular, as I argued in connection with Scott, as ethnographic accounts of the past. If documentary descriptions of the Indian were regarded as a species of natural history, so too was the novel, explicitly so for novelists like Eliot and Balzac. Leaving aside the English and European novelists, Longfellow's American contemporaries, novelists and others, rooted their writings in ethnographic exactitude. *Hiawatha* was published four years after *Moby Dick*, in which

Melville's readers feel they learn precisely how life is lived on a whaling-ship, and in the same year as *Walden*, in which the reader is given the sense of learning every detail of how to live in a cabin near Concord.

Although he was writing a poem, which might naturally claim to have more poetic licence, Longfellow was aware that his Indian Edda must be felt to be genuinely Indian if it was in any way to be accepted as an epic of national origin. It is easy to think now of primitivism as fanciful or self-indulgent, but the aura of authenticity was always crucial in the revival of primitive poetry. Sometimes literal authenticity was at stake, as in the debate over the genuineness of Ossian. Sometimes authenticity could be metaphorical: poems clearly stating they were imitating primitive styles would be admired according to how well they were judged to have approximated it. Chatterton, one should remember, committed suicide when his frauds were exposed; and, even in these postmodernist times, Macpherson's work is regularly dismissed without reading purely on the grounds that it is a fake. Of course, the nature of primitive qualities – for the eighteenth century, for example, both sublime and tender – by which claims of primitive authenticity would be judged, was a construct of the civilised. In the mid-nineteenth century the construction of 'primitivism' was changing dramatically with the development of racialist theory. While there were still contemporary theories by which Longfellow could justify refining his sources to reveal the truly Indian, as pure and virtuous, a new and much harsher paradigm for the primitive – if it meant Indian – was emerging, one which was coming to assume the status of scientific fact. According to this paradigm, Longfellow was dealing in fantasy. But, yet again, the new and the old paradigms were more mutually compatible than might appear at first.

Like Tegnér, Longfellow felt his material must be purified and shaped. Longfellow believed, however uneasily, that he was sifting the dross to reveal the genuine Indian gold beneath. What he found in his sources sometimes clashed with his idea of suitable material for a 'primitive' or 'folk' saga, or with what he took as axiomatic truths about the Indian. He recast what he read. I am not suggesting that he distorts 'true' accounts of the Indians. His sources are with one exception (the George Copway) already Anglo-American readings, with their own internal contradictions, and often Longfellow is in tune with their spirit even when he radically alters their letter. But his numerous changes veil the conflicts and tensions of the historical moment present in their texts.

Schoolcraft, Longfellow's main source, provided him, in addition to the all-important suggestion of the poetic potential of Indian traditions, with the prototypes for his central and subsidiary characters. As is well known, Longfellow's *Hiawatha* is himself an amalgamation of the Algonkin *Manabozho* and of the Iroquoian *Hiawatha*. The latter was a historical figure, founder of the famous League; in Schoolcraft's account he is already

confused with a mythical figure and is presented as partly supernatural, having the magic canoe and miraculous death of Longfellow's poem. All the same, Schoolcraft gives an account of how Hiawatha brought peace to the Five Tribes through the creation of the League. This disappears from Longfellow's version, where instead peace is brought to the 'warring children' by the Gitche Manito, the Great Spirit, before Hiawatha enters the story. To the nineteenth-century American, as to the eighteenth-century, the Indian lacked government; but where the more positive Enlightenment appraisal stressed the Indian love of liberty, the nineteenth century saw incapacity for law-making. Peace brought by divine intervention appeared more appropriate to Longfellow and his readers than shrewdly made political treaties. Although the story of Manabozho provides most of the incidents, his name (not sufficiently melodious, Longfellow said) and personality (as a trickster he is undignified, half animal, anarchic, and even in Schoolcraft's expurgated version, rather lewd) play no part.

Schoolcraft's works contained numerous details about farming, games, songs and picture-writing which Longfellow incorporated into his account. In the original texts these are skills practised by Indians contemporary to Schoolcraft and Longfellow. In the poem, although these arts are present in Hiawatha's pre-Columbian golden age, at the end no hint is given that these arts survive in Longfellow's only description of contemporary Indians, the prophecy of the Indians 'wandering westward' after the arrival of the white men. The poem reproduces the pervasive nineteenth-century assumption that the Indians had neither arts nor agriculture (an assumption which again had been shared by the Founding Fathers, as I illustrated from Jefferson and Knox, though they were more optimistic than Longfellow's contemporaries that the Native Americans would be capable of learning). Even Schoolcraft, in logical contradiction to his ethnographic account, frequently follows the contemporary rhetoric and denounces the Indians for refusing to farm and for remaining nomadic hunters.⁹⁰ Longfellow's text resolves the clash. They farmed then; they wander now.

The changes Longfellow made to Schoolcraft's Algonkin legends produce other effects. For example, the general elegiac air that evokes the pathos of the vanishing Indian is emphasised by such alterations as Minnehaha's death, the absence of children (which both the original Hiawatha and Manabozho had), the sad outcome of the famine and the evil consequences of the ghosts. The ending of the poem refers to Indian prophecies of the coming of the white man, but Hiawatha's suggestion that they should be welcomed is Longfellow's (wishful?) distortion of Schoolcraft's words:

90. Schoolcraft, *Onéota*, p. 305. There is a perceptive analysis of Schoolcraft's attitude to Indian farming in Freeman, 'Religion and Personality in Anthropology of Henry Schoolcraft'.

Our Indians are rather prone to regard the coming of the white man as fulfilling certain obscure prophecies of their own priests, and that they are at best, harbingers of evil to them.⁹¹

This is strikingly different from Hiawatha's beatific vision:

From the brow of Hiawatha
Gone was every trace of sorrow,
As a fog from off the water,
As the mist from off the meadow,
With a smile of joy and triumph,
With a look of exultation,
As of one who in a vision
Sees what is to be, but is not,
Stood and waited Hiawatha. (SH XXII:158)

The speech that Hiawatha makes to his people recasts and reverses Longfellow's source in another way. When Hiawatha says that Gitche Manito has sent these strangers to them, but that his people will degenerate after the coming of the white man who will inevitably take over the land, he gives a mirror version of one of the few historical documents in Schoolcraft's work, Pontiac's message to the tribes before the rising. Pontiac berates the tribes for their decadence, urging them to regenerate so that they can repulse the invaders: the Master of Life says to them: 'you are wrong; I hate such conduct . . . The land on which you are, I have made for you, not for others; wherefore do you suffer the whites to dwell on your lands?'⁹² Longfellow transforms this historical hostility into an anodyne, ahistorical goodwill.

Longfellow's Other Sources

A second source for the Indian material in *Hiawatha* is George Catlin's account of his western travels in the 1830s, undertaken to paint and record the Indian's way of life before it vanished.⁹³ The conception of Hiawatha as the noble and dignified leader of his people must owe far more to Catlin's admiring descriptions of the chiefs he met than to anything in Schoolcraft. Many picturesque details, of implements, the making of the birch canoe, dishes (for the non-Indian wedding feast), food, the Indian clothes (Longfellow's Ojibway Indians are transformed to full Plains glory) were taken from Catlin, but again Longfellow has displaced information about contemporary Indians into the mythic past. Catlin's travels only predate *Hiawatha* by twenty years. Although the frontier was moving all the time, much of what he describes was still part of Indian life. What has changed is the liberal east-coast perception of the Indian.

91. *Onëota*, p. 191.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 320.

93. George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indian*, (1841). New York: Dover, 1973 (2 vols).

What Longfellow's notes tell the reader comes from Catlin is the story of the Gitche Manito's gift of the peace pipe at the Red Pipestone Quarry (SH:165). The passage from Catlin, quoted at some length, includes in the original text another gift, that of the red pipe of war, suppressed in Longfellow's poem. What this note disguises is that Longfellow has based this section largely on Schoolcraft's account of the founding of the Iroquoian League. Catlin's full text suggests a different reason why Longfellow chose to start the poem in this setting. Just before the passage quoted in Longfellow's note, Catlin had written:

Be not amazed if I have sought, in this distant realm, the Indian Muse, for here she dwells, and here she must be invoked – nor be offended if my narratives from this moment should savour of poetry or appear like romance.

If I catch the inspiration, I may sing (or yell) a few epistles from this famed ground before I leave it; or at least I will prose a few of its leading characteristics and mysterious legends. This place is great (not in history, for there is none of it about) in traditions, and stories, of which the western world is full and rich.⁹⁴

Longfellow, I infer, first intended to use this setting for his own invocation of the 'Indian Muse', but in the poem as we have it he substitutes a Muse and source in the 'sweet singer' from the vale of Tawasentha, Schoolcraft's birth place (SH:6). The Muse becomes not the Indian traditions but their European filter. The person to whom Longfellow probably owed most, Schoolcraft's half-Objiway wife, had already been effaced by Schoolcraft. But at this moment Longfellow makes one extraordinary misapplication of his source material. He gives Schoolcraft a mellifluous, trochaic Indian name, Nawadaha. What he seems to have forgotten is that in the story as Schoolcraft tells it, Nawadaha was a tyrant (one of twins) who mercilessly oppressed the Ojibway. When he was eventually destroyed (by having all his flesh cut off in little bits) he was found to have a heart of flint.⁹⁵ This parapraxis is, perhaps, one of the most telling symptoms of Longfellow's unconscious, unacknowledged guilty sense of the destructive power of the discourse in which he and Schoolcraft make known their version of the Indian. Like the ethnographic texts on which it drew, *Hiawatha* provided a discourse of what Foucault calls *assujettissement* by which these Indians become known, controlled and subject to white power.⁹⁶

In this introductory canto, the Indians from whom the myths and poems originally came disappear, their place being taken as so often by the non-human natural world. Nawadaha has found these songs

94. Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, Vol. 2, p. 163.

95. Schoolcraft, *Onéota*, p. 266.

96. Edward Said discusses *assujettissement* as one of the fundamental concepts in Foucault's thought in 'The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions', *Critical Inquiry* 4, 1978. Foucault writes of this in *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan, London, Penguin, 1977, pp. 137–8. This concept is applied to texts concerning the Native Americans by Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Come After*, pp. 33–4.

In the birds'-nests of the forests,
 In the lodges of the beaver,
 In the hoof-prints of the bison,
 In the eyrie of the eagle!
 All the wild fowl sang them to him,
 In the moorlands and the fenlands,
 In the melancholy marshes;
 Chetowaik, the plover, sang them,
 Mahng, the loon, the wild goose, Wawa,
 The blue heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
 And the grouse, the Mushkodasa! (SH:6)

The Indian tellers of these myths and songs have vanished.

Longfellow also drew on the works of John Heckewelder, the Moravian Brethren missionary who worked among the Pennsylvanian Delaware, and whose accounts of the gentle, honourable Delawares, as well as of the marauding, treacherous Huron, were used so extensively by Cooper in his *Leather-Stocking* novels.⁹⁷ Longfellow had read Heckewelder while still at school and was deeply moved by his picture of the doomed, noble Indian. He told his mother they were 'a race possessing magnanimity, generosity, benevolence, and pure religion without hypocrisy' (HWL1:22). He re-read Heckewelder while working on *Hiawatha*, and found much on which to model his Golden Age. According to Heckewelder, 'they live as peaceable as any people on earth, and treat one another with the greatest respect . . . and, love their neighbours as themselves'.⁹⁸ This Biblical language passes into the poem (*Hiawatha* is described as a prophet), his gentle Indian morality becoming almost a prefiguring of Christianity, or at any rate a moderate-minded Unitarian John the Baptist figure. Although Heckewelder describes the ordered life of the Delawares, he too assumes they have no organised government. According to Heckewelder, they are non-hierarchical and non-authoritarian, peace and justice being maintained through moral education and example. Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, idealised beyond Heckewelder's Indians to bloodlessness, is leader of his people by example and not by force. Longfellow's elegiac tone also owes something to Heckewelder, who wrote sadly of a way of life whose irrevocable destruction he has watched. But again, Heckewelder was writing historically, not like Longfellow, of a mythic past.

Heckewelder is evoked in the notes at a curious point, quite atypical of the borrowings from him (SH:166). Longfellow credits him with the words with which Mudjekewiss mocks the bear:

Hark you, Bear! you are a coward,
 And no Brave, as you pretended;
 Else you would not cry and whimper
 Like a miserable woman! (SH11:15)

97. John Heckewelder, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 1, 1818.

98. Heckewelder, p. 330.

Like many of these notes, this may only show a readiness to mention any random point to defend the authenticity of the poem, though Moyne suggests this reference is a deliberate distraction from Longfellow's particular indebtedness to the *Kalevala* at this point. It also fits well Longfellow's pervasive nineteenth-century patriarchal assumptions. There is no Indian source which I can find for the lines:

As unto the bow the cord is,
So unto the man is woman,
Though she bends him, she obeys him,
Though she draws him, yet she follows
Useless each without the other. (SHX:72)

That is hierarchical complementary at its purest. Longfellow's Hiawatha, like a nineteenth-century American, takes for granted that he controls and dominates woman, as well as the natural world. Hiawatha addresses the animals as Brother, as Manabozho does, but he destroys them and the forest imperialistically. Heckewelder's text had referred to an Indian addressing the bear as an equal, taunting him as he would taunt a Huron, to test his courage. Heckewelder found the incident confusing. Longfellow does not: he has no doubt of masculine superiority.

A fourth text that Longfellow uses is John Tanner's *Narrative of Captivity and Adventures*.⁹⁹ John Tanner, taken from a frontier settlement at the age of nine, lived with Indians till he was thirty. His captors, brutal, demoralised Indians, in what would best be called guerilla camps near the white settlers, have nothing in common with Longfellow's idealised natives. Even the kindlier, more humane Indians Tanner later joins exist in quite a different literary discourse – the captivity narrative, the antithesis of the noble savage mode. Longfellow incorporates Tanner's experience as a boy growing up among these people. The highly coloured account of Tanner's adolescent hunting exploits are the basis of the canto describing Hiawatha's boyhood, including the feast made to celebrate the killing of the deer, though, of course, Tanner used a gun, not a bow and arrow. Longfellow was apparently not anxious to draw attention to this particular borrowing, which even more than his other texts was a white version of Indianness: all he gives Tanner credit for is a reference to the elm-bark cords for tying prisoners (SH:170).

The one example I have found of Longfellow's use of an unmediated Indian source is a description of picture-writing which he takes from George Copway, or Kah-ge-gah-bowh, a Christian Ojibway chief with whom he was acquainted.¹⁰⁰ The pictographs of canto 14 appear in

99. John Tanner, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner (US interpreter at the Saut de Ste. Marie) during 30 years residence among the Indians in the Interior of North America, prepared for the press by Edwin James* (1830), Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, 1956.

100. George Copway, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation*, London: Gilpin, 1850, pp. 135–6. According to Copway, Pontiac's message to the

Copway's history of the Ojibway in which he makes clear their widespread contemporary use, and their importance in the preserving of records, the sending of messages, and the recording of songs.¹⁰¹ He gives all of the examples that Hiawatha is said to invent, which were among the two hundred in common currency among the Ojibway, except for the 'hostile sign and signal' in which

Bloody hands with palms uplifted
Were a symbol of destruction. (SH: XIV)

Longfellow does not acknowledge his debt to Copway; perhaps he felt an Indian could not be an 'authority' or maybe a contemporary Christianised Indian seemed out of place, too much part of Longfellow's own world to be juxtaposed with the Golden Age. Schoolcraft, characteristically, writes both slightly and admiringly of this picture-writing. He regards it as an indication of the 'fear, suspicion and secrecy' of the 'Red man', but he also describes it as the 'literature of the Indians', and recognises its extraordinary accuracy as a record of Mide songs.¹⁰² What Longfellow would have found in Copway's book is an account of the way Algonkin photographic records, especially those to do with the Mide society, were preserved. The Native histories, written on birch-bark, slate, copper or lead, were buried in secret depositories, opened by the guardians of the records every fifteen years, and if any showed sign of decay, a copy made and buried in its place.¹⁰³ Yet in the poem, the pictographs, like so much else, are removed from their context of contemporary Native American life, and in a double sense dehistoricised. Longfellow's most disturbing adjustment is his emphasis on picture-writing as a means of recording the dead. In the poem, Hiawatha invents writing to mark their gravestones, although there is nothing in any

tribes was carried in this script on bark. Gordon Brotherston suggested in an article published in 1990, though written in 1984, that Longfellow was drawing on the pictographs used in the *Walam Olum* ('The Time Remembered in the Winter Counts and the *Walam Olum*', *Circumpacifica: Festschrift für Thomas S. Bartnel*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990). There is overlap between the *Walam Olum* figures and those Longfellow describes, and I would certainly agree with Gordon Brotherston about the dehistoricising treatment that Longfellow gives this writing. However, I have not been able to find any evidence that Longfellow knew anything about the *Walam Olum*, while he met Copway in 1849, and was given a copy of his autobiography then. As I say in my text all except one of Longfellow's figures appear in Copway, while many do not appear in the *Walam Olum*, and others do not quite fit his description. I am grateful to Gordon Brotherston for suggesting that there was a genuine Algonkin source for this writing. It is now generally accepted, by Gordon Brotherston among others, that the *Walam Olum* was a fake, though that does not in itself prove Longfellow had not seen it, nor that the Algonkin pictographs are not genuine copies. As Copway himself asserts, Algonkin writing was understood over a wide area, but nevertheless there were variations.

101. Mide songs, however, seem to have been recorded in a very precise form, as Francis Densmore noted later in her collection of Chippewa music: see chapter four.

102. *Onéota*, p. 34.

103. It is possible that Rafinesque, who purported to have discovered the *Walam Olum* meant his find to represent one of these records.

of Longfellow's sources to suggest this was an important use; Copway does not mention it at all, and Schoolcraft only among many other uses, the chief of which was in recording songs.¹⁰⁴ But the effect is to add even more to the melancholy tone of the poem; this canto mirrors the 'neglected graveyard' of the introduction (Longfellow's analogy for his poem), where the reader may 'pause . . . For a while to muse, and ponder/On a half-effaced inscription/Written with little skill of song-craft' and 'may read this rude inscription'; in the world of this poem Indian songs are transmuted into the memorials on their graves (SH:8).

Hiawatha and Contemporary Racial Theory

Although the structure of the poem is that of Hiawatha's life story, in many senses he is never allowed to reach maturity. After his marriage, his own story ends – disasters and tales of others fill up the remainder. Even his marriage to Minnehaha is de-sexualised. After the wedding feast the only hint of consummation, the only sexual moment, is when Minnehaha gives herself to the cornfield; the only fruit of their union is the flourishing corn, presented to the Europeans at the poem's end. They can have no children, because Longfellow's idealised Indians can have no progeny: they have no place in nineteenth-century America. To Hiawatha the fruit of that marriage is disease, famine and death. He is, he discovers, only the eunuch who guards the Virgin Land for her rightful ravisher.

The American listener, drawn into the poem in the first line ('Should you ask me, whence these legends . . .') and held there throughout ('You shall hear how Hiawatha . . .') is the emotional pivot of the poem. The putative listener, who modulates from kindly, condescending, innocently delighted by this pastoral play, to melancholy, regretful, but still blameless, legitimises the necessary disappearance of the Indian from his contemporary world. The reader is asked to collude with the myth. At the end of the poem Hiawatha describes his vision of the Indians driven westward 'forgetful of [his] counsels': then the reader learns that Hiawatha has told them to welcome and cherish the white men, whose only wish is to bring them Christianity. This is the counsel that was disobeyed. All Hiawatha and the reader can do is mourn.

The excellence of *Hiawatha's* sales were clearly not much marred by the critical voices of those who felt Longfellow was deceiving the public by claiming his material was genuinely Indian. Those critics were right, of course, though for the wrong reasons. Leaving that group aside for the moment, it is easy to see why Longfellow's poem was so successful. What made his version of the Indian so welcome was the crucial split in his

104. Blair, however, had made 'lament[ing] their public and private calamities, the death of friends, or the loss of warriors' an important cause for their poetry. *Lectures*, pp. 505–6.

poem between the idyllic past of primitive innocence, and that final 'darker, drearier vision' of the present Indians:

I beheld our nations scattered,
All forgetful of my counsels,
Weakened, warring with each other;
Saw the remnants of our people
Sweeping westward, wild and woeful,
Like the cloud-rack of a tempest,
Like the withered leaves of Autumn! (SH XXI:157)

Among Longfellow's readers, there were various theories or assumptions by which they made sense of their relationship with the Indians. In 1855 the explicit theories of scientific racism were only supported by an educated élite, but the rigid hierarchy of races which those theories justified was widely accepted. Some readers might hold, like the fundamentalist Schoolcraft, that the present nomadic Indians were the degenerate ancestors of the people of Genesis, or the lost ten tribes of Israel, thus solving the problem of why, if all are descended from Adam, there could be such different lifestyles. This view went with strong moral disapprobation for the present Indians, but allowed for a less reprehensible past. Schoolcraft had suggested that the legends he records must be corrupted, 'recent and grosser' derivations of more elevated accounts, and that the light of earlier knowledge of the truth dimly glimmered in them, so justifying Longfellow's refining transformation. The Unitarian Longfellow can have had little personal inclination to this view, but his poem proved compatible with it. Schoolcraft praised the work obsequiously, and reissued the legends in a popular edition called *The Myth of Hiawatha*,¹⁰⁵ altering his text to approximate the poem better.

A more liberal version of this theory argued that though many present Indians were degenerate, their present vices were the result of the white men's treatment of them. This was the view held by Heckewelder and Catlin, who see the Indians they describe as still untarnished by frontier brutality. Although such attitudes were less common in the 1850s they became powerful again later in the century, as the Indian Wars drew to a close and a new wave of sympathy arose for the Indians. Longfellow's noble pre-contact Indians fused easily with this viewpoint. Those who thought in this way did not see Indians as equal. They were primitivists of a sort, seeing in the Indians' nature a rebuke to the faults of the present civilised world, but by now also accepting that their childlike incapacity to negotiate with the white man's world made their disappearance inevitable. As with Cooper's designation of 'red gifts' and 'white gifts', there was no doubt in the 'real world', as opposed to that of the pastoral, which was superior.

105. Schoolcraft, *The Myth of Hiawatha, and Other Oral Legends, Mythologic and Allegoric of the North America Indians*, London and Boston, 1856.

Longfellow's poem presents the modern world in terms which allow both for primitivist sadness at the loss of tranquil innocence and for admiration (even if ambivalent) of nineteenth-century American progress:

All the land was full of people,
Restless, struggling, toiling, striving,
Speaking many tongues, yet feeling
But one heart beat in their bosoms.
In the woodlands rang their axes,
Smoked their towns in all the valleys,
Over all the lakes and rivers
Rushed their great canoes of thunder. (SH XXI:157)

Belief in progress was fundamental to the American enterprise and to westward expansion. Some still held to the Enlightenment idea of progress, based on a belief in man's natural goodness, and compatible with a benevolent, if patronising, view of the Indian as a childlike savage who must mature to the adult virtues of civilisation. By the 1850s, for most intellectuals progress had taken on a new and racial form, one less easy to assimilate with the primitivist viewpoint. Scientific racism's argument, that the different races were quite distinct, possibly with different origins, and that comparative physical measurements, particularly the size of the cranium, definitively showed the superiority of the more highly developed white races, was what Said would call the manifest of a widespread latent emotional racism. Longfellow's early critics were principally those directly influenced by scientific racism. The *Boston Daily Evening Traveller* reflected the waning sympathy for the Indians when it said:

We cannot deny that the spirit of poesy breathes throughout the work. . . . but we cannot but express a regret that our pet national poet should not have selected as a theme of his muse something higher and better than the silly legends of savage aborigines.¹⁰⁶

The word 'higher' indicates this paper expected its readers to know and accept the concept of higher and lower races. Emerson, who firmly held these latest scientific views, wrote a carefully worded, not altogether kind, letter to Longfellow about the poem. After saying somewhat ambiguously that at least he always felt safe reading Longfellow's 'sweet, wholesome as maize' books, he continued:

The dangers of the Indians are, that they are really savage, have poor, small, sterile heads, – no thoughts; and you must deal very roundly with them and find in them brains. (HWL2:266)

It is only in the last cantos (when the Europeans arrive) that Emerson could see 'a pure gleam or two of blue sky'.

Yet eventually, scientific racism found a way of appropriating *Hiawatha*, as an example of the white poet's power to transform even these backward savages and their ways into art. Robertson, author of Longfellow's bio-

106. Moyne, *Hiawatha and Kalevala*, p. 10.

graphy in the 1880s, insisted that 'the red man, in truth, had never been the rhapsodical, sentimental being that ignorance imagined'. Yet he marvelled at Longfellow's skill:

It is highly improbable that the poor Red Indian will ever again receive an apotheosis so beautiful as this at the hand of any poet. . . . Abuse and parody have now ceased; and when the Redskins themselves have died from off the face of the American continent, there will always be men and women ready to follow the poet into the primeval forest, see him make for himself a woodland flute, piping to the poor painted braves and making them dance. . . . It is true that in Hiawatha's pleasant numbers the Red Indian, with his narrow skull and small brain, is not presented to us with less embellishment than he gains in Cooper's romances; but the fact does not diminish Longfellow's credit as a poet.¹⁰⁷

The Song of Hiawatha could not, of course, speak to those actively engaged in displacing the Indian. It was a poem for the East-Coast, or at least for the bourgeois liberal or moderate conservative, not for the frontiersmen or government officials. As one Washington official testily observed, as the policy of starving out the Indian by extermination of the buffalo began:

The idea that a handful of wild, half-naked, thieving, plundering murdering savages . . . should be dignified with the sovereign attributes of nations, enter into solemn treaties, and claim a country five hundred miles wide by a thousand miles long as theirs in fee simple, because they hunted buffalo and antelope over it, might do for beautiful reading in Cooper's novels or Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, but it is unsuited to the intelligence and justice of this age, or the natural rights of mankind.¹⁰⁸

Yet the ideological positioning that underlies this – the wild hunters there, the civilised world of intelligent and just mankind here – is not very different from that of *The Song of Hiawatha* itself, whose consoling myth was as essential to the dispossession of the Indians as the raucous racism of the frontiersmen, or the legalistic exclusion of the Indian from natural rights in the government's bureaucratic language. Liberal Americans were still conscious of their destiny as the moral leaders of mankind, and if that destiny was transformed into terms of Anglo-Saxonism rather than of liberty and natural rights, that destiny was in no sense less imperative. *The Song of Hiawatha* anaesthetised American anxieties over their treatment of the Indian; it created a moment of self-indulgent melancholy that could appease the liberal conscience and make further action unnecessary. London *Punch*, from the safety of a transatlantic vantage point, underlined this in its parody:

From the fast-decaying nations,
Which our gentle Uncle Samuel
Is improving very smartly,
From the face of all creation,
Off the face of all creation.¹⁰⁹

107. Robertson, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, p. 149.

108. Quoted in Peter N. Carroll and David W. Noble, *The Free and The Unfree: A New History of the United States*, London, 1977, p. 233.

109. Austin, *Longfellow*, p. 328.

Hiawatha and History

Longfellow had produced a new version of the myth of the vanishing Indian, one that could be translated into all the various discourses that justified, more or less enthusiastically, Indian displacement. What Matthiessen and his followers should have criticised about the poem is not that it had fallen under foreign influence, but that it reproduced so uncritically the prejudices of contemporary American society, drifting into acceptance of its worst aspects. In its fusion of the contradictory elements of contemporary US ideology, it might rather be called too American than too European. Matthiessen's suspicion was that what was wrong with Longfellow was that he was swamped by European models and lacked indigenous strength, 'strength' and 'vigour' being key words in Matthiessen's version of the American. But Longfellow's *capacity* for evasion, not any *lack*, is the problem, and what swamps him is certainly indigenous. Yet, one should note, *Hiawatha* was also extraordinary successful in England (not withstanding the *Punch* parody); it worked as a general and enabling myth for nineteenth-century colonialism.

As William Rossetti said perceptively in 1878:

The sort of intelligence of which Longfellow is so conspicuous an example includes predominately 'a great susceptibility to the spirit of the age'. The man who meets the spirit of the age halfway will be adopted as a favourite child, and warmly repositied in the heart. Such has been the case with Longfellow. In sentiment, in perception, in culture, in selection, in utterance, he represents . . . the tendencies and adaptabilities of his time . . . he can enlist the sympathies of readers who approach his own level of intelligence, and can dominate a numberless multitude of those who belong to lower planes, but who share none the less his own general conceptions and aspirations. He is like a wide-spreading tree on the top of a gentle acclivity, to which the lines of all trees lower down point and converge, and of which the shadow rests upon them with kindly proximity and protection. This is popularity.¹¹⁰

Ironically, it is perhaps because of Longfellow's perplexed and pained withdrawal from the intellectual and political debates of his day that he was so warmly welcomed by it. Longfellow had wanted to follow the programme of romantic nationalism to create his American epic. He appeals to the Herderian aesthetic in his introduction to the poem, saying he is addressing:

Ye who love a nation's legends
 Love the ballads of a people,
 That like voices from afar off
 Call to us to pause and listen,
 Speak in tones so plain and childlike,
 Scarcely can the ear distinguish
 Whether they are sung or spoken. (SH:7)

110. W.M. Rossetti, *Lives of the Famous Poets*, London: Moxon, 1878, p. 389.

But these legends belong to one nation, his readers to the nation which is silencing them. Instead of linking the white American and the Indian his poem placed them across an unbridgeable divide – at the end, the modern American participant-listener watches the Indians fade from sight. Instead of a Romantic folk saga, Longfellow had written a poem that met the demands of the refined and moral Anglo-Saxonism of the latter half of the century.

When in my first chapter I wrote of the revolutionaries' attitude towards the Indians, I pointed out that two conflicting views of history have co-existed for Americans from then to the present day: history as the march of progress, and history as a falling away, with the present as a redemptive new beginning. Redemptive history was rhetorically the most pervasive in the early years, but it always existed side by side with the belief in progress. By the mid-nineteenth century, the linear view was dominant. The Indian stood at the dawn of human society, in the childhood of the human-race. The American, mature and manly, was the highest point of the race, the pinnacle of Anglo-Saxonism.

Longfellow's constant infantilising of the Indians is part of this contemporary metaphor of the Indians as the childhood of the race, a metaphor which was to become increasingly powerful towards the end of the century. For Longfellow's more intellectual and/or more racist readers his evocation of an Indian Golden Age was already an outworn fantasy. The Indian noble savage was to many literally a joke. This is not to say the redemptive view of history was dead. The rhetorical evocation of America as a new, fresh country untainted by the moribund and decaying vices of the Old World was still ideologically powerful. But the role of the noble primitive was now more often played by a white man, the Adamic American central to the Matthiessenian school's interpretation. The vanishing Indian left the land empty to his view.

Leslie Fiedler in 1972 and Richard Slotkin in 1973 both argue that what emerges is a new figure, half-Indian, half-white.¹¹¹ I recognise the phenomenon, but I think their conceptualisation is misleading, for it suggests an acceptance and embrace of the Indian, while in fact the American Adam takes the place of the Indian as the natural inhabitant of the continent. What was constructed was a white American who can live with the wilderness, can indeed take over the wilderness from the Indian, but who, although, as Lawrence says, always a killer, remains innocent and untainted. The white primitive is ascribed some of the qualities earlier associated with Indians – solitary, violent, at one with the wilderness – but he is Anglo-Saxon. This is a transformation of that earlier narrative, where the first element or, one might say, the first Adam (Indian as natural man), is absorbed and effaced by the last element or second Adam (the new

111. Fiedler, *Return of the Vanishing American*, and Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*.

American). The intervening fall vanishes from history. Linear history has in fact effaced the Native American. For the American Adam, the drama becomes geographical not temporal: corrupt civilisation threatens in the east, nature promises regeneration in the west. The tensions underlying American identity at the mid-century have to be seen in the context of the clash between the morality and idealism on which the US insisted it was based, and the opportunistic barbarity of its westward progress. The oedipal anxiety of the revolutionary state, the angst of what Lawrence calls the 'masterless men' was by then less powerful than the guilts stirred by its libidinous territorial drive. As Lawrence asks, 'Can you make a land virgin by killing off its aborigines?' The myth of the Virgin Land purged and purified the 'American' himself. Longfellow's feminised, de-sexualised Hiawatha, gladly offering his land, occludes the power of American desire.

The revolutionary image of the Indian, symbol of the free American spirit, was, like the American Adam, highly masculinised. Hiawatha is undoubtedly emasculated, certainly one reason why the poem was so scorned by manly Matthiessenian critics. But masculinity is no simple category, and is as much a construct as femininity. David Leverenz, in his provocative study, *Manhood in the American Renaissance*, sees three versions of manhood jostling for position in those years. Firstly, there was the old established 'patrician paradigm defined . . . through property, patriarchy, and citizenship', associated with the upper bourgeoisie, the version of manhood Henry Knox would doubtless have recognised. Then there was the artisan paradigm, 'manhood in Jeffersonian terms' (that is, what he recommended, not what he represented), 'autonomous self-sufficiency', a man who 'worked his land or craft with integrity and freedom', summed up, Leverenz suggests, by Longfellow's 'The Village Blacksmith':

His brow is wet, with honest sweat,
 He earns whate'er he can,
 And looks the whole world in the face
 For he owes not any man.

As Leverenz comments, 'one can tell from the patrician paternalism of Jefferson and Longfellow [that] this ideal of manhood worked well with mercantile capitalism, which depended for its raw materials on independent yeoman farmers and whose characteristic mode of production was the small patriarchal village shop'. Finally, and disruptively, the entrepreneurial paradigm, masculinity as competitive, tough individualism, threatening both the other two. By the mid-nineteenth century the entrepreneurial model was in the ascendancy.¹¹² Perhaps Longfellow, in the noble Hiawatha, is also inscribing the fading of his own class, his own earlier pretensions to making poetry safe for respectable masculinity. He and Hiawatha were of

112. David Leverenz, *Manhood in the American Renaissance*, pp.78ff

the past – masculinity was different now. Leverenz does not identify the American Adam with the entrepreneurial paradigm, but he argues it was a creative alternative, unlike the defeated patrician version.

The writers of the 'American Renaissance' had other strategies than Longfellow's for dealing both with these social changes and with the problem of creating an identity and a literature for an America in conflict between its heritage of Republican ideals and its present expansionist pragmatics. One can see the emphasis on the autochthonic Adam as one liberating refuge, the masculinist flight from sexuality as an assuagement of irreconcilable guilts; the denial of history one desperate answer to an impossibly contradictory historical moment. These writers were often radically opposed to contemporary American policies; they were conscious of their alienation from the majority of their fellow citizens. Rather than see them as apostles of 'Americanism', perhaps one should take note of Pearce's quite contrary view. After his innovative study of American attitudes to the Indian in the first half of the nineteenth century, Pearce wrote a book on American poetry in which he identifies American poets as antinomians.¹¹³

Perhaps this is too attractively simple a solution, which comfortingly claims these 'good' writers for one's own ideological camp, just as Matthiessen did, leaving Longfellow and his 'great bad poem', as Fiedler calls it, once more trounced.¹¹⁴ Some critics (for example Robert Clark and David Simpson) have been harshly critical of these writers' political evasions, and Nina Baym sees them as no more than 'consensual critics of the consensus'. David Simpson argues that when the Transcendentalists claim for themselves, what had earlier been ascribed to the Indians, an unalienated language, 'the word one with the thing', they attempt to deny the exploitation and division on which their contemporary world was constructed. So I want to return to Longfellow's critics. For them *Hiawatha* was a deeply disturbing poem. It may have been mocked and parodied, but as we know after Freud, jokes betray anxiety.¹¹⁵ As I suggested earlier, it is itself an anxiety-ridden poem. Longfellow had paid serious attention to actual Indian texts, albeit inadequately translated. He was unable to present these texts without distancing, distorting and defusing them. But even so the idea that Indians could have a literature and cultural life was deeply perturbing to some mid-nineteenth century Americans. That seems the only explanation for the vehemence of the attacks and the indignant refutations of a possible native source. It is ironic that the *Kalevala* is one of the

113. Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Continuity of American Poetry*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

114. Fiedler, *Return of the Vanishing American*, p. 77.

115. Jung, in fact, was to find the imagery of *Hiawatha* appearing in the dreams of a schizophrenic patient. Carl Jung, *Symbols of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia* (rev. ed. 1952) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956, trans. R.F.C. Hull.

works that owes its written existence to the enthusiasm for primitive poetry which Lois Whitney traces back to travellers' accounts of Indian songs, and which I suggested in the last chapter was reinforced by the interest in Indian oratory. By the mid-nineteenth century it went without saying that any European work, including oral folk poetry, must be immeasurably superior to any Indian tradition. The idea that such Indian traditions existed particularly perturbed his more intellectual readers. In Bakhtinian terms, here was a literal heteroglossia. Indian words and names constantly recur. The poem brought at any rate echoes of Indian voices, and raised the spectre that something was wrong about the way the Indians were perceived and treated by the US. The poem itself constantly attempts to still such anxieties: phrases that begin concernedly and humanely end desperately, forcing the Indian back into his place. Longfellow writes the poem for those

Who believe, that in all ages
 Every human heart is human,
 That in even savage bosoms
 There are longings, yearnings, strivings,
 For the good they comprehend not,
 That the feeble hands and helpless,
 Groping blindly in the darkness,
 Touch God's right hand in that darkness . . . (SH:7-8)

Their humanity is undercut: they are feeble and blind, only benighted heathen after all. Longfellow had read a wide range of Indian myths, poems and cultural traditions. Though he muffled their resonance by wrapping them in fake cobwebs, he and some of his readers were deeply agitated by what their existence implied. It was not for another thirty years or so that a new myth of the Indian as primitive was constructed which made it possible to look safely for longer at Indian texts. That is the subject of my next chapter.

4

READING THE SAVAGE MIND

PROFESSIONAL ANTHROPOLOGY in the United States came into being in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Ethnology had been one of the areas promoted by the Smithsonian Institution since its foundation in 1846, promoted so successfully that its first Secretary, Joseph Henry, could write with satisfaction in 1877 that anthropology 'is at present the most popular branch of science'.¹ But it was after 1879, when the Smithsonian created a separate Bureau of Ethnology, that the profession really established itself. Administratively and ideologically, the Bureau dominated the discipline until the first decades of the twentieth century, when the centre of power shifted to the universities and to the theories of Franz Boas. As Curtis Hinsley puts it, the Bureau 'profoundly altered the context, force and direction of nineteenth-century American anthropology'.² Up until that point, and often beyond, much of what we would call anthropological data was provided by travellers, missionaries, soldiers, government officials and others. Not all the researchers whom the Bureau employed were full-time anthropologists: Washington Matthews, for example, one of the most distinguished researchers to be published within their volumes, was an army-doctor. In the 1920s and 30s the Bureau employees tended to be dismissed

1. Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian: Making a Moral Anthropology in Victorian America* (first published as *Savage and Scientists: the Smithsonian Institution and the Development of American Anthropology, 1846-1910* in 1981), Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994, p. 57.
2. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 151.

by Boasians as unscientific amateurs. But that was not how they saw themselves.³ The early fieldworkers who worked under the aegis of the Bureau of American Ethnology (as it became known after 1894) thought of themselves as scientists, like other scientists classifying and hypothesising connections between the specimens, in their case, 'living specimens', which they found.

Conventional histories of anthropology have, in the past, constructed their narratives through analysing the progression and transformations of theoretical positions in the discipline. It is, of course, crucial to understand the changing paradigms within which anthropology has operated, though one must equally be aware, as historians of anthropology increasingly are, of the political agendas which lie behind those theories.⁴ In the last ten years, however, ethnographies have come more and more under scrutiny not just as theories but as texts. Ethnographies no longer appear transparent; their rhetoric and tropes have become visible, their construction of the anthropologist's persona, their devices for representation of their subjects, their discursive legitimisation of colonial power.⁵ In their accounts, as Gillian Beer has put it, they are 'speaking for others': the 'I' of their narrative 'stands in for (and so usurps) the utterance of the people described'⁶ Yet within the framework of the Bureau's aims, how to 'stand in' was a problem fraught with ambiguities. The fieldworkers were, as they insisted, scientists, but central to their scientific quest was the desire to discover how these 'living specimens' thought about their world. Even at this stage in American anthropology, before the emergence of the Boasian emphasis on subjectivity, it was not enough to discuss artefacts and kinship terms, the objective data of their task.⁷ Ethnographers wanted to understand the mental world of these 'primitive' people: their primary aim was to know what constituted the 'savage mind'. For such discoveries rapport and fellow-feeling are needed. Yet the cultural theory which these early ethnographers set out to prove argued for insuperable differences between themselves and their objects of study. One paradigmatic strategy to overcome this divide (still

3. The next generation of anthropologists then dismissed the Boasians as unscientific: see Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, p. 84.
4. See, for example, the acute awareness of political issues in Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion*, London and New York: Routledge, 1988. One of the many problems with conventional histories of anthropology is that they tend to be apologias for their author's own theories, as is, for example, Marvin Harris's *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1968), which Kuper describes as 'advocacy' for neo-evolutionary theory (p. 238), and of which Fabian says, '[Harris's] tale of anthropology is confessional, aggressive, and often entertaining, but not critical' (*Time and the Other*, p. 168).
5. See, for example, the works I referred to in my introduction: Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, and Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*.
6. Gillian Beer, 'Speaking for Others: Relativism and Authority in Victorian Anthropological Literature' in *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Robert Fraser, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990, p. 45.
7. See chapter five for a full discussion of the Boasian concern with subjectivity, or, in social science terms, his 'emic' emphasis.

sometimes employed) was to represent the ethnographer as someone with an unusual gift of gaining the love and respect of the observed group, who then offer trusting confidences. He or she understands them as parents do their children (a dubious proposition in itself). Fieldwork reportage is based on this version of the family romance. There is no question of the observed understanding the ethnographer.⁸ Frederick Ward Putnam prefaces Alice Fletcher's study of Omaha music with the note that 'her long residence among the Indians and her success in winning their love and perfect confidence have enabled her to penetrate the meaning of many things which to an ordinary observer of Indian life are incomprehensible'.⁹ John Wesley Powell says in his introduction to her work on the Omaha tribe that she 'enjoy[s] a measure of their friendship and confidence rarely accorded one of alien race'.¹⁰ Alice Fletcher even adopted her chief native collaborator as a son.¹¹ As the Women's Anthropological Society asked in its constitution in 1885, since the Indians were the children of the human race, who could from the 'earliest unfoldings of thought, language and belief . . . collect so valuable materials as can mothers?'¹²

Yet the anthropologist as parent (which in many cases spilt out of the reports into the attempt to teach the Indians how to enter the white, adult world) was a limited model. The official belief was in the 'psychic unity' of mankind, but by that was meant that all human societies had passed through identical evolutionary stages, Indians being still at a stage the Aryans had left behind millennia before. How could a late nineteenth-century American enter, understand and represent the mental processes of these backward people? In the ethnographic writing of this period the tension between identification and analysis which always exists in anthropological works was particularly acute. All ethnographic writing controls the representations of its subject-people and the classification of their culture. All ethnography claims, or has claimed until very recently, that it knows better than its subject the nature and place of their world. Some ethnographic theory, indeed, has claimed that their subject's view of the

8. This is still just as true, although presented with much more sophistication, in Clifford Geertz's famous account of the Balinese cockfight ('Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight' in *Myth, Symbol and Culture*, ed. Geertz). See Clifford's critique of this piece in his introduction to *Writing Culture*.

9. Alice Fletcher aided by Francis La Flesche, *A Study of Omaha Music*, Archaeological and Ethnological Papers of the Peabody Museum, Vol. 1, Camb., Mass: Peabody Museum, 1893, p. v: hereafter referred to in the text as OM.

10. Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 27th Annual Report 1905-6, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1911, p. 14, hereafter referred to in the text as OT.

11. This was never an official adoption, because La Flesche did not wish to lose his name, as he was proud of his father's fame as a powerful chief.

12. Nancy Oestrich Lurie, 'Women in Early American Anthropology' in *Pioneers of American Anthropology*, ed. June Helm, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960, p. 37.

world is irrelevant to the analytic task of the ethnographer. Not so early anthropology in the United States, which both classified the native in a more derogatory way than any later American anthropology, yet insisted its task was to get inside these natives' minds. Finding a way of empathising was essential. Some ethnographers, like Frank Hamilton Cushing, were accused of identifying much too closely with their subjects, committing the sin of going native. To *appear* to identify, as James Clifford argues, emptied their texts of scientific value.¹³ How could they (to draw on Clifford again) fashion an ethnographic subjectivity which could stand in and speak for such very different subjectivities?

In this chapter I want to consider the implications of this dilemma for the reading of Native American literary traditions. Ethnographers at this period, when the hegemonic belief in Aryan superiority dominated intellectual life, worked with a cultural theory which, unlike eighteenth-century primitivism, left no place for any intrinsic literary or aesthetic worth in Indian oral literature. Yet among these ethnographers some came to recognise the extent and richness of these traditions, and found a hermeneutics, a way of interpreting these texts, which was much more productive and fertile than that of the primitivists. That paradox is one I hope to elucidate here – how it was that, even though the ethnographers' imperialistic theory fixed and differentiated the inferiority of the Indians, some, at any rate, found models or metaphors through which they could identify with aspects of Native American life, and, through that identification, found a way of recognising value in their traditions. Any identification must always be at best an approximation, in Lacanian terms a misrecognition, but necessary for all that, if those ethnographers were to find a way of representing Indian subjectivity, to themselves in the first instance, and then to others.¹⁴ Although their contact with Native American culture was much greater, their problem was essentially the same as that of Morton and Longfellow, the need to find a discourse which made Native American difference comprehensible. I want here to explore the tension between the rigidity of these early ethnographers' theoretical framework and the dynamics of their identifications, looking at the political matrix out of which these ethnographic theories and practices grew. In particular I want to consider the contradictory legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan's work, and the hermeneutic strategies which that work made possible. Later in this chapter I

13. Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, p. 26.

14. Lacan believes the infant first achieves a sense of identity by identifying with its mirror image, 'the first of the *méconnaissances* [misrecognitions] that constitute the ego, the illusion of autonomy to which it entrusts itself': Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience', *Écrits: a Selection* (1966) trans. Alan Sheridan, London: Tavistock, 1977, p. 6. Part of this article is an explicit attack on existentialism, and Lacan seems to be offering *méconnaissance* as an alternative to either good or bad faith. Cf. my comments in my introduction on structuralism and existentialism.

will explore how models of gender difference, so often used to represent primitive inferiority, became in the work of Alice Fletcher and Frances Densmore, as with Sarah Morton, another strategy through which they found a way to interpret Indian literary traditions. But first I shall look at the political climate which shaped these theories and texts.

During the 1850s the popularity of *Hiawatha* had been in striking contrast to the general indifference of east-coast Americans to the continuing dispossession of the Indians. From the end of the Civil War, with emancipation achieved, many abolitionists switched their attention to the Indians. The leading abolition publication, the Boston *National Anti-slavery Standard*, dropped anti-slavery from its title, and commenced campaigning for the Indians.¹⁵ A series of organisations came into being to press for reforms in government policy, and for the end of military force against the tribes. A renewed and heady belief in America's moral mission inspired these postwar reformers. Senator D. Schitter in 1864 had prophesied, that, when the struggle to end slavery was successfully over 'we shall be redeemed and regenerated as a people; . . . we shall stand hereafter, as we have stood heretofore, in the vanguard of the civilised nations – the power of all other powers on earth'.¹⁶ The result of this revived confidence in America the good was an outcry against the exploitation of reservation Indians and their depredations at the hands of unscrupulous western settlers. According to Prucha,

the nation witnessed an upsurge of Christian sentiment demanding Christian justice for the Indians that would be proper to a Christian nation. This was a restatement of the paternal concern for Indian welfare that had existed for decades. . . . What was new was . . . the intensity with which evangelical Christians moved into Indian affairs.¹⁷

Yet it is hard to decide now whether the Indians' way of life suffered more from the land-hungry settlers or these zealous philanthropists. The reformers saw the Indians as pitiful children to be treated as the wards of the United States. They campaigned to prevent some of the grosser injustices towards the Indian, but, although there were as always exceptions, the majority had a fiercely programmatic belief in the need to civilise the Indians, a belief which did as much well-meaning damage as the similarly paternalistic efforts of British missionaries elsewhere. Such reformers urged the abandonment of treaty-making, on the grounds that Indians were not mature enough to know what was good for them; they refused to pay attention to Indian 'rights' if those rights would result in Indians failing to turn into Americans; they applauded the slaughter of buffalo herds because it would compel Indians to abandon hunting; they welcomed starvation

15. Linda K. Kerber, 'The Abolitionist Perception of the Indian', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 12, 1975, p. 286.

16. Prucha, *Great Father*, pp. 479–80.

17. Prucha, *Great Father*, p. 430.

among the Indians because it would force them to become American-style farmers.¹⁸ In other words, they were, in their well-meaning way, as determined to eliminate Indian culture as any frontiersmen. Even among the most enlightened reformers the idea that the Indians should be able to continue in their own way of life remained inconceivable, just as it was impossible to regard their preference for their own culture over that of the Americans as a rational adult choice. Lydia Maria Child, for example, who greeted the news of the peace commission report in 1868 with the exclamation, 'Really, this encourages the hope that the Anglo-Saxon race are capable of civilisation', was a bitter critic of US treatment of the Indians, and, most unusually, objected to imposing English and monogamy on the Indians. Yet even she saw civilisation of the Indians as the ultimate aim. In her *Appeal for the Indians* she wrote: 'How *ought* we to view the peoples who are less advanced than ourselves? Simply as younger members of the same great human family, who need to be protected, instructed, and encouraged, till they are capable of appreciating and sharing all our advantages.'¹⁹

In addition to these reformers' zeal to assimilate the Native Americans, the postwar years saw a new burst of expansion towards the west, and the building of transcontinental railroads, so destructive to the Indian way of life. The pressure to take away even reservation lands from the Indians became overwhelming. By the last quarter of the century it became government policy to disband gradually the reservations, granting Indian heads of families allotments of 160 acres each, and single people ones of 80 acres. Indians would now be eligible for American citizenship; and all other land would then be available for white purchase; as the reservation lands contained about 500 acres per Indian, the amount of land potentially to be released was vast.²⁰ The large reservations, it was argued with that reversal of cause and effect I have noted before, 'provoked . . . encroachments'.²¹ While in the west settlers invaded Indian lands, in the east reformers argued the Indians would be better off without them. Even the majority of liberals were no longer concerned with Indian territorial rights, but with their duty to Americanise them. 'The nation,' it was argued at the Friends of the Indian Lake Mohonk conference in 1895,

possesses a supreme sovereignty over every foot of soil within its boundaries. Its legislative authority over its people it has neither right nor power to alienate. Its attempt to do so by Indian treaties in the past does not relieve it from the

18. Prucha, *Great Father*, especially pp. 528–33, 560–61 and 619–23. Obviously there is a difference in moral culpability between the frauds, the deceptions and the massacres that characterised the more blatant violence against the Indians, and the insensitive eurocentrism (perhaps one should coin the word amerocentrism) of the reformers. I find, however, Francis Prucha's attitude to the latter surprisingly tolerant.

19. Prucha, *Great Father*, p. 497 and Kerber, 'Abolitionist Perception', p. 286. See Lucy Maddox's comment on Child's response in *Removals*, pp. 102–03.

20. Joan Mark and Frederick Hoxie's introduction to *With the Nez Percé: Alice Fletcher in the Field, 1889–92*, ed. Mark and Hoxie, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981.

responsibility for the condition of government in the reservations and in the Indian Territory; and, despite those treaties, it is under a sacred obligation to exercise its sovereignty.²²

Dispossession of the Indian had become a moral crusade: allowing them to keep their lands was a dereliction of the Providential Nation's godly duty.

At the same time, racial prejudice against the Indians and conviction of their inferiority was hegemonic, even if the nature of that inferiority was disputed. Well-to-do evangelicals might have seen the Indians as wayward children to be saved for the God who blessed America, but in popular fiction they were savage vermin to be exterminated. As Henry Nash Smith says, 'where Kit Carson had been represented as slaying his hundreds of Indians, the dime novel hero slew his thousands, with one hand tied behind him'.²³ Extensive somatometric research had been carried out on Civil War soldiers of different ethnic groups, and the published results gave a new degree of scientific authority to beliefs in a hierarchy of races.²⁴ Although from 1868 the official policy was one of peace, some of the bloodiest confrontations and massacres were yet to come. As before, assimilation and elimination were alternative policies sharing the common end of removal of the Indians from the wanted land.

Already in 1849 the Bureau of Indian Affairs had been transferred from the War Department (where it had been in Knox's day) to the Department of the Interior. As Regna Darnell points out,

The transfer reflected not a softening attitude to the Indians, but a vision of continental political domination that was the manifest destiny of the United States. The Indians had become enemy aliens rather than foreign enemies.²⁵

The idea that the Indians should be regarded as 'wards' of the United States rather than as foreign nations was first put forward by Chief Justice John Marshall in 1831 – a view which had as its essential corollary the implication that Indians were already on United States land and so had no real territorial rights.²⁶ This became the official and pervasive view during the second half of the century. In attempts to deal with relations with Indians administratively rather than through war, anthropologists, Regna Darnell says, 'aided in setting the terms of the peace'.²⁷

21. Prucha, *Great Father*, p. 664.

22. Prucha, *Great Father*, p. 75. The Friends of the Indian were a powerful philanthropic pressure group. Their Lake Mohonk conferences were begun in 1883, at a resort owned by Quaker Albert K. Smiley, and had a strong influence on government policy towards the Native Americans. –

23. Nash Smith, *Virgin Land*, p. 103.

24. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution*, pp. 21–29.

25. 'Introduction', in Regna Darnell (ed.) *Readings in the History of Anthropology*, New York: Evanston, London: Harper and Row, 1974, p. 7.

26. Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, pp. 164–5.

27. Darnell, 'Professionalization of Anthropology', in *Readings in the History of Anthropology*, pp. 169–73.

Anthropology emerged internationally as an independent branch of science in these mid-century decades. The American Ethnological Society was founded in 1842, three years later than the Ethnological Society of Paris and a year before that of London.²⁸ Ethnology's growth was always linked with colonialism, but ethnology in the United States was particularly closely entwined with politics. The American Ethnological Society had been founded by Albert Gallatin, famous for his study of Indian philology, but also an influential political figure who had been secretary to the treasury under Jefferson, and an adviser on Indian policy. Gallatin's attempt to classify the Indian tribes by language was undertaken with government help, because it was anticipated that it 'would not only help the War Department learn more about various tribes and tribal affinities, but that it would assist the government in determining tribal land claims by identifying Indian terms for local geographical features'.²⁹ Ethnology rapidly became a tool of government in the settling of Indians on reservations and in the renewed efforts at Americanisation, one important reason why fieldwork developed much earlier in the American than the British traditions.³⁰ The book generally cited as the opening *oeuvre* of English anthropological work is Sir Henry Maine's *Ancient Law* (1861), which, although a contribution to the debate on how British India should be governed, was entirely reliant on written sources. Moreover, according to Adam Kuper, many of those written sources were not concerned with India, as Maine developed his ideas on Indian villages on the supposition that they were analogous to Teutonic marks.³¹ Schoolcraft's bulky, theoretically confused, *History and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Conditions and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, whose six volumes appeared between 1851 and 57, was the publication of first-hand surveys of the tribes commissioned by the Department of War in 1847 to help with reservation administration.³² From that time on, however, such research was more often organised through the government-funded Smithsonian Institution, set up in the year before to deal with all aspects of the sciences. The research into the Indians which the institution carried out at this stage was mainly in the form of rather crude questionnaires and census-taking, though it also published independent research. Schoolcraft himself drew up a memorandum advising

28. Darnell, 'Professionalization of Anthropology', p. 170.

29. Robert Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, p. 16.

30. Another reason was its close connection with other natural sciences in the mapping and classifying of the flora, fauna and geology of the continent, while the links in England were much more with legal studies. See also Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 152. He points out that fieldwork only becomes more than the handmaid of theory in British anthropology with the work of Rivers, who specifically wanted to make ethnography a science (Rivers' first expedition was to the Torres Straits in 1898). This was also the period when British anthropology came to be used in the service of the government.

31. Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society* p. 28.

32. See Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, pp. 183–4.

a special office for ethnology: such an office came into being in 1879 as the Bureau of Ethnology.

The Bureau of American Ethnology (as I shall call it for simplicity, even before its change of name in 1894) had more autonomy. Part of its function was, all the same, to gain the kind of understanding of tribal life that would enable officials best to persuade the Indians to accept the American way of life. Much earlier the Franciscans in Mesoamerica and the Jesuits in the north had realised that missionary work demanded a knowledge of the prospective converts' culture. The Puritans' lack of concern with Native American culture (with one or two notable exceptions like Roger Williams) was perhaps one of the reasons their conversion attempts had so little success. But the Bureau also had a more purely scientific goal, which was to record the Indian traditions which they believed would be quickly gone forever. This is the process that Curtis Hinsley has described as 'salvage anthropology', and led to the practice, continued until after the Second World War, of describing, not what the anthropologist actually observed, but a reconstruction from the oldest inhabitants of what had been the habits prior to reservation life.³³ What is played out is the paradox of a culture determined to remove the Indian way of life, while at the same time wanting to preserve some relics of this National Heritage: according to Frederick Hoxie, this confusion was graphically illustrated by the Indian exhibitions at the three late nineteenth-century World Fairs, which remained unable to decide if they wished to exhibit Native Americans as potential American citizens or as romantic native exotica.³⁴

Major John Wesley Powell (he always used his military title), first Director of the Bureau, argued strongly for the political importance of his work:

In pursuing these ethnographic investigations . . . it has been the endeavor as far as possible to produce results that would be of practical value in the administration of Indian affairs, and for this purpose especial attention has been paid to vital statistics, to the discovery of linguistic affinities, the progress made by the Indians toward civilization, and the causes and remedies for the inevitable conflict that arises from the spread of civilization over a region previously inhabited by savages. I may be allowed to express the hope that our labors in this direction will not be void of such useful results.³⁵

What Powell had to offer the government was more than practical advice. He could also provide a new, respectable scientific theory which explained and justified social and racial inequality. Although Powell might disagree with the detail of the government's policy towards the Indian, he offered them a new version of the scientific racism and Anglo-Saxonism of the

33. Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 20.

34. Frederick E. Hoxie, 'Red Man's Burden', *Antioch Review*, Vol. 37, 1979, pp. 323–42. Alice Fletcher was one of those who made all the use she could of such opportunities to educate the public. See the reference below to the New Orleans Exposition of 1895.

35. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 150.

mid-century, a version in which the laws 'of science decreed that the disappearance of Indian culture was inevitable, and that (even if they wished to) the United States could not prevent it. This was an amalgam of Social Darwinism, widely popular in the States at this period, anthropometry, and the theory of cultural evolution put forward by Lewis Henry Morgan in *Ancient Society* in 1877, two years before the founding of the Bureau. In that book Morgan had argued that the history of the human race ('one in source, one in experience, and one in progress') had three stages, savagery, barbarism and civilisation, each with its own form of inventions, social organisation, kinship and property. Civilisation was the highest form, and the other two would disappear in its path. The Aryan race, and especially the United States, represented the highest form of civilisation. Like most anthropologists more Lamarckian than Darwinian, Morgan argued that mental capacity increased with technological process (i.e. that modern mental ability was an acquired characteristic), that there were decisive breaks between evolutionary levels, and that civilisation was the result of intelligence, effort and self-help.³⁶ Under Powell's leadership, the Bureau produced publications in which, as Regna Darnell, says, 'the achievements of the American aborigines are contrasted, implicitly or explicitly, to the pinnacle of civilisation reached by the culture that developed the science of anthropology'.³⁷ When Powell felt his anthropologists' reports did not make this sufficiently clear, he would intervene. These interventions were sometimes overt, when, for example, he prefaces Cushing's account of Zuni folktales with an introduction which stressed that any poetic beauties the reader may find are due to Cushing rather than the Zuni.³⁸ Less obviously, he carefully controlled the presentation of field reports, keeping the responsibility for synthesis largely in his own hands.³⁹

36. On anthropology and Lamarckianism, see Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, pp. 2–3. See also Fabian, *Time and the Other*, pp. 11–14. By the 1880s in intellectual and scientific quarters in the States the idea of evolution was largely established. This was eased by the theory's acceptance by the influential Presbyterian Church (though many fundamentalist Christians remained hotly opposed, as they do in the States to this day). But evolutionism had led to the general acceptance, following Darwin, of monogenesis rather than polygenesis, which for many was much less compatible with Christian faith. 'Social Darwinism' was becoming accepted as a rationale for the rapid development of capitalism in the States at this time. Darwin's actual theories do not imply a teleological progress towards a necessarily better state. Darwin's theory of development was of change through blind chance and the random interaction of environment and organism. As Gillian Beer has shown so powerfully, Darwin's world picture can be read as tragedy: the survival of the fittest (in Spencer's phrase) was not necessary the survival of the best. But in popularised form the developmental hypothesis was taken to underwrite a growing belief in a progress led by the white races. Morgan also seems ambivalent, but not Powell.

37. Darnell, 'Professionalization of Anthropology', p. 169.

38. Frank Hamilton Cushing, *Zuni Folk Tales* (1901), New York: Knopf, 1931, p. ix.

39. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 155.

One reason that Powell was anxious to control the Bureau's publications was that he wanted to present 'the science of the Bureau as a united front to the Congress'.⁴⁰ The Bureau represented scientific expertise, not to be challenged by the laymen of the government. Establishing what James Clifford has called ethnographic authority was a struggle for the Bureau, never to be separated from the unsuccessful struggle to obtain what Powell considered adequate financial support from Congress. Although the government funded the Bureau, there was often a certain tension, with the Bureau employees convinced that they knew best. The anthropologists were on the side of the reformers, protesting against abuses of the Indians. They agreed with them and the official government policy on the need for the Indians' Americanisation, though sometimes suggesting a gentler pace. Often they worked harmoniously with the government, as, for example, did Alice Fletcher, but there could be stormy clashes, and the accusations would be hurled at the anthropologists that too much contact with Indians had sapped their moral and mental fibre. Frank Hamilton Cushing in 1881 led a successful fight to reclaim Zuni land taken by the son-in-law of a Senator and prospective vice-President, John H. Logan, who, according to Hinsley, arrived in fury at Zuni, and launched an attack against the ethnologist and the Bureau. Significantly, the main focus of the attack was [Cushing's] supposed moral degradation through prolonged exposure to Indians.⁴¹

If the anthropologists could subvert their employers' policy, their texts, or some of them, could occasionally subvert the relentless and closed arrogance of the theory to which they subscribed. While the dominant paradigm was that of cultural evolution, another conceptual shift had occurred which made a new understanding and appreciation of Indian culture possible. This can be dated back to 1851, also to the work of Morgan, and perhaps helps to explain why it is in these years that the enormous richness of Native American poetic traditions begins to be transcribed and interpreted at length.

Lewis Henry Morgan

Before Longfellow had even begun to struggle with the problem of how to impose a European sense of order on to the ill-understood myths which

40. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 155.

41. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 196. In his defence, Cushing said he had always preserved his honour in his relationship with the Zuni. This presumably has nothing to do with not exploiting them, which would have been (to Senator Logan at least) quite honourable. Morgan's advice on treatment of the Indians had been rejected earlier in similar terms: 'Mr Morgan has . . . so far by habit of mind linked himself with the aboriginal race . . . no politician or citizen would ever dream of regarding [his] . . . diction on a political matter of slightest value'. (Quoted Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, p. 243.)

Schoolcraft had transcribed, Lewis Henry M \ddot{o} rgan was arguing that the Iroquois had created, in social organisation and religion at least, coherent, integrated and admirable systems. Morgan's *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee or Iroquois* (his use of Iroquoian form is in itself emblematic) is an impassioned polemic, pleading for the better treatment of the Indians and an understanding of the value of their culture, written, as he says there, 'To encourage a kinder feeling towards the Indian, founded upon a truer knowledge of his civil and domestic institutions, and of his capabilities for future elevation.'⁴² The information in the *League* came from his own study of the Indians of New York State (he was adopted as a Seneca), and, perhaps even more importantly, from Ely S. Parker, an educated Seneca who became his close friend, and was later the first Indian Commissioner for Indian affairs. It gave the most detailed and best informed of any account of a North American Indian nation that had yet appeared in the States. Morgan had worked with Parker to campaign against the removal of the Seneca, and in the *League* he is determined that what he writes will change the white Americans' view of the Indian. Unlike Longfellow and most of his other contemporaries, he recognises that the Iroquois had a system, and a good system of government. Unlike Schoolcraft, he recognises that they had a system of belief (which he describes as if it were a species of Unitarianism, or even a nature-loving deism) rather than a jumble of superstitions:

In their original, well-developed institutions, and in their government, so systematic in its construction, and so liberal in its administration, there is much to enforce a tribute of respect to the intelligence of our Indian predecessors. (LH:127-8)

Eminently pure and spiritual, and internally consistent with each other, the beliefs and the religious ceremonies of the Iroquois are worthy of a respectful consideration. (LH:224)

In the context of this passage, M \ddot{o} rgan is using the word predecessor, not just in the sense in which Cadwallader Colden had used 'progenitors' in reference to the Indians, or as indeed Melville was to use the word the same year in a review castigating the racism of Parkman's *Oregon Trail*, as examples of the earlier form of all mankind.⁴³ Morgan also means, as he has just explained, that the Indians, as the first people of the American continent, should be regarded as spiritual ancestors, and regarded with pride. They too had an admirable cultural and religious life. Though at

42. Lewis H. Morgan, *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee or Iroquois*, Rochester, New York: Sage & Bros, 1851, hereafter referred to in the text as LH.

43. Melville wrote of *The Oregon Trail* in 1849: 'Whenever we affect to condemn Savages . . . we should remember that they are our progenitors, for they were savages too'. Quoted Michael Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville*, New York: Knopf, 1985.

another level of development, and though with a social structure which Morgan defines (at this stage) as an oligarchy, the Iroquois are, like the Americans, passionate lovers of Liberty, 'whose spirit could never be bowed in servitude':

It would be difficult to find a fairer example of government by the few . . . [or] . . . to find a political society, in which there was less of oppression and discontent, more of individual independence and boundless freedom. (LH:137)

But Morgan was caught within a contradiction. For all his admiration of the Iroquois, he accepted the superiority of civilisation and the progressive march of history. Like his contemporaries, he believed, however regretfully, that the Iroquois were doomed to disappear.

Race has yielded to race, the inevitable result of the contact of the civilized with the hunter state . . . The Iroquois will soon be lost as a people, in that night of impenetrable darkness in which so many Indian races have been shrouded . . . The residue of this gifted race, who still linger around their native seats, are destined to fade away, until they become eradicated as an Indian stock. We shall ere long look back to the Iroquois as a race blotted from existence. (LH:143–4)

Morgan sees this destruction as the ineluctable price of civilisation, which for him, as nature for Tennyson, has its bloodied teeth and claws:

Civilization is aggressive, as well as progressive . . . To uproot a race at the meridian of its intellectual power is next to impossible: but the expulsion of a contiguous one, in a state of primitive rudeness, is comparatively easy, if not an absolute necessity. (LH:444–5)

The 'fatal deficiency of Indian society,' Morgan decides, is the 'non-existence of the progressive spirit' (LH:141). All that he can offer in the end is to insist that the individual Iroquois are capable of being educated into Americans, and to urge the gathering of their traditions before it is too late:

It may be safely averred, that if the sustaining faith, and the simple worship of the Iroquois are ever fully explored, and carefully elucidated, they will form a more imperishable monument to the Indian, than is afforded in the purity of his virtues, or in the mournfulness of his passing. (LH:225)

Morgan's language in the *League* holds numerous echoes of earlier primitivist writers in his descriptions of the Iroquois; his assessment of the progress of civilisation reproduces many of the received ideas of his contemporaries. What is new – besides the detail and care, which are not negligible factors – are the two recognitions: one, that the Indians have a 'government', and secondly, that their culture has its own coherent structures and philosophy. He sees in their culture what Darwin would call eight years later 'a web of affinities'. The terms Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age had already been invented by the Danish archaeologist Christian Thomsen in 1819, and by the 1840s and 1850s evidence of palaeolithic culture had brought the recognition that all human societies had indeed been societies, had had a 'culture' of some sort. There had never been

men living in a 'state of nature'.⁴⁴ Morgan's insights are in line with that recognition, but they were, I would guess, made possible by his friendship with Ely Parker. The book carries the dedication: 'To Ha-Sa-No-An-Da, Ely S. Parker, a Seneca Indian, this work, the materials of which are the fruit of our joint researches, is inscribed: in acknowledgment of the obligations, and in testimony of the Author.' As far as I know, this is the first acknowledgement of the central role of what would later be called the 'native informant', or by the more generous (or more honest?) anthropologists, 'native collaborator'.

Morgan's account of the political sophistication and success of the League established by the historical Hiawatha – 'It is, perhaps, the only league of nations, ever instituted among men, which can point to three centuries of uninterrupted domestic unity and peace' (LH:141) – stands in stark contrast to its banishment from history in Longfellow's poem. Longfellow appears never to have read Morgan's work: indeed, unlike *Hiawatha*, the *League* appears to have attracted very little interest. Morgan's respect for the Iroquois fell on unreceptive ears.

Morgan's *League* was in many ways a backward-looking book, in the melancholy primitivist tradition, gazing at the former glory of the League, now so reduced, but it still asserted the present worth of Indian culture in an unwelcome way. Morgan's later works, less romantic, more diagrammatic, appealed much more to his contemporaries. Though Morgan's political and ethnographic interest in the Indians continued, his next major anthropological work did not appear for twenty years. *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinities of the Human Family* was published by the Smithsonian in 1871. The thesis of this work, which dominated much of anthropology for a century, and which was, in its own way, as bizarre and dangerous as anthropometry, was that among what were by now disparagingly called primitive peoples, kinship names were relics of earlier forms of group marriages. Through kinship terminologies, the anthropologists' fossil finds, the history of social evolution could be constructed. The idea that 'primitive' customs should be interpreted as a survival from an earlier stage of evolution was argued in England by E.B. Tylor in the same year, and became a staple of anthropological interpretation.⁴⁵ Primitive races had

44. See Rosalind Coward, *Patriarchal Precedents: Sexuality and Social Relations*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, p. 19.

45. I am here following Adam Kuper's analysis: see his *Invention of Primitive Society*, pp. 54–64. Tylor's views appeared in his influential book, *Primitive Culture*. A third book that had appeared in 1871 was Darwin's *Descent of Man*, whose stress on the importance of language and culture generally greatly influenced Morgan. But as Adam Kuper points out, in spite of the prestige of Darwin's work and its success in achieving first an intellectual and then a popular acceptance of evolution, Morgan, like most anthropologists was in practice more Lamarckian than Darwinian. Like Lamarck, they favoured the idea of evolutionary leaps; they preferred clear-cut divisions between savage and civilised. They accepted his optimistic belief in purposeful progress, so

failed to evolve. By studying them civilised man could learn more about his predecessors – not in the way Blair had suggested, when he argued that the truths of human nature were not overlain by the artifices of culture among primitive peoples, but because in them modern man can see the journey through which he had struggled from the darkness of savagery to the light of civilisation.

Morgan's work was a contribution to a growing international debate on the progress of cultural evolution, a debate which presented itself as a search for the nature of primitive origins, but which was in fact a debate over what the modern political state should be like. Did, for example, the peak of civilisation approximate to British traditional government or to American democracy? The narrative of cultural evolution was teleological: the nature of its telos depended on how the narrative was told. In 1877 in *Ancient Society*, Morgan presented his fuller resolution of the problems he found in contemporary theory, and a solution for his own conflict between continuing admiration for the Iroquois and a cultural matrix which assumed their backwardness and inadequacy.

Morgan particularly took issue with the assumptions of Maine's *Ancient Law*, which was an attack on precisely the radical view of history on which the United States had been founded. Maine argued that primitive society was a patriarchal despotism, that there were no natural rights, that only civilisation could bring about the liberation of the individual, because its social organisation depended on free contract, i.e. political relationships, not on status, that is family and blood obligations and customs. Other views of history, Maine insisted, lead to catastrophic episodes like the French Revolution.⁴⁶ Morgan, a committed democrat, could not accept that. Like Maine he accepted that patriarchy, territorialism, and emphasis on property were undisputed marks of civilisation. He agreed that there is a radical difference between what he calls gentile societies (the savage and barbarian who organised through kinship or the gens) and the civilised society (organised through political institutions). But for Morgan democracy was natural to all human societies, both their earliest and their highest form. In their own terms there could be excellent 'gentile' societies, although these could not cope with the complex demands of the civilised:

As a plan of government, the gentile organisation was unequal to the wants of civilized man: but it is something to be said in its remembrance that it developed from the germ the principal governmental institutions of modern civilized states . . . out of the ancient council of chiefs came the modern senate; out of the ancient assembly of the people came the modern representative assembly . . . out of the ancient general military commander came the modern chief magistrate,

much more comforting than Darwin's random, amoral development. They made use of Lamarck's idea of acquired characteristics, which fitted best the blend of racial and cultural hierarchy they dealt with.

46. Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 24.

whether a feudal or constitutional king, an empéror or a president, the latter being the natural and logical results.⁴⁷

As Adam Kuper comments, 'the constitution of the United States is therefore the logical and natural flower of the ancient order of the gens'.⁴⁸ Therefore, too, in spite of the vice-hold of the evolutionary framework, Morgan can find a rationale for his respect for the Iroquois. Even in this work Morgan attempts to heal the gap between Indian and American, finding a way past the defeat of the earlier romantic nationalism's efforts to make Indians the ancestors of white Americans.

As in the *League*, Morgan makes a plea for the documentation of Indian life, but no longer, as there, solely for its own sake:

Rich as the American continent is known to be in material wealth, it is also the richest of all the continents in ethnological, philological and archaeological materials, illustrative of the great period of barbarism. Since mankind were one in their origin, their career has been essentially one, running in different but uniform channels upon all continents, and very similarly in all the tribes and nations of mankind down to the same state of advancement. It follows that the history and experience of the American Indian tribes represent, more or less clearly, the history and experience of our own remote ancestors when in corresponding conditions. Forming a part of the human record, their institutions, arts, inventions and practical experience possess a high and special value reaching far beyond the Indian race itself.⁴⁹

Moreover, while the 'sciences' of ethnology, philology and archaeology are still only 'feebly prosecuted among us', the Indians are fast disappearing:

While fossil remains buried in the earth will keep for the future student, the remains of Indian arts, languages and institutions will not. They are perishing daily, and have been perishing for upwards of three centuries. The ethnic life of the Indian tribes is declining under the influence of American civilization, and their institutions are dissolving. After a few more years, facts that may now be gathered with ease will become impossible of discovery. These circumstances appeal strongly to Americans to enter this great field and gather its abundant harvest.⁵⁰

This odd mixture of the metaphors of fossils in the rocks and the gathering of the corn, one an image of death and one of life, embodies a central contradiction in the anthropology that would follow as it studied living people as if they were fixed in an amber past. Though here Morgan's affirmation of the 'uniform channels' of human development is a model of onward flowing progress, the still-present tinge of melancholy is not without significance. Like Darwin, though unlike Spencer, Morgan is not always sure that development means improvement. There is a point at which his clear 'channels' of history run into emotional and intellectual muddied waters. The full title of his book was *Ancient Society, or Researches*

47. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, p. 341.

48. Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 71.

49. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, p. xxxi.

50. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, p. xxxii.

in the *Lines of Human Progress from Savagery to Barbarism to Civilization*, but the lines become confused when he describes the idea of property and its role in the move to Higher Barbarism and civilisation. Progress suddenly seems to have gone wrong: aristocracy, slavery, 'greed for gain' appear. Things have in fact got worse, although the United States, being the only place where 'the privileged classes' have been overthrown, has the seeds of a better future:

Since the advent of civilization . . . property has become . . . an unmanageable power. The human mind stands bewildered in the presence of its own creation. The time will come, nevertheless, when human intelligence will rise to the mastery over property. . . . A mere property career is not the final destiny of mankind, if progress is to be the law of the future as it has been of the past. . . . The dissolution of society bids fair to become the termination of a career of which property is the end and aim; because such a career contains the elements of self-destruction. Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges, and universal education, foreshadow the next higher plane of society to which experience, intelligence and knowledge are steadily tending. It will be a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes.⁵¹

Morgan is echoing that same redemptive view of history that was one side of the Founding Fathers' beliefs. Morgan, it has been pointed out, revived the Enlightenment belief in man's perfectibility and the unitary development of mankind: he revives as well their tension between the belief in progress and critique of modernity. Yet he ends *Ancient Society* with a firm closure that reiterates his faith in the superiority of the Aryan race. In the complexity of elements within his text, that closure, fortunately, does not always hold.

Morgan's work was used in many different ways (to the non-anthropologist, most famously by Engels who responded precisely to Morgan's sense that present society was scarcely the ideal). For Powell, it gave a patriotic stamp of approval for his enterprise, emphasised the urgency of the Bureau's work, confirmed his own moralised social Darwinism, and gave him scientific respectability. Powell had a less sympathetic view of Indian culture, apparent even in his nomenclature: while in Morgan's theory nearly all Indian groups were barbarians, Powell always refers to them as savages. Powell saw 'human progress' as the result of 'human endeavor',⁵² and this moral strenuousness meant he was bound to be censorious of those who had not endeavoured. However, his view also meant that he was anxious to disprove the Spencerian idea that cultural evolution was brought about by unconscious forces: cultural evolution for him, as for Morgan, was the product of intelligence and effort. (Morgan emphasised luck, 'the accident of circumstance' as well, which allowed him to be warmer towards the uncivilised.) But for Powell, it was all in the mind, and the savage mind was what he wanted to study, to learn from it how progress had come about. As Hinsley says:

51. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, p. 522.

52. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 131.

Powell wanted to do for the science of man what Darwin had done for biology: formulate a powerful guiding theory of (human) evolution buttressed by an unassailable mountain of empiricism. Morgan made a critical contribution with his development stages marked by characteristic, correlated forms of inventions in material goods, ideas, and institutions. Here the student could see the unity of the human mind in its full clarity, as it created essentially similar products across the spectrum of human needs at each point in evolution. . . . With the full panoply of man's inventions at each stage spread before him, the student of man could proceed to examine by inference the development of the magnificent agency that had created them: mind. This was Powell's final destination, to which Morgan opened a way.⁵³

It is possible – and probably correct – to point to a range of elements in Morgan's work that impeded cross-cultural understanding: the later emphasis on groups as representative of stages rather than of inherent interest; a theory which placed these cultures irrevocably behind the whites, as fossils left behind from an earlier age; the idea that within that fossil society, there would be yet older fossils (e.g. kinship names), drawing attention away from a present culture to a conjectural reconstruction of its past; a belief in the cerebral inferiority of primitive people; the assertion (to which I shall return) that patriarchy was one of the achievements of civilisation.

None of these ideas was original to Morgan; his was simply the synthesis that had most impact in the early years of US anthropology. But in Morgan's work – and this was more unusual – these ethnographers could find a model of engagement with the complex detail of Indian life and respect for its values. The idea of cultural evolution dated back at least to the mid-eighteenth century.⁵⁴ Morgan's search to understand a system of interrelating parts looks forward to the dominant twentieth-century metaphors, whether as the field of force in modern physics, or the synchronic models of structuralism. Lévi-Strauss has hailed Morgan's disciple Frank Cushing as a forerunner of structuralism, but it was Morgan's thinking that made Cushing's work possible, as Lévi-Strauss indicates by saying Cushing deserves a 'seat on Morgan's right'.⁵⁵ Lévi-Strauss dedicated *Elementary Structures of Kinship* to Morgan, and repeatedly praised his work. Structuralism is the extreme in the search for universal systems, and it became as reifying in the end as cultural evolution, but Morgan's move in that direction and at that moment was creative and productive. If they wanted it, the ethnographers who followed Morgan could find through his writing a much more productive hermeneutics than had been available before for their approach to Indian culture. They could expect that culture to have a shape and coherence of its own, which would be different from the European, and need not be understood by imposing European categories on it. These,

53. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 137.

54. See Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, for a thorough examination of these ideas.

55. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (1958), trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grandfest Schoepf, Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin, 1963, p. 291.

of course, were not always easy to avoid: sometimes Morgan and his followers merely substituted a new European concept for an old one. But they could insist that Indians, like white Americans, possessed *systems* of thought. Morgan's use of the word in the title of *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity in the Human Family* is significant – the only major nineteenth-century anthropological work to be so titled – in spite of the gross distortions of their culture that particular system implied. (Similarly his term the 'human family' is indicative of his humanitarianism.) When Washington Matthews first understood the significance of the Navajo sandpainting he wrote in delight to Cushing that the Navajo have 'a complete system of pictographic myth symbolism'.⁵⁶ The pioneering work of both Cushing and Matthews, I believe, owes much to the insights that Morgan gave them.

Morgan himself, in spite of his own fine prose, and the closeness in some respects of his early work to the primitivist tradition, did not conceive of Indian poetic or mythic traditions as an art form.⁵⁷ Yet he recognised the importance of looking at Native American oral traditions as a means of understanding their beliefs. The *League* was already a rich gathering of prayers and chants, presented not as literary forms but as religious philosophy or social rituals. It is on those lines that his followers proceeded. They were not all so disparaging as Powell, who said firmly that tribal mythology was destitute of all poetry.⁵⁸ But the new expansion in the recording of Indian traditions was not due primarily to any search for an aesthetically pleasing primitive poetry, which was not an expectation within the terms of this cultural theory. These ethnographers looked for knowledge of Indian intellectual and symbolic systems. Ironically, the abandonment by the cultural evolutionists of the idea of primitive poetry made it possible for these ethnographers to discover much more about what Indian poetry was.

Women in Anthropology

Morgan's view of the Iroquois was a better informed – and more qualified – version of the revolutionary icon of the Indian as the spiritual type of the freedom-loving American nation. He recognises his kinship with them, whilst at the same time also distancing and placing present Indians, whose League has lost its glory and whose social system is not adequate for the

56. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 199. Matthews refers to the Navajo as 'rascals' in this context, which took me aback, until I remembered he was Irish, and realised it was a term of affection.

57. Powell felt Morgan underestimated the need to study Indian language and mythology, which up until then had been the central focus of most nineteenth-century ethnography. Of course, Powell did not conceive of these as art forms, but he believed they provided insight into the 'savage mind'.

58. Cushing, *Zuni Folk Tales*, p. vii. See below, p. 214.

modern world. Yet he rarely uses the image that dominated late nineteenth-century relations between whites and Indians – parent and child – even though that image is embedded in his phylogenetic view of evolution. What this simultaneous identification and distance enables him to do is to recognise otherness in a positive sense. This recognition is still a hierarchical one – civilisation is superior to barbarism – but it does not see the difference only in terms of Indian lack. Indians have their different culture with its own characteristics – inferior of course in technology and knowledge, though sometimes, in limited ways, morally superior – but a culture which must be understood in terms other than those of capitalist society. This is not very different from most contemporary educated American men's attitude to women, who were, of course, inferior, but possibly very admirable in their own way, or as they put it, in their own sphere. In chapter two, I looked at the way Indians, in the earlier primitivist tradition, were often depicted with characteristics that would also be associated with the feminine. In Morgan's evolutionary scheme the same association finds a new form. The periods of savagism and barbarism are the period of mother-right, when relationships are always essentially personal, blood relationships. Civilisation is the period of patriarchy, when relationships are based on contract and the state, the public, manly world.⁵⁹

The idea of the evolution of mother-right to father-right was first argued by Johann Bachofen in *Das Mutterrecht* (1861). Hegelian rather than Darwinian, Bachofen conceived of history as the working of

a *Weltgeist* whose 'stages' were manifestations of different aspects of human spiritual nature, of underlying ideas which 'unfolded and flowered' at specific points in time and space – but which were encompassed within a general sexual dialectic leading man gradually from 'nature' to 'culture', from the dominance of the materialistic, earth-orientated, Oriental maternal principle to the dominance of the spiritual, heaven-oriented, Occidental paternal principle.⁶⁰

The moment of breakthrough is when fathers recognise their paternity, a triumph which

brings with it liberation of the spirit from the manifestations of nature, a triumph of human existence over the laws of material life. This 'triumph of paternity' gives to humanity its specific quality. The maternal principle is in operation for all animals. For mankind alone, there is the advance in spiritual and intellectual life based on the recognition of paternity. Recognition of paternity liberates mankind's higher aspirations, that is spiritual or intellectual aspirations based on the possibility of differentiation and identity which overcomes the sensuous.⁶¹

59. Morgan does believe the first stage is promiscuity. For a full discussion of the gendering of nineteenth-century anthropological theory, see Coward, *Patriarchal Precedents*.

60. See George Stocking, 'Some Problems in the Understanding of Nineteenth-Century Cultural Evolution' in Darnell, *Readings*, pp. 407–08.

61. Coward, *Patriarchal Precedents*, p. 33. (My copy has misnumbered pages: it should be p. 32).

The sexual metaphor is at its most overt with Bachofen, but it is implicit even in the most sober and scientific versions of the co-dependence of patriarchy and civilisation. Even those like Maine who argued for the early origins of patriarchy saw the distinguishing break between pre-civilised and civilised societies as the shift from social relations dependent on kinship (i.e. the home) and social relations dependent on political institutions (i.e. the world).⁶² Morgan read Bachofen's work in the years between *Systems* and *Ancient Society*. He was deeply impressed by its arguments, and entered into a correspondence with Bachofen. (Bachofen was equally impressed by Morgan, and later dedicated a book to him.) Following Bachofen, Morgan insisted that patriarchy was the distinguishing mark of civilisation: while patriarchy, in logic, is surely no less a family matter than matriarchy, he shares Bachofen's conviction that, with the coming of patriarchy, society moves beyond the ties of kinship to a structured public world. To have followed literally Bachofen's conviction that patriarchy was a world of the Idea rather than Matter, of Culture rather than Nature, would have gone against the complexities which Morgan elaborates in his theories of kinship. Yet nonetheless, his concept of the break between barbarianism and civilisation was as potentially gendered as Bachofen. As with Maine, and as remained an axiom for anthropological thought for decades, the move from primitive to civilised represented the move from ties of blood to ties of state, from structures determined by the body to structures determined by the mind, from a world of private horizons to the public domain. The pre-civilised and indeed all non-Aryans might or might not have many virtues, but they were no more capable of dealing with the public modern world than women. To a greater or lesser extent this was one of the ways in which anthropology naturalised imperialism, confirming the hierarchical relation between the western powers and the dispossessed non-Europeans through the analogy of gender. Such a metaphorical elision is repeatedly found in colonialist discourse, and this is one late nineteenth-century version of it.⁶³

In my chapter on Sarah Morton, I looked at the way ideas of racial and gender differences intermeshed in her work. The different qualities that she ascribed to men and women, Americans and Indians, were part of a hierarchy of difference embedded in her contemporary culture. Whilst she elevated the qualities common to women and Indians, medical science of the period was beginning to argue that both women and non-white races could be shown on physical grounds to be inherently inferior to white men.⁶⁴ By the late

62. Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, pp. 26–27.

63. I discussed this metaphorical elision at greater length in 'Woman/Indian: the "American" and His Others', *Europe and Its Others*, ed. Francis Barker et al., Colchester: University of Essex, 1985. See also Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of the Orient*.

64. The extensive physical measuring and tabulating of non-white bodies had its equivalent in the concentration of the medical profession on women's physical *inner*

nineteenth century those two scientifically-defined inferiorities were widely assumed to be fact. They were embodied in political practice and underpinned intellectual life. Yet the gender association was a multivalent one. What has been called the doctrine of female superiority was still argued by leading women proponents of the idea of the separate spheres. Though in the earlier primitivist tradition, placing the Indian as the childhood of the race could be an identification with the truest and best parts of the self, in the late nineteenth century such an analogy was nearly always dismissive and distancing. The gender analogy was most often dismissive too, emphasising passivity and weakness, but it could also be a strategy of identification, as it was for some of the early women anthropologists.⁶⁵

A remarkable number of women were, in fact, to be found among the anthropologists studying Native American culture in the reservations and pueblos in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁶⁶ Although that might appear surprising at a time when middle-class women's place was still very much in the home, many of the reasons for their presence are easy to deduce. A vigorous tradition of philanthropy and social concern existed among intelligent and well-to-do American women, who had already played a significant part in all reform movements, including abolition.⁶⁷ In the 1820s and 1830s, radicals and liberals, both male and female, had been critical of the treatment of the Indians, especially of the removal of the Cherokees, well before the main abolition movement had begun. Philanthropic concern for the Indian had preceded concern for the slave, and the two movements were always connected, although according to Francis Prucha, there were *no* philanthropic organisations working on behalf of the Indians in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.⁶⁸

organs, and particularly on the womb, which became seen as the central controller of a woman's being: in each case the *mind* was the mark of the white man. See, for example, Charles E. Rosenberg and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg 'The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women' in *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961, pp. 54–57.

65. I suspect it was too, in a more complex way, for some men.

66. For example, besides those I mention here: Mary Eastman, who lived with the Sioux in the mid-century; Harriet Maxwell Converse, who lived with the Iroquois; Mathilda Stevenson, Erminie Smith, Elsie Clews Parsons, all early field anthropologists; Natalie Curtis Burlin, who collected music and songs; Alice Corbin Henderson, Eda Lou Watson, and other poets in the Southwest who wrote about or encouraged the publication of Indian poetry women were there too in less professional roles, collecting folk tales and songs. Others, not necessarily in direct contact with Indians, worked as campaigners for Indian rights: increasingly, as the next chapter will illustrate, women translators and writers began to become enthusiasts for Indian culture.

67. Henry James's *The Bostonians* is perhaps the most famous fictional representation of this world. See also Lori D. Ginsburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, and Kerber, 'The Abolitionist Perception'.

68. I have previously mentioned this in chapter three. There were individuals, including L.H. Morgan and his friends. Prucha talks of the 'single voices' at this period of John Beeson and Bishop Whipple. Whipple made several visits to Washington to press for

Lydia Maria Child had made her name with her abolitionist novels, but her 1868 *Appeal for the Indians*, which I quoted earlier, was not a new departure, rather a return to her early concerns, for her first novel *Hobomok* (1824) had been on an Indian theme.⁶⁹ This revival of sympathy was given a great impetus in the eighties by a woman writer, Helen Hunt Jackson, who made a fierce attack on the government's Indian policies in her polemical book, *A Century of Dishonor* (1881), and later in a novel *Ramona* (1886), which she hoped would do the same for the Indian cause as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had done for abolition.⁷⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century it was not surprising that Indian reform movements were often spearheaded by women. The largest philanthropic organisation was the Women's National Indian Association (for which Alice Fletcher at one time worked) which later metamorphosed into the National Indian Association, and was the most important pressure group for Indian welfare in the early twentieth century.⁷¹ Early anthropologists believed themselves to be working for the welfare of the Indian and were part of that broad movement of concern.

Another reason for the presence of these women in pioneer anthropology was that anthropology, still only partially institutionalised, could be taken up without any formal training or qualifications. As Powell said when describing his own pre-Bureau research, earlier ethnological information had been collected from 'a large number of persons including missionaries and teachers among the Indians, Indian Agents, Army officers, scholars connected with the colleges of the United States and others'.⁷² The idea of any kind of full-time anthropologist was quite new, and the Bureau published research by many not directly employed by it. At a period in the States when women were first attempting to enter the professions, and encountering great difficulty, they needed only initiative and enthusiasm to

justice for the Indians to the president and cabinet, and reported that at one of them Secretary of War Stanton had said:

What does Bishop Whipple want? If he has come to tell us of the corruption of our Indian system and the dishonesty of Indian agents, tell him that we know it. But the Government never reforms an evil until the people demand it. Tell him that when he reaches the heart of the American people, the Indians will be saved. (Prucha, *The Great Father*, p. 473.)

Prucha argues that in the 1840s, the great decade of reform movements in the States, although there were no reform organisations for the Indian, the directors of Indian affairs acted in the benevolent and optimistic spirit of the decade (*ibid.*, p. 284). I wonder if Prucha is the one who is being benevolent.

69. See note 77, p. 82 and note 94, p. 90 of chapter two. Kerber, 'The Abolitionist Perception', p. 272, 1975.
70. Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the US Government Dealings with some of the Indian Tribes* (1881), Boston: Roberts, 1886; *Ramona: A Story*, Boston: Roberts, 1884.
71. See Helen Wanken, 'Women's Sphere' and Indian Reform: the Women's National Indian Association', PhD, Marquette University, 1981.
72. Neil M. Judd, *The Bureau of American Ethnology: A Partial History*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966.

enter anthropology, with none of the structural hurdles involved in entering medicine or law. Nancy Oestrich Lurie has suggested that women were welcomed into this new profession by male anthropologists, because it was felt they would be needed to deal with native women and their female concerns. I am not entirely convinced by this: she quotes an address by E.B. Tylor, in which he suggested anthropologists should get their wives to talk to the women, which seems a long way from welcoming women as professionals; and there seems little evidence that these women, any more than male anthropologists, regarded native women as important sources of information.⁷³

Precedents, however, for these women's geographical adventurousness certainly could be found in the numerous American women who had gone as teachers to the frontier towns, as well as in the women of independent means who became travellers outside the confines of western culture. Both English and American nineteenth-century women travellers have been the subject of a number of books, including reprints of their works, in the last few years, and there are instructive comparisons to be made. Deborah Birkett has argued that for some women contact with non-Europeans gave them a chance to play the dominant patriarchal role.⁷⁴ That certainly applied to some women anthropologists. Mathilda Stevenson was famous, or infamous, for her bullying methods, on one occasion having her exploits reported in the local press under the headline: 'Cowed by a Woman: A Craven Red Devil Weakens in the Face of a Resolute White Heroine'.⁷⁵ On that occasion her bullishness (to continue the cattle metaphor) went down well. Among her male colleagues it did not, though Cheryl Foote suggests many of the criticisms of Stevenson were simply due to misogyny, and that her actions would not have been seen as oppressive if carried out by a man. Intriguingly, like Florence Nightingale, Stevenson was intrepid and fired with energy in the field, but retired to her couch with neurasthenia whenever she had to go back to domesticity.⁷⁶ Some women sought professions like anthropology because they were literally dying of boredom at home.

73. Lurie, 'Women in Early Anthropology', pp. 33–34. Although Alice Fletcher did express a specific interest in women's position in their society before she became involved with anthropology, nothing appears to have come of it. E.B. Tylor's comments were sparked by an early study by Matilda Coxe Stevenson, when she was thought of merely as James Stevenson's wife, on 'The Religious Life of the Zuni Child'. (His response to this is an interesting example of the immediate elision of women and children in patriarchal discourse at the period.) This seemed to him just the sort of topic for an ethnologist's wife. Mathilda Coxe Stevenson's later work was certainly not confined to women and children, and she was a dominant energy in founding the Women's Anthropological Society of America. She would not have been happy to be merely a wifely helper. Yet she did get her chance to enter the profession by being a wife in the right place, a phenomenon Lurie recognises.

74. Deborah Birkett, 'The Invalids at Home, the Samsons Abroad', *Women's Review* No.6, April 1986.

75. Lurie, *Women in Early American Anthropology*, p. 59.

76. Cheryl J. Foote, *Women of the New Mexico Frontier, 1846–1912*, Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1990, p. 127.

All the same, if it is easy to see the broad historical reasons why women found their way into anthropology, it is less easy to discover how these women, many of whom had been influenced by feminism in one form or another, saw their own position, as women in a male-dominated society, in relation to the problems of the Indians in a white-dominated society. Women abolitionists who also supported women's suffrage had made explicit analogies between their position and that of the slaves. Abby Kelly, for example, said that:

We have good cause to be grateful to the slave for the benefit we have received to ourselves, in working for him. In striving to strike his irons off, we found most surely, that we were manacled ourselves.⁷⁷

This analogy does not in fact originate with them; they were subverting a comparison already made with equal force though different aim by some of their opponents. The *New York Herald* wrote in 1852:

How did woman first become subject to man, as she now is, all over the world? By her nature, her sex, just as the negro is and always will be to the end of time, inferior to the white race, and therefore, doomed to subjection: but she is happier than she would be in any other condition, just because it is the law of her nature.⁷⁸

Many of the women working with or on the fringes of the anthropological profession had earlier supported abolition. Many (sometimes ill-advised) parallels were drawn between the problems and the needs of the Indians and those of the blacks.⁷⁹ This comparison of their sex to an oppressed race would have been known to these women. In addition, anthropological theory presented them with even more emphatic analogies between themselves and the Indians than they had inherited from the abolitionists. Ideas of racial hierarchy, which at the time of the abolition debate had relied on the growing mystique of Caucasian, and especially Anglo-Saxon, superiority and on the scientific racism of anthropometry, had been intellectually strengthened by the new and powerful evolutionary paradigm which structured Morgan's work. Arguments for polygenesis (always controversial) had been dropped. But evolutionary monogenesis was not necessarily any less racist, and was much more sexist. Evolutionary theory, it was accepted, established beyond doubt the inferiority of both women and non-white groups; women and the non-white races, it was widely assumed, had both failed to evolve fully.⁸⁰ T.H. Huxley was saying, as early as 1860, that five-sixths of women had only reached 'the doll-stage of evolution'.⁸¹ Darwin suggested in *The Descent of Man*

77. bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, London: Pluto, 1981, p. 126.

78. Quoted Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*, London: Virago, 1980.

79. This is the overall argument of Kerber's article, 'Abolitionist Perception'.

80. Coward, *Patriarchal Precedents* and Jill Conway, 'Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Social Evolution', in *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. Martha Vicinus, London: Methuen, 1972.

81. Quoted Gillian Beer in a review article of books on gender and science, 'The Observers Observed', *Women: A Cultural Review*, Vol. 1:3, 1990.

(1871) that sexual difference was the result of woman's more laggardly pace of evolution, caused by her slower metabolic rate. The evolutionary distance between men and women in his scheme was constantly increasing.⁸² The anthropometrists, relying on cranial measurements, argued that, like non-white races, women had literally light-weight brains, and therefore were physically incapable of reaching evolutionary maturity. Herbert Spencer, whose work was very influential in late nineteenth-century American anthropology (in spite of Powell's reservations), believed sex-differences occurred because there was 'a somewhat earlier arrest of individual evolution in women than in men; necessitated by the reservation of vital power to meet the cost of reproduction'. So much of a woman's energy was taken up by reproduction she had none left for psychological and intellectual development.⁸³ All this parallels very closely with what Spencer and the later nineteenth-century social scientists said about the inability of non-European races to evolve:

Indeed the law of 'thus far shalt thou go and no further' tells the story of most of the failure of races and people. They fell through mental inability to succeed. They had reached the natural limit of their activities.⁸⁴

This was generally attributed to their small brains, though there was a Spencerian argument that the Negro failed to develop after puberty because so much of his energy was taken up by sex, but that was never applied to the Indian, whose supposed lack of sexual drive was taken to be one more sign of his evolutionary failure.⁸⁵ In the nineteenth century one quality regularly ascribed to both Indians and respectable bourgeois women is indifference to sexual pleasure.

How did these women anthropologists and students of Indian life come to terms with these theses? How did they feel about similarities between their own position and that of the Indians, especially now that the Indians were being literally confined and hemmed in by reservation life, as nineteenth-century women so often felt they were in their domestic roles? Did their own defiance of that confinement make them sympathetic to the dissatisfactions the Indians felt with the reservation life? Or was their essential confidence that white women, were, in the last analysis, always white, and therefore superior to any non-European men, enough to make the comparison inconceivable, when there was not the potent image of the

82. See Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, p. 7.

83. Conway, 'Stereotypes of Femininity', p. 141.

84. Daniel Brinton, quoted Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution*, p. 117.

85. Haller, *Outcasts of Evolution*, p. 52 for the negro. Buffon had argued that the Indians lacked ardour, though Jefferson defended them against this charge. It was one which had been made from the earliest days of colonisation, especially invoked by the absence of rape by Indians, even in warfare with the whites. It was not a consistent association however, as Berkhofer pointed out in his summary of the ignoble savage's characteristics which I quoted in note 34, p. 9 of the introduction: the evil Magua's sultry lust for Cora in *The Last of the Mohicans* is an example.

unfree slaves/disenfranchised women? (Some women suffragists responded with ugly anger to black male franchise, and some put forward arguments for white women's suffrage on distinctly racist grounds.) A woman anthropologist not only had the problem, that I outlined in the first section of this chapter, of trying to operate with a theory which denigrated the very minds it asked her to enter; the theory also denigrated her. Towards the end of the nineteenth century these ideas were beginning to be challenged, and in the next chapter I shall look at Boas's rejection of racialism. At the same time there were those like Thorstein Veblen and Charlotte Perkins Gilman who adapted the Lamarckian argument on women's behalf: because women had been deprived of education and opportunities beyond the home they had been prevented from acquiring the same characteristics as men.⁸⁶ A few generations of equal opportunities would begin to show a change. But the two women I want to look at here either were unaware or uneasy with those challenges. As in Sarah Morton's poem, Indians in their writing are very different from the model American male, but they are very similar to the ideal American woman. The doctrine of different spheres is employed, as by so many nineteenth-century women, not to argue equality but an alternative set of values, for the acknowledgement of the moral value, if not superiority, of the gentler sphere.

White middle-class women had been more restricted to the home since Independence. Indeed, Ann Douglas has argued that United States society was more 'Victorian' than England in its insistence on women's refined and virtuous nature, in the extreme polarity of gender stereotyping, and in the general sentimentality that became the norm in cultural forms designed by or for women.⁸⁷ The cult of domesticity and the glorification of the role of mother were even more influential in America than in Britain. Women were to belong to the home, not the world; even women who campaigned for women to move outside the narrow confines of their individual homes generally only visualised the possibility of extending domestic virtues to analogous spheres. Catherine Beecher, the moral reformer and educationalist, said that woman's role 'is self-denial . . . if not for her own children, then for the neglected children of her father in heaven'.⁸⁸ Women were, it was held, peculiarly suited to works of moral reform, charity or teaching. Elizabeth Blackwell, arguing that women should be allowed to become doctors, maintained that they had a special role to play in what we would now call the caring professions: 'the great essential fact of women's

86. See Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, p. 39.

87. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, New York: Knopf, 1979. See also Barbara J. Berg, *The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism, the Women and the City, 1800-1860*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

88. Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement*, Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981, p. 88. The Women's Anthropological Society conviction, which I quoted earlier, that mothers could best understand the child-like natives is a similar move.

nature is the spiritual power of maternity . . . the subordination of the self to the welfare of others'.⁸⁹ Catherine Beecher believed that women had been given a mission by God for 'the moral refinement of the race'. Women's novels of the period, like those by Harriet Beecher Stowe and Susan Warner, emphasise the suffering, religious, pure nature of woman, opposing values of affection and tenderness to the world of mercenary ambition.⁹⁰ This purity of course excluded the possibility of sexual passion: when Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, now regarded as a feminist classic, appeared in 1899, it was denounced even by feminists for its depiction of female sexual desire. Like Sarah Morton's assumption of the martyr role, these attitudes, promulgated then by leading women, now seem a distasteful collusion with patriarchal values; but in their own way they were an important, though limited, defiance of the dominant attitudes of American capitalism, and of the place ascribed to women in that tradition. This is not to pretend that these women did not on the whole do very well out of capitalism. Rather, I think, the conflicting gender ideologies were both essential to American society, with 'womanly' values acting as a system of checks and balances on the raw aggressiveness and hardness of the 'masculine' public world. The greater emphasis on 'womanliness' in the States is at one level in response to the greater aggressiveness of their culture. Reapplied to Indian culture, these attitudes were again both productive and limited. They provided a means of transvaluing Indian otherness from the modern world, but they restricted the range of emotions and ideas that could be represented as part of Indian culture.

Alice Fletcher

Alice Fletcher (1838–1927) was among the pioneers of American anthropology, one of the most famous of her generation, the first woman president of no less than three learned societies connected with anthropology, and the author of some of the most substantial early studies of Indian ritual and music. She worked as a 'collaborator' of the Bureau, publishing work through them but without being directly employed. Fletcher had first become concerned for the Indians through philanthropic work on their

89. Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, p. 89.

90. These novels have been sharply criticised by some feminists, e.g. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American*, and defended by others, e.g. Jane Tompkins in 'Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History' in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. Elaine Showalter, London: Virago, 1986, pp. 81–104, and more extensively in *Sensational Designs: the Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. See for a discussion of the debate, Rachel Bowlby, 'Breakfast in America: Uncle Tom's Cultural Histories', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha, 1990.

behalf, and always felt it her duty to put work for their welfare (as she saw it) before her research, which she much preferred. Her interest in anthropology only began in her forties. Until then she had lived as a single woman of independent means, devoted to benevolent causes, including temperance and feminism, doing some teaching and lecturing. She first came in contact with professional archaeology and anthropology through Frederick Ward Putnam, curator of the Peabody Museum at Harvard, where in 1890 a fellowship was specially endowed for her so that she could devote herself to her research. However, throughout her anthropological career she actually lived in Washington, and was an important though 'quiet force' behind the work of the Bureau, the government's Indian policy, and later developments in the world of anthropology.⁹¹

One of the contradictions apparent in Alice Fletcher's life, one which pained the later generation of anthropologists like Margaret Mead, was the contrast between her sensitive and perceptive accounts of Indian ritual and her earnest work to eliminate their culture. She agreed with the reformers of the day that the only solution to the Indian problem was to change the reservation system, which was indeed badly and often corruptly mismanaged, but where at least tribal customs and communality of ownership could to some extent survive, to a system of allotments separately owned. The implementation of this policy is generally dated to the Dawes Act in 1887, but Alice Fletcher had personally devised and used her influence to have enacted a smaller act, the Omaha Act of 1882, on which the later act was modelled, before campaigning vigorously for the Dawes Act itself.⁹² Both were disasters for the Indians, failing to achieve their declared objective, which was one more attempt to turn the Indians into property-loving American farmers. Instead they resulted in the Indians being cheated and pressured out of more and more of their land. Those who supported the policy because it would release Indian lands found its outcome more satisfactory: Indian land holdings were reduced by two-thirds, from 138 million acres in 1887 to 47 million in 1934, when the Indian Reorganisation Act terminated its implementation.⁹³ Margaret Mead herself published a disguised account of the demoralised and culturally damaged condition of the Omaha that resulted, and speaks of the 'missionary' zeal with which Alice Fletcher had pursued her ends.⁹⁴

91. For information on Alice Fletcher's life see Lurie, 'Women in Early Anthropology', Jane Gay, *With the Nez Perce*, and Thurman Wilkins, 'Alice Cunningham Fletcher' in Edward T. James, Janet Wilson and Paul S. Boyer (eds.), *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: a Biographical Dictionary*, Camb., Mass.: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1971.

92. Lurie, 'Women in Early Anthropology', p. 49.

93. See the introduction to Gay, *With the Nez Perce*, p. xv and David Murray, *Modern Indians*, BAAS Pamphlets No. 8, British Association for American Studies, 1982, p. 113.

94. Margaret Mead, *The Changing Culture of an Indian Tribe*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1932. She calls the Omaha the 'Antler' people.

I talked at the beginning of this chapter about the tension for this generation of anthropologists between their fixed, hierarchical ideology and their need for strategies of identification, and Alice Fletcher's contradictions perhaps need to be understood in that context: When dealing with Indian welfare, she operated with rigid and highly conventional patriarchal attitudes towards the Indians, in the unbending and arrogant tradition of nineteenth-century benevolent paternalism. Paul Radin, appalled by her disregard for the damage her benevolence imposed, called her 'a dreadfully opinionated woman'.⁹⁵ She believed Indian culture was finished, and, when the Indians failed to accept that, treated them, her companion Jane Gay says, as 'refractory sick children, [who] *must* take the medicine that is best for them'.⁹⁶ On one occasion (about 1890), having set out to see the Omaha about the working out of the Severalty Act, like 'a happy hen brooding a lot of helpless chickens' she was perplexed but not deterred by their saying directly to her 'we are not children, we are citizens'.⁹⁷ Yet when she was doing her real research into the Indian culture she could allow herself imaginative respect for their world as a separate and admirable sphere. Evoking the cluster of qualities by which nineteenth-century women defended the value of their sex, she is able to write of the Indians with sympathy and appreciation. Although she was born eighty years later than Sarah Morton, and in many respects had different intellectual presuppositions, for much of her writing she described the Indians as if they were the kind of women both Sarah Morton and Catherine Beecher would have thought exemplary – spiritual, gentle, full of family affection, possessing high moral sense, self-denying, nature-loving, and free from any mercenary or worldly ambitions.

These two apparently contradictory attitudes mingle to some extent in all her writing. Her book *Indian Story and Song From North America*, which she wrote for a general rather than professional readership, particularly exploits the generally accepted metaphor of the Indian as child.⁹⁸ In *Indian Story and Song* Alice Fletcher has both a pedagogic and a proselytising aim. In the framework of a popularised version of Morganian evolutionary theory, she gives some simple information about Indian songs and examples of their music:

The rise of our music and poetry is lost in an irrevocable past; but as the operation of psychical laws is universal, it may be that some of the influences that have been operative in the growth of these arts can be discovered through the study of native American story and song, born of a race living in a state of culture antecedent to that in which our earliest literature and music flourished. . . . for as has been well said, America is the 'fossil bed' where are preserved stages of progress unrecorded in written history. (ISS:120)

95. Lurie, 'Women in Early Anthropology', p. 45. Arnold Krupat has suggested Radin's irritation may also have sprung from the tensions between the immigrants, particularly Jewish immigrants, like Radin, in early anthropology, and WASPs like Fletcher.

96. Gay, *With the Nez Perce*.

97. Gay, *With the Nez Perce*.

98. Alice C. Fletcher, *Indian Story and Song from North America*, Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1900, hereafter referred to in the text as ISS.

Much of her object, however, is not to instruct but to enlist a sympathetic response to the Indians from a public more often at the period indifferent or antipathetic to aboriginal culture. Her account is like a Victorian genre painting, sketching the acceptable prettiness and pathos of her subject matter. 'Their songs,' she says, reinvoking the traditional primitivist images, 'are like the wild flowers that have not yet come under the transforming hand of the gardener. . . . The art of poetry is here in its infancy. . . . Like the swelling buds in the bare branch, which hint the approach of summer's wealth, so these little vocables and rhythmic devices whisper the coming of the poets' (ISS:120). When she speaks of the ghost dance, which she knows has inspired 'gloomy . . . fear . . . in the minds of so many of our own race' she presents the Indians as lost, confused and 'homesick' children:

The ghost dance is the cry of a forsaken people, forsaken by the gods in which they once trusted, – a people bewildered by the complexity of the new path they must follow, misunderstood by and misunderstanding the race with whom they are forced to live. (ISS:97)

At the end of a decade that had seen a new popular concern for the disappearance of the American wilderness,⁹⁹ she presents the ghost dance vision in nostalgic terms to which she hopes her public will respond:

The streams wander through unbroken prairies: no roadways, no fields of wheat, intrude upon the broad stretches of native grasses; the vanishing herds of buffalo come back to their grazing-grounds; the deer and the antelope, the wolf and the bear, are again in the land; and the eagles look down on the Indian villages, where are to be seen the faces of old friends returned from the spirit realm. (ISS:96–7)

Some of her comments on Indian songs are summaries of what she had earlier written in her study of Omaha music – the pervasiveness of music in Indian life, the importance and complexity of rhythm, its subtle modulations and harmonic relations, the possession and inheritance of songs. But she also echoes popular assumptions about what primitive song should be like:

The Indian, when he sings, is not concerned with the making of a musical presentation to his audience. He is simply pouring out his feelings, regardless of artistic effects. (ISS:117)

In a sense this does not entirely contradict what she writes elsewhere, because it is true she emphasises that Indians do not sing for audiences, but these phrases suggest that these songs are no more than the formless overflowing of powerful emotion, not, as she says here and elsewhere, forms preserved 'without change from one generation to another'. And in contradiction even to the brief account she gives here of Indian songs (to say nothing of the extensive evidence of her research) in this book, though not elsewhere, she repeatedly stresses the 'spontaneous' nature of Indian song.

99. See Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (rev. ed.), New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973, especially chapter 7, 'The Wilderness Cult'.

Alice Fletcher here makes her points in a language which she hopes will arouse the imaginative sympathy of the public. They think of the Indians as children, which she often does, so she evokes the Victorian sentimental cult of the child, and a popularised view of primitive song as naïve, undisciplined, ‘untutored’ as she says herself. She did not hesitate to give the white public what she thought best for it, just as she did to Indians. In the New Orleans Exposition of 1895 she exhibited photographs under the title of ‘Indian Civilisation’ that quite misleadingly made the Omaha appear acceptably ‘monogamous and patriarchal’ – well on the way to being cosy nuclear all-American families.¹⁰⁰

But this childlike image of the Indian was not adequate in her ethnographic writing. Something rather different happens there. Many elements from *Indian Story and Song* appear in her research, but overall the presentation of her research conveys a much higher evaluation of Indian culture and art, a respect which increases as time goes on. In *Indian Story and Song* she describes the difficulty which the Indians have in hearing music on the piano. In her study of Omaha music (1893) she begins by talking about her difficulty in hearing Indian music. At this stage in her conceptualisation of the Indians she characterises them in terms reminiscent of the earlier primitivism – tenderness and delicacy of feeling, high moral tone, sensitivity to the beauty of the natural world. Yet she does talk of their songs as art, even if, as a good Morganian, she stresses their songs are the products of an early stage of society, and so only what she calls ‘nascent’ art:

We seem to have come upon the beginnings of versification, to have found the little springs of feeling and expression that lie at the source of the mighty stream of poetry. (OM:13)

She stresses the interconnectedness of their culture, not at this stage of her work as what Washington Matthews would have called a system of mythic symbolism, but as a world unified by the totality and spirituality of their immersion in music:

Music envelopes like an atmosphere every religious, tribal and social ceremony as well as every personal experience. There is not a phase of life that does not find expression in song. . . . Music is the medium through which man holds communion with his soul, and with the unseen powers which control him. (OM:10)

Both the persona she presents of herself and the version she gives of the Omaha are feminised. Her opening is subjective and tentative, admitting her difficulties; then comes her illumination/initiation, through an illness and the Omaha’s care for her, of which singing to her is a central part; then analysis, which explicates with care, but also affectivity. Her account is emotionally coloured, evoking the beauties of the surrounding nature,

100. See Melissa Banta and Curtis Hinsley, *From Site to Sight: Anthropology and the Power of Imagery*, Camb., Mass: Peabody Museum, 1986, p. 103.

responsive to the innerness of the Indians. She presents herself as giving up preconceived ideas of 'savage' music (her quotation marks) and 'theories of scales, tones, rhythm and melody', because their songs have brought her 'deeper revelations of the heart and inner life of the Indian' (OM:8–9). An essay by John Fillmore on the technical aspects of music is attached to the study, but Alice Fletcher writes about the meaning of the images and the emotional timbre of the songs.

Fletcher is impressed by the need to understand the context and associations of the songs, and the far from simple meanings that they have. She explains one war-song, where the words ventriloquise the response of the warrior's sister when he was born, foreseeing his destiny, to which the song recalls him. Frances Densmore later was to record similar oblique war-songs, which are precisely the reverse of the popular conception of war-whoop, but as far as I know Alice Fletcher was the first Anglo-American to realise this art was no mere outpouring of emotion but worked in complex psychotropic ways.¹⁰¹ Yet she still writes about this poem with sugary sentimentality:

Through these lines twines the poetry of thought and expression, simple as a wild flower and as delicate; the music assists the tender verse and bears the weight of the thought. (OM:14)

Another song is 'full of the movements of the dawn, the gentle breeze that heralds the day, stirring the leaves, nodding the flowers, and awakening the birds'. Another brings tears to the old men's 'faded eyes'. She is working, clearly, in the tradition of American women's writing of which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the best-known example, in which what we now see as sentimentality was regarded as the most potent tool in creating the realisation of a common humanity. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, of course, also appeals to compassion through the feminisation of the alien race, as critics have pointed out for some time.¹⁰²

Fletcher carefully explicates the symbols of the songs and their relation to traditions and rituals,¹⁰³ but even that admirable ethnographic project is expressed in primarily romantic terms:

The music, to be understood and appreciated, needs its original setting of nature's colors, Indian life, and tribal ceremonial. (OM:55)

She continually stresses the fine ethical ideals of the Omaha. The only defect, in fact, that she finds in them is precisely that ascribed at the period to women: 'evidence of sustained thinking is wanting'. The differences

101. 'Psychotropic' is a word generally only used of mood-altering drugs like LSD, but it is clear that this visionary songs produced very similar results.

102. See the texts referred to in note 90, p. 173.

103. In her awareness of the need to understand the context of these cultural forms, she may have been influenced by her first mentor Putnam's own sensitivity to place and diversity. She and Putnam disagreed over the allotment programme and social evolution, of which he was an early critic. Joan Mark argues that Putnam was a forerunner of Boas, whose early career he did much to aid.

between Indian and modern culture are 'upon the intellectual rather than the emotional plane' (OM:56).

I am not suggesting that Fletcher consciously 'feminises' the Indians, rather that the doctrine of the separate spheres gives her a model of an alternative to the capitalist public world, another way of life and being which, though unfitted to run a modern government or corporation, should be admired in terms of sensibility and morality. The concept of such a separate sphere for the Indians lies easily with contemporary anthropological theory, in which Indians, like women, were defined in terms of personal not public relationships. In addition, as Fletcher's works shows, the early primitivist tradition, not yet dead though etiolated, still works to fix them more than it ever did in a gentle and feminised sensibility. (She writes just before a new and invigorated primitivism, which will be discussed in the next chapter.)

Fletcher ascribes the Omaha's lack of 'sustained thinking, without which there can be no full expression of thought in literature, music or any other art' to the conditions of a society that predates the division of labour and the accumulation of property which make a leisured class possible. This is good Morganian theory which ties cultural forms to modes of production (which in turn are tied to evolutionary changes), but her argument here also has echoes of the debates about women's education that had been going on in the States ever since Morton's day. Was it lack of opportunity or, as scientific opinion insisted, innate lack of ability, that held women back? Fletcher eschews any suggestion of racial or innate inferiority: Indians are being taught 'English speech' and 'English thought' now, so 'their directive emotion will hereafter take the lines of our artistic forms' (OM:57). Alice Fletcher differs from her contemporaries at the Bureau in that she shows no interest in linking social and physical differences. When asked to send skull measurements of the Nez Perces to the World Fair at Chicago, she left the matter to Jane Gay, on whose previous efforts to help professionally Fletcher had poured scorn.¹⁰⁴ Morgan's own view was that the Indians would need generations to acquire through use the right inherited characteristics (essentially, bigger brains) to cope with the modern world.¹⁰⁵ That was comparatively liberal; I have already quoted the more common view that the lower races were evolutionary failures, who were unlikely to develop. Women's inability to cope with the modern world was similarly linked with their physical limitations and arrested evolution. I suspect Alice Fletcher ignored all these arguments, whether about women or Indians. She certainly took no account of womanly incapacity in her own life, nor of racial handicap in her plans for the Indians. Perhaps, with sad irony, just because her resistance to these biological theories made her

104. Gay, *With the Nez Perce*. Poor Jane Gay discovered the Nez Perce had rather large heads, which she felt sure was the wrong answer (pp. 137–41).

105. See Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution*, p. 111–14.

more enlightened in one respect than many of her contemporaries, and so much more willing to accept Indians individually as equals, she was also more ready to drive on with her scheme of freeing them from their backward, dying culture. After all, she must have felt she was making it very successfully in a man's world. At the same time, of course, she held on very firmly to her east-coast women philanthropists' culture, in a way she felt the Indians certainly should not be allowed to hold on to theirs.

However, that may be, although she never admits that she was wrong to persuade the Omaha to desert the old ways, in her later work she increasingly shows serious respect for Indian culture, and shows doubt about the correctness of the place assigned to them in cultural evolutionary terms (OT:602). As early as 1893 she had written 'the Indian is not a primitive man, nor properly a savage, but he is untutored', which is closer to Morgan himself than to Powell.¹⁰⁶ By the time she produces her study of the Pawnee Hako ceremony she is no longer suggesting Indian culture shows an inability for sustained thought. The Hako was the Pawnee equivalent of the Omaha Wa-Wa ceremony, which she realises in her study of Omaha music had been carefully preserved for at least two hundred years.¹⁰⁷ Most Indian groups from the Southwest to the Eastern Woodlands had a version of this ceremony, which could be performed inter-tribally, with the important political function of creating peaceful links between different groups. No Omaha remained who could give her a full version of the Wa-Wa, but she eventually found a Pawnee who knew the Hako. In her attitudes to such Indian helpers, there is a further change. When she wrote the study of Omaha music, she mentions at the very beginning that she was aided by Francis La Flesche, but after that he entirely disappears from her narrative of her growing understanding of these songs. In the Hako, she begins by saying how impossible ethnographic research would be without a 'native collaborator'. She names two; the main one is James Murie, who in fact then does disappear into the text. But she also relied on Tahirussawichi, whose version of the words of the ritual, and commentaries on the ritual, she reproduces as the body of her text, referring to him then as the Kurahas, a possessor of the rite. By the time she produces the massive work on the Omaha tribe, she publishes it under the joint authorship of herself and Francis La Flesche.¹⁰⁸ She has learnt to trust the Indians: trust has not all been one way after all.

106. Quoted Lurie, 'Women in Early Anthropology', p. 53.

107. *The Hako: A Pawnee Ceremony*. 22nd Annual Report, 1901–2, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1904, hereafter referred to in the text as HAK.

108. Of the three Native American anthropologists that Lévi-Strauss mentions as among the strengths of the BAE, two were trained by Fletcher, which must be to her credit: see 'The Work of the Bureau of American Ethnology', in *Structural Anthropology*, Vol. 2 (1973) trans. Monique Laytin, London: Penguin, 1977.

So the Hako's twenty fixed rituals, most of which have two to four parts, and its four incidental rituals, are given with Tahirussawichi's explication of the symbolism. Fletcher then goes through the ritual again, with fuller details about the conduct of ceremony and the use of symbolic equipment, information Tahirussawichi must also have provided, but whose analysis here must owe much to James Murie as well. The result is one of the earliest and fullest explications of the complex and rich symbolism of Indian culture. Fletcher repeatedly insists how full of 'reverence' is the conduct of the ceremony, what deep feeling for the natural world the rituals show, and how they emphasise 'on the one hand, man's dependence on the supernatural for all the gifts of life, and on the other hand, his dependence on the family tie for all the gifts of peace and happiness' (HAK:362). She shows meticulous care in her recording of the text and its context, and now grants the Indians in addition to spiritual values, intellectual strength:

it is made up of many rituals, each complete in itself, but all so related to each other as to form an unbroken sequence from the beginning of the rites to their end. . . . The compact structure of the Hako ceremony bears testimony to the mental grasp of the people who formulated it. As we note the balancing of the various parts, and the steady progression from the opening song of the first ritual to the closing prayer in the twentieth, and recall the fact that ceremony was constructed without the steadying force of the written record, we are impressed on the one hand, by the intellectual power displayed in the construction, and on the other, by the sharply defined beliefs fundamental to the ceremony. (HAK:282)

The ceremony, using as its central metaphor the blessing of a child by its father, but always performed between two adults representing two groups, possibly of different tribes, shows, Fletcher says, that 'the trend of thought among the native seers has borne them toward a conception of the brotherhood of man, a conception recognized as the noblest known to the human family' (HAK:362). She recognises that the existence of such a highly-developed peace-making ceremony not just on the more esteemed Mexican plateau and in the Southwest, but 'over the wide territory occupied by the so-called hunting tribes marks the growth of political ideas and gives a higher place to these tribes in the line of social development than has usually been accorded them' (HAK:280). Yet, all the same, almost the first thing she tells the reader of Tahirussawichi is that he is 'trusting and child-like' (HAK:14).

These two sets of attitudes reflect the two sides of Alice Fletcher's career, and the contradiction between her way of life and the 'womanly' ideals with which she clearly identifies. Feminist histories of the period suggest the idea of the separate spheres began to disintegrate at this period. A new generation of feminists argued for equality once more, and saw 'womanliness' as a patriarchal trap. As the journalist Rhoda Childe Barr wrote, they wanted 'to belong to the human race, not the ladies' aid society to the human race'.¹⁰⁹ Even among those women still influenced by the cult of

109. Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres*, p. 54.

true womanhood, some had lost the confidence that existed in the mid-century in the 'heavenly influence' of female superiority and its ability to save the world. Lori Ginsburg suggests this ideology never recovered from the need to rely finally on the 'masculine sword' to end slavery.¹¹⁰ Womanly virtues were all very well, but the stern hard decisions of the masculine world and the legal system would achieve more results. Fletcher is typical of her generation in her primary reliance on law, and only secondarily on emotional appeals to the public. In some ways she might be seen as a very 'patriarchal' woman. Even her close friend Jane Gay always referred to her as 'Her Majesty'.¹¹¹ Her construction of the Indians in their feminised world could be, equally for her as for her male colleagues, a distancing operation. She equated them with children, as women were so often equated, in their need for help and guidance in the world that progress had brought.¹¹² She was acutely aware of their exploitation in the west, referring to the Idaho settlers as 'buzzards', and writing that she 'had never seen such greed, such a determination to rob a people, as I have found here in Idaho. One would think these Indians had hardly a right to live, and not a right to possess their land.'¹¹³ Yet she was unable to see that the eastern paternalistic legislation was performing the same process.

On the other hand, Fletcher's recording of Indian ceremonials like the Hako was done with a receptivity and willingness to listen to the Indians which has preserved some of the most extensively annotated texts. The Hako is the only Plains ceremonial to have been fully recorded. In spite of her sentimentalising of the Indians' religious feeling for nature, her sense that they had a morally admirable culture, different from the European American, less technically advanced, but in some ways more worthwhile than the hectic commercialism of the cities, comes, I think, from her being able to consider them in terms drawn from contemporary views of women. She stresses their peaceableness and feeling for others, as her fascination with the Hako and Wa-Wa ceremony illustrates, or her elucidation of the quite unmartial war-songs. At the end of the account of the Omaha tribe is a list of the moral qualities they admire. Almost everyone of them would be regarded at the turn of the century as womanly virtues – unselfishness, willingness to help and serve others, courtesy, sympathy, openness to persuasion, diffidence – the only exception, disturbingly, is 'Wapiun', which, she says, is 'applied to a bright child who said clever things. Such a child, it was generally thought, would die young' (OT:602).

110. Ginsberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, pp. 172–3.

111. Gay, *With the Nez Perce*, passim. This did also refer to her appearance.

112. Jane Gay's account is fascinating in its revelation of Alice Fletcher's dogged devotion to what she thinks is best for the Indians. Her attitudes can only be called motherly paternalism.

113. Joan Mark, *Four Anthropologists: An American Science in its Early Years*, New York: Science Historical Publications, USA, 1986, p. 70.

Finally, I want to mention one curious blank in her work, which I think has quite different causes. She almost never gives what is generally understood as a translation of their poetry. What she calls a translation reads, for example, like this one from the Hako:

Ho-o-o! An introductory exclamation.
 Hi-ri! 'Hari! Hiri! Awi kots we re hwe kusi hil!
 hiri! give heed!
 'hari, a part of iha'ri, child.
 hari! harken!
 awi, a part of awiu, a picture.
 kots, a part of rekots, whitish; as a thin cloud through which
 one can see a tinge of blue cloud beyond.
 we, now.
 re, are. hwe, holding.
 kusi, sitting.
 he! from hiri! give heed! (HAK:232)¹¹⁴

This is then followed by the Kurahus's explication. In the second part of her account she goes through again offering 'rhythmic renditions', very free versions of the same stanzas, which include elements of the 'elucidation'. In this she tries to follow the original rhythm, but the language is full of late Victorian archaïcising and verbiage. When she tries to describe the words of the songs she stresses how minimal they are. Although she calls them 'highly poetical' in their references, and as the commentary makes clear, dense in signification and symbolism, the possibility that such bare elliptical writing could find a response in western readers is something she cannot imagine. She clearly believes that the religious and symbolic significations that those words represent are worth preserving, and that the music can be of intrinsic interest; she more than once recommends that American composers should make use of the themes, as Europeans had used their folk music from the late eighteenth century. This is in itself an interesting recurrence of romantic cultural nationalism, but this time one that leaves no room for the poetry.

Her appreciation of Indian music⁴ may, I think, owe something to her admiration of Wagner, who perhaps gave her the kind of modern model she lacked for poetry. This is not just that Wagner himself drew on folk traditions, but, according to John Fillmore, some of the Omaha's most striking use of harmonic relationships were also 'the most notable peculiarities of the Modern Romantic School', especially of Liszt and Wagner (OM:62). My musical knowledge is not sufficient to know how significant this may have been, but she certainly made that link more than once. She wrote in 1893 that the Indian in his music 'voice[s] his aspirations and his loves in accordance with the same laws that are intelligently and consciously

114. See Ernesto Cardenal's fine poem based on the Hako in *Homage to the American Indians* (1970), trans. Monique and Carlos Altschul, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.

obeyed by a Wagner',¹¹⁵ and John Fillmore records that Alice Fletcher told him that 'she had never been so powerfully stirred by any music as by the Wawan songs, except by some of the great Wagnerian music dramas' (OM:71). In a few years, with the advent of imagism, other readers would seize on Indian verse, but Alice Fletcher had no western poetic model that enabled her to see how to translate as poetry this language which was simultaneously spare and freighted.

Recent ethnographic self-critiques have suggested that anthropology has been dominated by oppressive metaphors of sight, the observed fixed by the western gaze. Listening, they suggest, is a less coercive source of knowledge. Alice Fletcher, I have argued, is in many ways remarkable for her readiness to listen to Indians speaking of their traditions, but fine though in many ways she finds their culture, ultimately she judges it inadequate. This inadequacy is rooted in an attitude that soon would be seen as the Indians' great virtue: they see themselves as part of Nature instead of setting out to dominate her. But for Fletcher, the Indians, like women in nineteenth-century medical theory, are inextricably part of the world of Nature, unable to master her and pull apart into the detached manly world of culture:

The ground was still Mother Earth, the stones, the animals, the trees shared with man a common gift of life, and were his friends and foes. The Indian had not shaken himself free so that he could face nature and bend her to his will; he had not yet comprehended the possibility of an intellectual, independent and external relation to the natural world. (OM:57)

For the primitivists in the late eighteenth century, nature was always associated with the sublime; that is, it dwarfed human pride in their civilised achievements. Alice Fletcher's view of nature here makes it clear why her use of traditional primitivist descriptions has become so sentimental. Those songs 'simple as a wild flower' are the expression of a people who still mistakenly see power in a universe that real men have learnt to dominate. They are charming, but effete, like the Indians themselves, to whom she has come, she said, 'to bring manhood'. Before she began to study Indian culture, she had said her aim was to find out about Indian women, hoping to add to 'the historical solution of "the woman question" in our midst'.¹¹⁶ She never seems to have followed through that quest in its literal form, but her involvement in 'the woman question' is central to her understanding of all Indian lives. Franz Boas (who found her intensely irritating) said she 'wanted to know only the ideal Indian, and hated what she called the "stable boy" mentality of an inferior social group'.¹¹⁷ He is right: her Indians are idealised, yet also doomed. For her, womanly/Indian virtues are admirable and right, but they are weak; they cannot protect you in the modern world.

115. Lurie, 'Women in Early Anthropology', p. 53.

116. Mark, *Four Anthropologists*, p. 67.

117. Mark, *Four Anthropologists*, p. 95.

Frances Densmore

I shall end this chapter by looking at one other woman ethnomusicologist, Frances Densmore (1867–1957), whose work was deeply influenced by Alice Fletcher, and includes numerous translations which have become some of the best known and most anthologised of Indian poetry. She too had an early enthusiasm for Wagner, and was earning her living by lecturing on Wagnerian opera and teaching the piano at the time (the early 1890s) when she became interested in Indian music.¹¹⁸ She was a mid-westerner, living all her life in Red Wing, Minnesota: in later life she recalled her interest in Indians being aroused in early childhood by hearing the singing of the nearby Sioux Indians: ‘I heard an Indian drum when I was very young. . . . Unconsciously it has called me and I have followed it across the continent from British Columbia to the Everglades of Florida.’¹¹⁹ Her mother had told her that Indians were ‘interesting people’, with valuable although different customs, a liberal and tolerant view for the 1870s. She remained curious about them, and having met Alice Fletcher and studied her work, Densmore added Indian music to her lecture repertoire (‘presenting Miss Fletcher’s work with her permission’), while continuing her own musical training.¹²⁰ Indian music, however, interested her more and more, and after doing some fieldwork on her own initiative,¹²¹ she began her long career as a ‘collaborator’ of the Bureau in 1907, during which she was to record nearly 2,500 phonographic cylinders of songs.¹²²

Frances Densmore is in some ways a transitional figure between this chapter and the next. She entered the world of ethnography shortly before Boas and his followers shifted the intellectual centre of American anthropology away from the Bureau to the universities, and from evolutionary ideas to those of cultural relativity. Yet intellectually she never questioned the theories of the early days of the Bureau, nor the moral codes that she shares with Fletcher. Her ambition was limited: Densmore was told early in her career by Dr Walter Hough not to read scientific reports on the groups she was to visit, in case they biased her judgments. That she accepted such a directive is perhaps an indication of the modest, indeed quite humble

118. Information on Frances Densmore’s life is taken from Lurie, ‘Women in Early Anthropology’, Thomas Vennum, ‘Frances Theresa Densmore’ in Barbara Sicherman et al., *Notable American Women, The Modern Period: a Biographical Dictionary*, Camb., Mass.: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1980, pp. 185–86; Charles Hofmann, *Frances Densmore and American Indian Music*, New York: Contributions from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, Vol. 23, 1968, and her own account, ‘The Study of Indian Music’, in the *Smithsonian Annual Report for 1941*, pp. 527–50.

119. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. 1.

120. Densmore, ‘The Study of Indian Music’, p. 528.

121. She spent time reading all she could – she mentions army officers, historians and some Bureau of American Ethnology publications.

122. Vennum, ‘Frances Densmore’, p. 185.

way, in which she approached her work.¹²³ In its early days the Bureau wanted to keep as far as possible the hierarchical distinction, still rigidly in force in British anthropology of the time, between fact-gatherers in the field and theorists in the study. In terms of cultural evolution this was no problem: ethnographic facts whatever their provenance could be mentally labelled and placed at their appropriate stage of development. Many of the Bureau's fieldworkers were not to be stopped from doing their own synthesising, but Densmore seems to have accepted her more limited role, and does not overtly take part in professional debates. In this she is very different from Boas's students, whom he told to 'read, read, read', and to find out all they could about a given culture, after which they would be in a unique position to draw their own conclusions.¹²⁴

Frances Densmore lived through great changes: she saw the collapse of the attempt at Americanisation, and the introduction of the Indian Reorganisation Act, John Collier's 'Indian New Deal' (1934) which for all its failures and misunderstandings, marks the first moment when the US government contemplated a cultural plurality which could allow the persistence of Indian ways of life. All the same, she took for granted the theory she met first, and which indeed was by then a common assumption, that the Indians represented an early stage of evolution. Writing of their music in 1939 she makes the traditional evolutionary parallel of these songs with the archaeologists' stones.¹²⁵ They are the finds by which the history of music could be reconstructed. Yet when she begins her book on Chippewa music she says, with that image clearly in her mind, these 'songs are not petrified specimens: they are alive with the warm blood of human nature'.¹²⁶ Indeed, while she consistently returns in her writing to ideas of musical evolution, as far as the Indians and their ideas are concerned she approaches them without attempting to make them conform to a developmental stage. As she says in her collection of Mandan and Hidatsa music, 'it is the custom of the writer to follow rather than force the trend of Indian thought'.¹²⁷

Like Alice Fletcher, she is always aware that the songs she records cannot be understood without a considerable understanding of their place and purpose in the group's life and thought. She moves away from the technique of Alice Fletcher's earlier work, that is, the context given through the anthropologist's impressionistic retelling of her informants' words.

123. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. vi. The Bureau provided grants for her work, and later equipment, though she always remained uncertain of her funding, and at one stage Mary Austin raised money for her elsewhere.

124. Joan Mark, *Four Anthropologists*, p. 79.

125. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. 81.

126. Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, Bulletin 45, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1910, p. 1.

127. *Mandan and Hidatsa Music*, Bulletin 80, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1923, p. 13.

Instead, as in the Hako, but using a whole range of individuals, she records closely what a named person has told her about these songs. In that sense her work could be thought admirably postmodern, allowing a whole range of different voices their chance to give their explanation of what particular songs or ceremonies mean.¹²⁸ This is not to say, however, that there are not other forms of closure in her work, as I shall suggest later on. In addition, to name and even record words of named individuals may be in itself a rhetorical and controlling device. Densmore at the beginning of each collection writes a few words – I would not say description – about each singer: ‘Horse Chief is one of the younger men and wears his hair in two long shining braids. He is one of the leading singers at dances’; ‘John Mocihat comes from one of the old families, his father having been prominent in the reservation’.¹²⁹ The background of these figures is otherwise left shadowy. They are captured in their moment of intensity and devotion, personalised by a reverent bow of the head or the drawn face of spiritual endeavour. All other aspects of their lives, other than the songs and their explication, are left unspoken. It is a shock to discover Lone Dog of the Teton Sioux, who contributes an important group of songs, remembered much later by Densmore as coming to the little coal-shed of a disused fort where she did her recording (an ironic setting, not mentioned in the monograph) dejected because he, a poverty-stricken reservation Indian, has walked many miles to sell his songs, and on that day she had no time.¹³⁰

Nancy Lurie points out that Densmore’s work has been much more appreciated by musicologists than anthropologists (though some musicologists have criticised her western system of notation). If what Lurie says is true, I think the reason must be that Densmore’s work fitted in neither with the Boasians nor the evolutionists. Her monographs do not aim to give any comprehensive sense of a particular group, nor of a cultural evolutionary stage. To the end of her life she happily generalised about ‘the Indian’, although by then for decades the emphasis had been very much on the difference between Indian cultures. Densmore’s work appears empirical and untheorised: her self-presentation and style are direct, innocent of all intellectualisation, almost indeed naïve, very much keeping herself out of the account. Only the occasional touches, emphasising Indian reverence and seriousness, give a more personal view. Her views on Indian music

128. Her work of which this is particularly true is her account of *Teton Sioux Music*, Bulletin 61, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1918. Cf. James Clifford on the text he most admires for its rich number of native voices, James Walker’s work on the Lakota (*Writing Culture*, pp. 15–17). Perhaps this is something to do with what seems to me a very particular interest in philosophising among the Sioux.

129. *Pawnee Music*, Bulletin 93, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1929, p. 1, and *Menominee Music*, Bulletin 102, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1932, p. xxi.

130. Frances Densmore, ‘For the Sake of Indian Song’, *Masterkey*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1955, p. 27.

were deeply influenced by Alice Fletcher. Many of the generalisations she makes in a lecture she gave in 1899 based on Fletcher's work appear again in one she gave in 1954 after half a century of her own recording. Her style is very different from Alice Fletcher's emotional and poeticising femininity, but, like Fletcher, she patterns Indian culture as an admirable but different kind from the modern world in a way comparable to the contrast between men and women's spheres, stressing Indian earnestness, love of nature, affection, spirituality and passivity. Densmore writes as a quiet, pious, orderly and unassuming spinster who would never challenge men in intellectual matters in her own culture, but who equally is ready to listen to the Indians – who, too, like her, are represented as quiet, pious, orderly and unassuming. Like Fletcher, she presents the Indians as first and foremost spiritual and refined, akin to the nineteenth-century womanly ideal: in some ways, she carries that model even further.

Fletcher had stressed that music and song were 'coexistent with the life of the tribe', and essential for success in every venture. Densmore makes a similar point, but in more moralised language, returning repeatedly to the idea that Indian music is always sung for a purpose, for healing, for bringing rain, for gaining a dream, never for merely frivolous or aesthetic reasons. In other words, it has qualities in common with the women's novels of the nineteenth century. Indians, she stresses, as these novelists said of right-minded women, are indifferent to ambition or monetary gain:

Our composer regards the song as a possible source of applause or wealth, while the Indian connects it with mysterious power. An old Indian said to the writer, 'If a man is to do something beyond human power, he must have more than human strength; song is a means through which that strength is said to come.'¹³¹

Like Fletcher she emphasises that music is for the Indian an expression of his religious nature and sense of the pervasiveness of the sacred in all things:

Music is a source of pleasure to Indians, and skill according to their standards is appreciated and honored, but music to them, in its highest sense, is connected with power and communication with the mysterious forces that control all human life. In that even more than in the sound of the singing, lies the real difference between the music of the American Indian and that of our own race.¹³²

The Indians' approach to religion and nature is receptive and mystic:

The white musician composes his songs to his deity. The Indian waited and listened for the mysterious power pervading all nature to speak to him in song. The Indian realised he was part of nature – not akin to it.¹³³

Unlike Alice Fletcher, Densmore sees this oneness with the natural world as a commendation: in that way Densmore is more in tune with the Southwestern primitivist movement contemporary with these collections of

131. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. 78.

132. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. 78.

133. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. 79.

songs. She is very aware of the disruption and disappearance of Indian cultures. If she does not go so far as to blame that on her own people, she no longer, like Morgan and Fletcher, feels the need to define the fatal weakness within the Indian which has led to their decline. Densmore has a lively sense of the beauty of much Indian poetry, and of the Indians' sensitivity to its aesthetic value. If she insists that aesthetics take a secondary place to purpose and religious awe, it is not that, like Morton, that she sees their art as artless, but that she sees it as applied art. As I suggested earlier in this chapter, the fact that the earlier Bureau ethnologists did not try to see Indian verse as 'poetry' was in many ways a strength, because it enabled them to understand Indian chants and songs as an integral part of a system of cultural forms. Conventional late nineteenth-century views of poetry stressed emotion, and, on the whole, emotion connected with personal rather than cultural meaning. Although Densmore does talk of their poetry as 'the expression . . . of feeling', she is always aware of the complexity of the act of translation when a philosophy as well as words have to be understood, and the songs, as she puts it, 'correlated with the life of the tribe'.¹³⁴ She refused to use interpreters provided by the agency or the missionaries because their English would be so saturated 'with the current vocabulary of these institutions':

Much time is required in working out the understanding of a word in the Indian mind, and the interpreter must be patient as well as painstaking when translating the words of songs or any information that lies close to the finer phrases of Indian thought. An exact translation of the Indian idea reveals the native poetry in the words of the songs.¹³⁵

She criticises the anthologists who reprinted poems in an inexact form. George Cronyn published a Papago poem which Densmore had been given by the shaman Owl Woman, which should have read:

In the great night my heart will go out.
Toward me the darkness comes rattling,
In the great night my heart will go out.¹³⁶

The rattle is an essential part of the shaman's power, but Cronyn changed 'rattling' to the conventionally western-poetic 'rustling'. A Chippewa vision song went:

As my eyes search the prairie
I feel the summer in the spring.¹³⁷

Densmore complains that Mary Austin has substituted 'I seem to see' for 'I feel': 'probably a person unfamiliar with early spring in northern Minnesota would not realize the subtlety of this translation'. She realises this problem

134. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. 82.

135. 'The Study of Indian Music', p. 533.

136. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. 82.

137. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, pp. 82–3.

is particularly acute in dealing with Indian notions of the sacred, which are so different from Christian anthropomorphism:

A careful interpreter is necessary, with many patient conferences between the interpreter and the Indian as well as with the student, but the result is worth the effort. For example, if the Indian uses a word meaning 'spirit' and it is interpreted as 'a spirit', the significance is changed and there enters the concept of a material form, so the presence of a spirit may be assumed when it is not in the mind of the Indian.¹³⁸

In all her collections this search for the precise word is present. It leads her to ask for 'the simplest, clearest meanings of words'. Her way of presenting translations is very different from Alice Fletcher's muddled format which simultaneously provides too much and too little information. Sometimes Densmore would provide only the very simple English translation I have quoted above, presumably when neither she nor her interpreter were able to transliterate the original. Her most characteristic practice, however, is to place each Indian word on a single line (though as Indian languages are agglutinate that may represent a phrase) with the English translation beside it, spaced slightly so there are two blocks of text:

hinhan'	owls
ho'tun pelo	(were) hooting
henhe'pi hiya'yec'	in the passing of the night
hinhan'	owls
ho'hin pelo	(were) hooting ¹³⁹

These translations were claimed by American modernists as their native version of the Japanese haiku or Chinese poetry, and as aboriginal American imagist poems. But beautiful and resonant as these translations often are, and conscientious as Frances Densmore is about their meaning, the songs, which certainly in her version look remarkably like imagist poems, were in fact in form entirely different from this. The songs would repeat the words many times; vocabulary in some cases would be esoteric and far from the limpid clarity Densmore loved; many vocables would be added as an essential part of the song, not just in addition to the words, but transforming the shape and sound of the very words themselves.

What Frances Densmore does to the words of these songs she does to Indian music as a whole. I point this out not necessarily to criticise her. Her prodigious achievements were the result of rigorous reduction of her possible subject-matter. She makes this clear when she describes her negotiations (through an interpreter) about payment for songs. She would not pay for different verses to the same melody; she would not pay for different words to the same tune; she would not pay for songs only a few tones different from one she had already; she would not take a whole

138. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. 78.

139. *Teton Sioux Music*, p. 15.

sequence, but instruct the singer to select the most interesting in words or melody.¹⁴⁰ Although she does not mention this, she was also constrained by the length of the phonograph cylinder. If a song went on too long, it would be recorded in truncated form. To read the Hako, for example, or some of the Navajo chants recorded by Washington Matthews, makes it only too clear how integral the variations that Densmore discards would be, quite apart from the loss caused by a refusal to follow a ritual the whole way through. In that sense the finished completeness of the songs she offers is an illusion. Yet in the price she gave she would expect the explanation of the meaning of the song, and she would faithfully include that, if not entirely in the singer's own words, often in indirect speech with frequent quoted phrases. (Legends surrounding songs would be paid by the hour.) In other words, she abstracted what she hoped would be the highlights, the finest jewels to be kept, even if that meant throwing much other treasure away. A great deal has been saved that might have been lost. A great deal has been lost. Much recent work both by poets and anthropologists concerned with ethnopoetics has been to reconstruct, with the help of contemporary Native Americans, the performance nature of this art. This was far from her aim. A singer would be told that

he must sing in a steady voice and not introduce the yells and other sounds that are customary to Indian singers. The recording is not supposed to be realistic, but to preserve the actual melody.¹⁴¹

As she was proud to claim, she recorded from the Northwest to Florida, in the Southwest and on the plains. No other anthropologist can have achieved her range, though it could be argued that she was too ready to generalise about their music to make the most of that remarkable achievement. It is of course impossible to weigh up the gains and losses of her methods, because it is so hard to know what has been lost; and whilst one would long to have a fuller account, say, of the Midiwiwin songs or the Owl Woman's shamanic travels, there is nothing that one would want to do without. In a similar way, her modelling of the Indians on the ideals of womanhood also brought both gains and losses, and was both an advantage and a disadvantage, enabling and limiting. Both Fletcher and Densmore helped to transform the mid-nineteenth century image of the Indian as bloodthirsty heathen into a gentle, nature- and family-loving mystic; it is a change comparable, and equally double-edged, to that in the traditional view of woman from what Olive Banks has called 'Eve the eternal temptress to Eve the innocent victim' that had occurred earlier.¹⁴² The unconscious, or unacknowledged, analogy they make between women and Indians as both

140. 'The Study of Indian Music', p. 535.

141. 'The Study of Indian Music', p. 536. See also Thomas Vennum's introduction to the reprinted edition of Frances Densmore's two volumes on Chippewa Music, 1973.

142. Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, p. 90.

possessors of separate, valuable but different spheres from that of the male public world gives them a means of identifying with and valuing what this culture has to offer. Densmore responds powerfully to the aspects of Indian culture that fit with that picture. For example, in her book on Teton Sioux music, it is clear how much she admires their self-denial, asceticism and contemplative mysticism; this long collection is particularly full of extensive translations of the actual words of those explaining their philosophy. Writing about the Papago, she is drawn to Owl Woman, who as a shaman (though Densmore does not identify her as such) writes her songs out of her own deep suffering in order to bring comfort to others. Owl Woman has learnt her songs through descending herself to the depths through bereavement and illness, and is now able to revisit the spirit land to bring healing.¹⁴³ Similarly, in Densmore's recording of the Midiwiwin, she is sensitive to its moral ideals and its practice of healing. She is always particularly drawn to any ceremonies to do with medicine (the caring professions again) and has some unusually imaginative suggestions about the actual therapeutic effect of the rhythms of healing songs. And always, her belief in the moral purpose of their art makes her aware of the necessity of exploring its context. In as far as the 'womanly ideal' was in opposition to capitalist values, it was a powerful model in appreciating the strengths of a non-surplus society.

On the other hand Densmore filters out of her material what she finds inappropriate: as many of her contemporaries were saying of their own society, she sees the old days as moral, and the modern as dangerously permissive. In her descriptions of the singers there is no doubt that her highest commendation is 'quiet and conservative' (as, 'Mark Evarts is a quiet and conservative member of the tribe. Mrs Good Eagle also is held in high esteem', or 'Louis Pigeon is quiet, conservative, and recognised as a representative of the old ways with which his life was consistent').¹⁴⁴ Even in her collection of Nootka and Quileute music, which she opens with an uncharacteristically dashing preface, evoking the intrepid whalers as if they were scavenging Norsemen, once she begins in earnest she introduces her first singer (Young Doctor) as, of course, 'conservative and quiet'.¹⁴⁵ There are only occasional moments of disturbance in her work, when she cannot totally avoid aspects of Indian culture, or of individual Indians' behaviour, which do not fit in with her idealised view of them. Though she emphasises how quiet and respectable they are, at moments that clearly is not the case, when for example she came across the overtly sensual Chippewa love-

143. *Papago Music*, Bulletin 90, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1929, pp. 114–31.

144. *Pawnee Music*, p. 7 and *Menominee Music*, p. xvi.

145. *Nootka and Quileute Music*, Bulletin 124, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1939, p. xxv.

songs, which were, she says 'modern' (and therefore not truly Indian) and for which she 'learnt not to ask for their translations'; after that she only collected love-songs from 'old, steady Indians'.¹⁴⁶ Her attitude to love-songs is intriguing altogether. She wants to deny that love-songs are a native form, in spite of her own evidence and that of other collectors (including Fletcher) to the contrary. In the past she says, there were songs of affection between old married couples.

The cause of the change from these songs of respectful affection to the modern love song is found in the general change from primitive customs, and began when the young people refused to recognise parental authority in the matter of the affections.¹⁴⁷

She might have been talking of white songs of the twenties. But it is not just a question of censoring impropriety. There are a whole range of emotions that never appear in Fletcher or Densmore. Precisely all the qualities – of irrationality, violence, passion, eroticism – that Freud was to find in the bourgeois unconscious or the surrealists in the Native Americans themselves, are absent. One passage in Alice Fletcher's *Omaha Music* strikingly exemplifies for me what are the strengths and limitations of their approach. Fletcher describes their only funeral song and ceremony, which includes painful self-laceration, a loop of flesh made in the left arm in which a stem of a willow twig with leaves was inserted. Fletcher says of this song and ceremony that 'savage as they appear at first sight, [they] are really full of tender unselfishness' (OM:42). On the one hand, for the 1890s it is extraordinary to be able to get beyond the idea that this was savage. But then to turn this intense ritual of self-immolation into such an entirely safe and gentle emotion seems to me to evade what is so powerful – while being so frightening – about this ceremony: its dramatisation of the overwhelming violence of feeling that bereavement entails, which may spring out of human beings' needs for each other, but can scarcely be equated with 'tender unselfishness'. Something very similar happens with Densmore's approach to the Sun Dance. It is not of course simply that Fletcher and Densmore do not recognise these emotions in the Indians. Their genteel womanly culture does not allow them to recognise them in themselves. Frederick Ward Putnam summed up the contradictory demands placed on anthropologists in the Bureau's early days when he says of Alice Fletcher: 'she is able to put herself mentally in the Indians' place and . . . describes the thoughts and acts of her Indian friends as they would describe them, while her scientific training leads her to analytical work and thence to an understanding of the meaning of what she sees and hears' (OM:v). To him that is unproblematic. What I stressed in the earlier part of this chapter was how difficult that particular 'scientific training' made understanding or sympathy. But identification too is always limited by self-knowledge as well as by

146. Hofmann, *Frances Densmore*, p. 108.

147. 'The Study of Indian Music', p. 540.

knowledge of the other. No-one can ever put themselves entirely in another's place.

I have said that unlike Fletcher, Densmore does not see Indian culture as intrinsically inadequate. She believes their culture is in the process of being eroded and corrupted by the modern world, but that is largely because she believes many aspects of American society have been eroded and corrupted by modernity. When she talks with commendation of the 'conservative' Indians, she clearly is thinking partly at least in the terms of tribal factionalism, of splits between 'progressives' and 'conservatives'. Politically Fletcher had always supported the progressives, who were most likely to agree to the allotment policy. Densmore differs: again she is here more in tune with the movement contemporary with her later years, led by Mabel Dodge Luhan and Mary Austin, who wanted to preserve the remnants of Indian culture. They on the whole, as David Murray has pointed out, had a very essentialist view of Indianness (pure old Indian good, mixed new Indian bad) and Densmore shares this with them, though not all of them would, like her, have fused that notion of purity with traditional sexual prudery.

Frances Densmore was not an intellectual; she does not deal with the professional or theoretical debates of her day. Her unquestioning but not strenuously pursued acceptance of cultural evolution cannot be forgotten. It is what gives her justification and rationale for her always tactful but none the less coercive methods of obtaining songs. For Frances Densmore the tension between political certainties and sympathetic identification disappears: the two become fused. She has assumptions rather than theories, and she assumes that her values and the Indians' are largely the same. One of the frustrations of her work is that though it is full of fascinating elements, unlike Fletcher (or Matthews or Cushing) she never pursues very far the intellectual development of the ceremonies or rituals she describes. I am not sure it would be fair to say she was simple-minded, but she feels happy with simplicity. For her, simplicity is a virtue, and one she is sure the Indians possess. Unlike Fletcher she never moves on from the supposition of Fletcher's own early work, that 'evidence of sustained thinking is wanting'. Of course, in spite of this, she records a great deal of Indian thought, but like the songs, it is eclectic and incomplete.

I want to end, on a more positive note, by returning to her translations. Sometimes she tried to turn them into what she considered poetry. The result is clumsy and unsuccessful. In her work-a-day translations she does not think of writing poetry, only of being true to the intention of the songs. As I have already said, that truth for her is a matter of simplification, driving to the heart of matter. For her this is not an aesthetic, but a moral endeavour, but it is, as it happens, in line with the aesthetic of many contemporary primitivists in the visual and literary arts, who believed 'that any reaching under the surface, if it is only carried far enough . . . will

reveal something "simple" and basic which, because of its very fundamentality and simplicity, will be more emotionally compelling than the superficial variations of the surfaces'.¹⁴⁸ This instinctive though untheorised affinity to one contemporary aesthetic meant her translations found what Stanley Fish would call an interpretive community which recognised them as poetry. Frances Densmore, rather than the Indians, could be called a primitive poet, in the sense that the United States has a rich tradition of primitive painters, 'untutored', innocent of conscious skill, or form. She is the Douanier Rousseau of anthropology. Her poems are of course not identical with the poems she translates. She has, as translators always do, created something new, though it owes everything to the Indian poems. It is because of her very genuine response to a culture she admired so deeply that her writing has been so powerful in arousing a response in others to Indian literary tradition.

148. Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (rev. ed.), New York: Vintage Books, 1967, p. 122.

5

IN OTHER WORDS

IN 1904, W J McGee, for a decade ethnologist in charge at the Bureau of American Ethnology, summarised its goals:

Ethnologists, like other good citizens, are desirous of raising the Indian to the lofty plane of American citizenship: but they prefer to do this constructively rather than destructively, through knowledge rather than ignorance, through sympathy rather than intolerance – they prefer to pursue in dealing with our immature race the course found successful in dealing with the immature offspring of our own flesh and blood. Incidentally, they desire to record those steps in mental and moral progress visible among our aborigines, with the view of treating the mental and moral progress of all mankind, and thereby more wisely guiding efforts toward future betterment.¹

Curtis Hinsley sees this statement, with its complacent paternalism and earnest purpose, as the embodiment of all that the Bureau had stood for until that moment. Already, however, by 1904, within anthropology and elsewhere, the attitudes and values implicit in McGee's words were under question, not, certainly, in the ground-swell of opinion, but increasingly among radical and liberal American intellectuals. Although it was still thirty years before the official abandonment of the 'civilisation' programme, not only were there increasing doubts about the value of 'raising the Indian to the lofty plane of American citizenship', but Americanism no longer seemed necessarily a higher, or more mature, form of life. 'Mental and moral

1. W J McGee (he insisted on having no stops after his initials), quoted Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 287.

progress' was failing as a convincing narrative for mankind. The modern world did not point unequivocally to 'future betterment'.

In this chapter I want to look at the implication of this new critique of modernity for the reading of Native American literary traditions. A different kind of interest in Native American literature emerges now, a *modernist* interest. By this I mean not only the explosion of interest in 'primitive' art associated with literary and artistic modernism, but also a new focus on these traditions in American anthropology, which was transformed during that same period by what I would see as one of the central strands in modernism, the move from a positivist understanding of reality to a sense of the subjective and language-bound nature of our perceptions of ourselves and the world. So in this chapter I shall look both at the literary and artistic modernist responses to Native American culture and poetry, and also at the attempts which anthropologists were concurrently making to understand Indian subjectivity, and what they called their 'world view', through the recording of autobiographies. The writers' and artists' conviction that the western world needed to learn from so-called primitive cultures was paralleled by the anthropologists' increasing wish, not just to enter sympathetically into the Indian mind, but to listen to what the Indians had to say, and how they said it. It is a shift that had already begun in Fletcher's and Densmore's work. This concern played less part at this period in British anthropology, which in the work of Frazer had very different links with modernism, and in which the practice of fieldwork was established later: it was a concern which largely disappeared from American anthropology after the Second World War, though in the last few years it has become of central importance to what is known as postmodern ethnography.²

George Stocking talks of a paradigm shift in American anthropology in 1900.³ Modernism in the arts, too, is represented as a radical break with the past: Anglo-American literary modernism is often dated to 1912 and the imagists, whom T.S. Eliot described as the modern movement's *point de repère*, though the date is sometimes shifted back to 1910 and Virginia Woolf's gnomic pronouncement that human nature changed that year.⁴ Yet, both in the arts and in anthropology, although new narratives, metaphors and aesthetics emerge, these changes co-exist with much from the previous century.⁵ In addition, these new movements only established themselves slowly. In the Anglo-American world of arts, the modernist aesthetic was still

2. See for example Michael M.J. Fischer, 'Ethnology and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory' in Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*.
3. George W. Stocking, *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (1968), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
4. Virginia Woolf is generally thought to be thinking of the impact of the 1910 Post-Impressionist Exhibition – a starting date for British artistic modernism, perhaps, rather than Anglo-American literary modernism.
5. As my account of Frances Densmore illustrated.

deeply embattled until after the end of the First World War; in American anthropology, the paradigm of cultural relativity only gradually replaced that of cultural evolution. George Stocking is looking back as an historian to pick out the works which first put forward ideas later widely accepted, but in the practice of anthropology it was not until the early 1920s that the cultural-relativist views of Franz Boas and his university-based followers were without strong and powerful opposition in the profession.⁶

Yet if neither Boasian anthropology nor modernism was fully established until the twenties, from early in the century anthropologists, writers and artists were paying a new attention and giving a new valuation to Native American life and culture. The belief that Native Americans would inevitably disappear faded with the threat they posed. Some intellectuals became actively involved in campaigning for the preservation of their culture; for many the Native American world had come to embody values that modern American life had lost. Of course, the romantic melancholy of the vanishing Indian was still often evoked. The first anthology of Native American poetry, *The Path on the Rainbow*, published in 1918, was dedicated to 'those who have labored faithfully in the collection and transcription of the Art Forms of a Vanishing Race'.⁷ Edward Curtis, whose elegiac sepia photographs were published between 1907 and 1930 in the forty parts of *The North American Indian*, chose as the keynote of his collection a photograph of a line of Navajo horsemen disappearing from sight into a canyon, entitled 'The Vanishing Race'.⁸ But, significantly, John Collier's Indian Reorganisation Act, which drew on the ideas of these modernist campaigners and was supported by them, had as its first aim 'the conservation of the biological Indian and of Indian cultures' (my emphasis).⁹ From the time of Sarah Morton, writers and intellectuals had complained that America was too obsessed with commerce and money-making to have time for artistic and spiritual values.¹⁰ These discontents emerged

6. Adam Kuper suggests Boasians had become the dominant force in American anthropology by the beginning of World War I, or at least that by then 'the critique of evolutionist anthropology had been established'. (*Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 147), but the events I recount later in this chapter to do with Boas's confrontation with the American Anthropological Association in 1919, and Holmes' comments there, show there was still powerful opposition to him and his ideas. Boas's views were not universal among anthropologists even in the twenties.
7. See George Cronyn (ed.), *The Path on the Rainbow: an Anthology of Songs and Chants from the Indians of North America* (1918), republished as *American Indian Poetry: the Standard Anthology of Songs and Chants*, New York: Liveright, 1934.
8. See Mick Gidley, *The Vanishing Race: Selections from Edward S. Curtis' 'The North American Indian'*, Oxford: David & Charles, 1976, p. 12. *The North American Indian* consisted of twenty volumes of illustrated text and twenty portfolios of large photogravures.
9. Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganisation Act, 1934-5*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, p. 30. Collier's use of the plural for cultures in itself shows the transformation that had taken place.
10. See Spencer, *Quest for Nationality*, for the recurring expression of this anxiety. See also p. 109.

again now, this time in the context of the international, though very heterogeneous, modernist attack on bourgeois capitalism, intensified in the United States by disquiet at the increasing industrialism and ostentatious wealth of the Gilded Age. Many of the American intelligentsia, both writers and anthropologists, shared the European modernists' sense of the malaise of modernity and their loss of confidence in the promises of progress and science. In George Stocking's phrase, they were 'in revolt from civilization'.¹¹ Modernists, in America, as elsewhere, drew on 'primitive' art as a critique of bourgeois philistine modernity. Native Americans were now seen not as an 'immature race' but as the inheritors of ancient wisdom. Primitivism was reborn.

I am not suggesting artistic modernism and Boasian anthropology correlate precisely, but I would argue that they have much more in common than is generally recognised. Marc Manganaro, in his introduction to the collection of essays he edited, *Modernist Anthropology*, debates at length the question of whether 'modernism' in literature has links with 'modernism' in anthropology, but finally remains uncertain, though allowing that several of the contributors to his book have located parallels.¹² He is very sure that 'postmodernism' means something similar in both areas, but leaves 'modernist anthropology' to mean only – with any certainty – 'modern' anthropology before postmodernism. This is in spite of the fact that his book covers the period, 1900–1945, which starts earlier than most people would place the beginning of 'modern' anthropology, and stops well before postmodernist anthropology begins. One problem is that even 'modern' is a slippery term: in the British context 'modern' or 'modernist' anthropology is often dated from 1922 (that year again) with the publication of Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, but the American situation is less clear cut.¹³ In spite of some intriguing observations on Boas's 'modernist irony', Arnold Krupat suggests that in anthropology 'modernist' means 'scientific', and should be used to describe the period between the emergence of 'scientific anthropology', which is how he sees Boas's work, and ethnography's fall into postmodernist doubt.¹⁴ But, as Stephen Dedalus might have put it, the concept 'scientific' is another ineluctable modality: the earlier Bureau and Museum anthropologists had no doubt that they

11. George W. Stocking, 'Essays on Culture and Personality', in the collection he edited, *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, p. 6.
12. 'Textual Play, Power and Cultural Critique: an Orientation to Modernist Anthropology', introduction to Marc Manganaro (ed.), *Modernist Anthropology: From Fieldwork to Text*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
13. This is the date used, for instance, by Adam Kuper, in his account of modern British anthropology, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: the Modern British School* (rev. edn.), London: Routledge, 1983.
14. Arnold Krupat discusses Boas's irony in 'Irony in Anthropology: the Work of Franz Boas' in Manganaro, *Modernist Anthropology*, 1990, also reprinted as a chapter in his own book, *Ethnocriticism*, in which, in an earlier chapter, he discusses the question of how to define modernist anthropology.

were proceeding scientifically, and there were others contemporary with Boas, the eugenicists and the race scientists with whom he did battle, who claimed scientific status for views on culture quite contrary to his. Whilst it could be argued that 'Science' took over from 'God' the role of Transcendental and Absolute Signifier from the late nineteenth century until quite recently, there has been no more agreement about the Nature of Science than there was about the Nature of God.

Manganaro and Krupat both quote the anthropologist Edwin Ardener, who dates modernist anthropology from 1920 to 1975, but insists it cannot be compared to artistic modernism: the two are 'out of phase'. There is of course some truth in that: as Krupat points out, the anthropologists admired by modernist writers (he mentions specifically Frazer) belong to the earlier cultural evolutionary school, whilst, on the other hand, the new 'modern' ethnographies, although in a variety of styles, used narrative forms more akin to the realist novel.¹⁵ (Margaret Mead was condemned in horror by A.C. Haddon for writing like a lady novelist, and he certainly didn't have Virginia Woolf in mind.) Yet James Clifford has pointed to the very close links between modernism and the early 'ethnographic surrealists' in France,¹⁶ and I would suggest there are links too, though in a very different way, in the United States, though such links were certainly less pronounced in Britain, where ethnographers were not as concerned with either language or subjectivity as the Americans. One area in which a difference needs to be stressed between the anthropologists and the writers is in attitudes to race. Franz Boas and his followers argued for cultural relativity rather than the evolutionists' hierarchy of race and culture. They opposed not just the racial arrogance of anthropology's nineteenth-century models, in which Indian cultures were no more than the forerunners of civilisation, but they also repeatedly attacked racialism in contemporary politics. Their views were those of a minority: for most educated people, including most literary and artistic modernists, cultural evolution and white superiority had attained the status of scientific facts and intellectual commonplaces. Modernist primitivism did not, any more than primitivism's earlier manifestations, necessarily imply an unqualified endorsement of racial equality, or even a qualified one.¹⁷ The most aggressive twentieth-century critique of modernity was fascism, though it was also modernity's apotheosis. Fascism had, to a greater or lesser extent, sympathisers throughout the western world, including many Americans: its racial theory was in fact only a more rigidly held version of what had been the hegemonic view in Britain and America in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ In

15. Krupat mentions Zora Neale Hurston as one exception: *Ethnocriticism*, p. 73.

16. James Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Surrealism' in *The Predicament of Culture*, 1988.

17. Similarly, no recognition of black equality was implied by the white American craze for jazz at the same period. Carroll and Noble, *The Free and the Unfree*, p. 326.

18. Adorno et al.'s *The Authoritarian Personality* was based on research in the late 1940s which revealed an alarming degree of anti-Semitism in the States. Adorno commented

the years between the wars, fascist Aryanism was one end of a spectrum; cultural relativism was the other; unselfconscious racism was the norm. Many of those who professed admiration for aspects of Native American culture and art remained racist in their assumptions. T.S. Eliot, one of those who turned to Europe, expressed a certainty of his superiority to the primitive which his more self-consciously primitivist compatriots often shared, even if they would not put it in his terms. Writing a review of *The Path on the Rainbow*, he says that

it is certain primitive art and poetry help our understanding of civilized art and poetry . . . the poet should know everything. . . . The artist is . . . the most and least civilized and civilizable; he is the most competent to understand both civilized and primitive. . . . But as he is the first person to see the merits of the savage, the barbarian and the rustic, he is also the first person to see how the savage, the barbarian and the rustic can be improved upon; he is the last person to see the savage in a romantic light, or to yield to the weak credulity of crediting the savage with any gifts of mystical insight or artistic feeling that he does not possess himself.¹⁹

The artist/intellectual, unlike the bourgeois, can encompass the primitive, but is superior to both. This is the Jefferson trinity in new terms. Instead of the sequence, European, Indian, American, it has become bourgeois, Indian, artist. The artist as critique of modernity could rapidly become, as it did with Eliot, an entrenched white conservatism.

But admirable and politically significant as Boasian anti-racism was, one must not exaggerate the gap between the two groups even here. As Johannes Fabian has pointed out, although cultural relativists rejected evolutionary assumptions, they still did not think of those they studied as truly coeval. They still imposed on them the distance between observer and observed. What disappeared from their ethnographies is the dialogue on which their fieldwork was inevitably based:²⁰ western knowingness was still unquestioned. The Boasian admiration for these cultures was very much a primitivistic one with all the ambiguities of that position, even though these were coming to question the word primitive itself. Already in 1921 Edward Sapir was arguing that there was no such thing as a primitive language: in his famous article, 'Culture, genuine and spurious', it is the modern world whose culture is spurious.²¹ Yet the wholeness and harmony they imputed to these cultures was always a wholeness which had existed before their contact with the white world. The impact of colonialism is

in his introduction: 'Observers have noted that the amount of outspoken anti-Semitism in pre-Hilter Germany was less than that in this country' (that is, America). Theodor.W. Adorno et al., 'Introduction to *The Authoritarian Personality in Critical Theory and Society: a Reader*, ed. Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas McKay Kellner, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 224.

19. T.S. Eliot, 'War-Paint and Feathers', review of *The Path on the Rainbow*, ed. George Cronyn, in *The Athenaeum*, No. 4668, October 17, 1919.
20. Fabian, *Time and the Other*.
21. Edward Sapir, *Language: an Introduction to the Study of Speech*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1921 and 'Culture, genuine and spurious' in *Culture, Language and Personality: Selected Essays* ed. David Mandelbaum, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949.

effaced. They recorded not the hybrid societies they found, but what they believed must have been their authentic, ideal form.

Here again one can see similarities with the artistic cult of the Native American. Mary Austin and Mabel Dodge Luhan, the central figures in the artistic colony which formed near Taos, and which focused on the Pueblo there, took an active part in attempts to preserve Indian culture.²² But they wanted to maintain a paternalistic control over the form of that culture, and to preserve beautiful fossils rather than dynamic communities. In the last chapter I quoted David Murray's assessment of the essentialism of this period as in itself a form of racism; the 'real', i.e. traditional, Indian was mythicised, while the Indian of mixed origins, racial or cultural, was scorned as much as ever.²³ It is significant that when Mary Austin campaigned for an organisation to foster the continuation of Native American art forms, she saw it as a *Museum of Indian Arts*, even though it was to help living artists.²⁴ For her, they too were museum pieces. The truly Indian was what had been there in the past, untouched by the modern world. It could only be preserved as stasis, the breathing equivalent of a Curtis photograph.

Another change in the representation of Indian culture fed into this desire to preserve a semblance of this harmonious past. I argued in the last chapter that Morgan had made a perceptual leap in 1851 when he ascribed coherent systems of belief and social organisation to the Iroquois. Up till then, systemisation, coherence, completion were white qualities. Indian belief and life were fragmentary, inconclusive, at best randomly enlightened by deeply felt intuitions, at worst benighted by muddled superstitions. By the early twentieth century, the modern world had become the place of fragmentation, rootlessness and dissolution: Indian culture is the place of wholeness, both of the psyche and of Nature. This view is still very much with us. The sense of lost western authenticity has grown: Fredric Jameson's 'waning of affect' which he sees as characteristic of the postmodern world is one recent formulation.²⁵ The early twentieth-century élite representation of the Indian as one with himself and the natural world has become widespread, in the US and beyond, in terms both of an holistic way of life, and of what is now seen as ecological awareness. The shift that occurred between Alice Fletcher's condemnation of the Indians' failure to master Nature, and Frances Densmore's praise for their life as part of Nature, has remained in place. In addition, in the early years of the century, the idea of Indian society as a close-knit and interdependent kinship, in contrast to the modern world's independent but isolated units had a powerful appeal.

22. See, for example, the account of this group in *Mary Austin: Song of a Maverick*, by Esther Lanigan Stineman, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989.

23. Murray, *Modern Indians*, pp. 7–8, 14–15.

24. Stineman, *Mary Austin*, p. 176.

25. Fredric Jameson first argued this in 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 146, July-Aug, 1984.

David Murray links this new organicist view of Indian life to the reaction amongst humanitarians against the harsh individualism of Social Darwinism, and their desire for a politics of co-operation rather than competition,²⁶ the liberal, socially concerned politics which led to the era of Roosevelt's New Deal.

The story of this chapter has to be seen as a meeting place of many currents. If, diachronically, it charts a certain stage in the history of United States attitudes to Native Americans, synchronically, it forms part of a pattern of modernist responses to non-western art. Both of these, the history of white/Indian relations and modernism's radical disturbance of traditional western forms, can, and perhaps should, be seen in the wider context of western expansionism and the beginning of its disintegration. Modernism, which was until recently, in academic literary criticism, the dominant aesthetic for both left and right wing critics, has increasingly come under attack. John Carey's fierce onslaught on modernist snobbery and racism in his book, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, has been followed by Robert Young's *Colonial Desire*, in which modernism is roundly rejected in a few sentences, his nub being that, 'sympathetic to primitive cultures, [modernism's] racism was converted to anti-semitism, and to its own doctrine of high cultural elitism'.²⁷ This critique has some truth in some cases, but modernism had many strands: anti-semitism was not universal among, and certainly not confined to, modernists; Nazism and Stalinism were both anti-semitic and anti-modernist. Modernism, like postmodernism, could be deeply reactionary and imperialistic; it could also be radical and emancipatory; it is sometimes, indeed often, both at once.

Theorists of postmodernism often emphasise its difference from modernism, but the continuities are also important. One of the most helpful definitions of the relation between the two is given by Zygmunt Bauman who suggests that '[i]n modernism, modernity turned its gaze upon itself and attempted to attain the clear-sightedness and self-awareness which would eventually disclose its impossibility, thus paving the way to the postmodern reassessment'.²⁸ This is a particularly useful formulation for understanding literary modernism, in which the critique and deconstruction of modernity's authoritarian claims began so early, and in which the line between modernist and postmodernist parody, pastiche and irony is so narrow. If postmodernism encodes the crumbling of western hierarchies, that process was set in chain within modernism. Modernists, like post-modernists, were cultural scavengers: if, unlike postmodernists, they

26. Murray, *Modern Indians*, pp. 15–16. He also suggests Collier generalised ill-advisedly about Indians from his knowledge and admiration of the Pueblos. This is the central argument of Taylor's book on the New Deal.

27. John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939*, London: Faber and Faber, 1992; Young, *Colonial Desires*, p. 51.

28. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1991, p. 4, note 1.

sought for coherence, through art, through formalism, through myth, they could no more than postmodernists find it in the artistic forms which they inherited. Modernism has often been portrayed simply as an attack on Victorian bourgeois culture. It certainly was always that, but the attack on bourgeois hegemony has to be read as a symptom, at the very least, of the failure of faith in western materialist progress and values, which the bourgeoisie represented.

Stephen Slemon has argued that 'modernism is colonialism itself, and that modernism's most heroically self-privileging strategies – its "fragmentation of textual unity", its "play of contradictory genres" its anti-normative aestheticising impulse . . . would have been unthinkable had it not been for the assimilative power of the Empire to appropriate the cultural work of a heterogeneous world "out there" and reproduce it for its own social and discursive ends'. This is certainly one way of looking at modernism, but it again only follows the western gaze, and is in danger of fetishisation of western power. Said's point, in *Culture and Imperialism*, seems to me a telling one:

I would like to suggest that many of the most prominent features of modernist culture, which we have tended to derive from purely internal dynamics in Western society and culture, include a response to the external pressures on culture from the *imperium* . . . Europe, its art, mind, monuments is no longer invulnerable.²⁹

Said is rightly tentative about this shift. If the west is less confident, it still retains more than its share of power. The new attempt in post-modernist ethnography to give space to native voices has been questioned by those who argue that its liberal intentions are undermined by a political naïveté which refuses to acknowledge the controlling power of the western editor-ethnographer. A parallel accusation is made against the arts by those who assert that it is foolish to believe that literary and cultural post-modernism challenges the old hierarchies of high and low, west and the rest. It is, they say, simply a new phase in western hegemony, greedily snapping up trifles from around the world and re-delivering them reprocessed as its own. Such criticisms could equally apply to the writers and anthropologists which I look at here; simultaneously, they offer a space for the Indian's own words and take control of what those words will say. But all the same, in the modernist period, those other words begin to enter and to throw in question western discourse. Modernism came out of a radical ambivalence, even if some modernists retreated into new and often darker forms of authoritarianism. I suggested in my first chapter that the

29. Stephen Slemon, 'Modernism's Last Post' in *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, ed. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffen, Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990, p. 1; Said, *Culture and Imperialism* p. 227. On doubts about postmodern anthropology, see: Paul Rabinow, 'Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology' in *Writing Culture*, and Henrietta Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology*, Oxford: Polity Press, pp. 194–5,

Enlightenment was always shadowed by doubt; in modernism that doubt became a crisis.

The New American Primitive

In 1903, in the first issue of Alfred Stieglitz' avant-garde magazine, *Camera Work*, among its first group of photographs, appeared a photogravure entitled 'The Red Man'.³⁰ The face is clearly that of a Native American, but it is very different from the usual nineteenth-century image of the Indian warrior-stoic. George Catlin had painted noble, aloof, magnificently attired chiefs. Later, Washington's commercial photographers produced pictures of Indians on treaty missions, dressing them up from a box of props to recreate the war-bonneted, unsmiling leaders their customers would accept, and expect, as authentic.³¹ Gertrude Käsebeir's photograph of 'The Red Man', however, is intimate and warm. It shows a gently smiling young face whose gaze, relaxed and open, looks directly at us. There are no feathers. The young man has a blanket wrapped around his head and shoulders, rather as a shawl would be in a picture of the Virgin, except where that would be smooth cloth or silk, this is soft, thick wool. Käsebeir has skilfully played on the contrast between the radiant sheen of his skin, glowing with natural health, and the hazy, yielding texture of the blanket's folds. This is no hostile, lonely figure, but a member of an innocent, affectionate, kindly world. Gertrude Käsebeir's usual subjects were women and children. Also in that group is a photogravure of a beautiful mother in white indoor dress, gracefully bending over her child, who, dressed in what appears to be a new school outfit, stolidly faces the camera and the world: it is entitled 'Blessed art thou among women'. Another is called 'The Virgin': swathed in misty white draperies, a mother cradles her child with almost sensuous maternal joy. Although neither wholly feminised nor infantilised, Käsebeir's Red Man inhabits a nurturing uncorrupted space which has more in common with those mothers' spheres than with the public world of white men's war or business.

Stieglitz' *Camera Work* was a journal which was one of the first to bring into the United States the rush of transformative, transgressive energies that changed the parameters of art and thought in the early twentieth century. That photograph was an early indication of the new view of Native Americans and their culture that was emerging around the same time as the modernist movement. By 1922 the art critic Edgar Holger Cahill, in the article entitled, 'America has its "Primitives"', which I quoted in my intro-

30. Gertrude Käsebeir, 'The Red Man', *Camera Work*, No. 1, January 1903, Plate III.

31. Melissa Banta and Curtus Hinsley, *From Site to Sight: Anthropology and the Power of Imagery* Camb., Mass.: Peabody Museum, 1986, p. 103.

duction, suggested a dramatic change had taken place in the perception of the Native American. There had been, he said, a shift from the view of the Indian as 'a strange ferocious creature, good only when dead, and utterly oblivious . . . to any need for economic activity' to one of a 'comparatively peaceful, industrious figure, a child of nature, close to the soil from which he wins his living, cultivating the earth with a rough hoe, hunting wild creatures, and living with his tribe in free democratic association. . . . We great Machine People, who have carried ugliness well-nigh to apotheosis in the fairest of lands, . . . may forgo the conqueror's pride and learn wisdom from our humble brother of the Pueblos, who has made the desert bloom with beauty.'³² Some of the elements that Cahill cites – the peaceful child of nature, for example – were already present in Fletcher and Densmore's accounts, but the emphasis on love of beauty is new, or perhaps one should say, a return to the earlier romantic primitivism, though even that had put more emphasis on the sublime than the beautiful. When Densmore said Indian poetry was always for a purpose, it was a moral purpose, not that of making the deserts or the plains places of aesthetic pleasure. The change in attitude which Cahill identified was far from universal; the wild ferocious Indian continued as a staple of popular fiction, and was already part of the early cinema. Yet Cahill was right that this new view of the Indian as a gentle democratic child of nature who made the desert bloom with beauty, through dances, works of art and song, had made a powerful impact on liberal, artistic and intellectual circles. Many of those particularly influential in establishing this new image were women. As in Gertrude Käsebeir's photograph, changing images of the Indian and images of womanhood continued to have a complex interrelation. Yet if the images of the Indian were changing, in many ways traditional ideas of womanhood, in spite of political and social changes, had not yet been challenged. As Rachel Blau DuPlessis has argued, in the modernist disruption of certainties, the one area so often unquestioned was gender, by women as well as men.³³

The shift Cahill observed from the violent to the gentle Indian was on one level a historical description, not of the Indians themselves so much as of American policy towards them. The Indians wars were over; the frontier had gone. At best the Native Americans were confined to their reservations, maintaining what they could of their traditional way of life in the face of government policy of the break-up of communal land and the suppression of their culture. They now excited compassion rather than aggression. But the philanthropic concern for the defeated Indian had by no means always included such admiration for Indian beauty, nor horror at American

32. Robert Fay Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board: an Aspect of New Deal Indian Policy*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983, p. 13.

33. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice*, London & New York: Routledge, 1990.

ugliness. Most liberals had, like Alice Fletcher, supported the 1887 General Allotment Act, and the plans introduced in 1889 to 'disintegrat[e] . . . the tribes';³⁴ like W J McGee, they believed that it was essential to attempt to raise the Indians to 'the lofty plane of American citizenship'. 'Primitive', in the States and Britain, had in the late nineteenth century referred to the undeveloped, evolutionary tardy peoples of the earth, who unlike the civilised white races produced no art or true culture. In the States, 'savage' was very much the preferred word. Although Powell had believed that understanding 'the savage mind' of the Indian, and therefore recording myths and rituals, was one of the prime objectives for an ethnologist, he had no doubt that the savage mind was incapable of artistry. By 1918 Alice Corbin Henderson would suggest, in the pages of *Poetry*, that the word 'primitive' implied innocence and beauty; she denounced 'our middle-class "barbarians" – including Indian agents, Indian commissioners and the like, who regard the Indian as a savage without culture, and his art as a curiosity at best . . . to be suppressed at all hazard'.³⁵

This change in attitudes had begun around the beginning of the century, most rapidly as far as Indian crafts were concerned. By 1914 the demand for 'authentic' Indian blankets was such that a system of tagging genuine Indian-made blankets was introduced; Käsebeir's photograph in that way marked a very specific as well as a general trend.³⁶ Although not the first, the most striking and influential example of the metamorphosis among the literary avant-garde in their attitude towards Native American arts was the publication in February 1917 of an 'Indian issue' of *Poetry* magazine, devoted to translations and interpretations of Native American oral poetry. *Poetry: a Magazine of Verse* had been founded in Chicago in 1912. Under Harriet Monroe's editorship, and the constant intervention (as 'foreign correspondent') of Ezra Pound, it had established itself as one of the leading little American poetry magazines, remembered now particularly for its publication of poems by leading modernists like Eliot, Yeats, HD, Wallace Stevens and of course Pound himself. But it always aimed for what Harriet Monroe called the 'Great Renewal' of American poetry, and it was in that context that the Indian issue was published.³⁷ After that issue, anthologies and articles followed, contributing to a surge of mixed concern and admiration for Indian arts. Mabel Dodge Luhan (as she was to be) moved the same year to New Mexico 'to save the Indians', becoming the centre of a group of intellectuals, artists and writers (including several contributors to *Poetry*), many of whom, like her, saw the Pueblos as a

34. Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934–45*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1980.

35. *Poetry: a Magazine of Verse*, October, 1918, p. 44.

36. Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, pp. 8–9.

37. Harriet Monroe, *Poets and their Art*, New York: Macmillan, 1926, p. 251.

world of beauty and harmony, a welcome retreat from 'Mechanical' America, as one of that circle, D.H. Lawrence, described it.³⁸ While the 'strange, ferocious' Indian, still busily attacking stage-coaches on celluloid, had always been a horse-riding, feathered Plains Indian, for this group it was the desert, and particularly the Pueblo Indians who represented and embodied the Indian way of life.

Remarkably, in a country whose artists complained they had little status, the attitudes of these writers and artists played a significant role in altering government policy towards the Indians. In 1921–23, Mabel Luhan and Mary Austin led a campaign against the crucial Bursum Bill, which would have enabled white settlers to take Pueblo lands, and can only be described as an opportunistic attempt to seize Pueblo land by legal sleight of hand.³⁹ The first bill which came out of the desire to preserve something of living Indian culture had gone before Congress (unsuccessfully) in 1912. This was supported by the Society of American Indians, a group formed in 1911 which included Arthur C. Parker and Charles A. Eastman.⁴⁰ But there was a significant gap between what the Native American organisation had wished to achieve, and the aims of Austin and Luhan. The Indian group wanted self-determination, and to find a way of taking what they wanted of twentieth-century life while preserving some of their own culture. Austin and Luhan wanted to conserve an art-form. They enlisted the support of such literary figures as Witter Bynner, Zane Gray, D.H. Lawrence, Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, Harriet Monroe, Alice Corbin Henderson and Elsie Clews Parsons, but politically their most important collaborator turned out to be the activist and idealist John Collier.⁴¹ Collier, who had earlier worked promoting community organisations for immigrants in New York, had visited Mabel Luhan at her ranch in 1920, and like her was deeply impressed by the Pueblo's stable and cohesive community. Collier, like many liberals of his day deeply concerned with the competitiveness and lack of community in American life as a whole, was appalled that these groups with their traditional and co-operative lifestyle were under threat. With Pueblo culture as his ideal and Luhan, as one historian has put it, as his 'mentor', he went on to devise and eventually to bring about the 'Indian New Deal' in 1934, reversing the policy of assimilation, and allowing a much greater degree of self-government.⁴² No doubt he would have failed had not the earlier policy proved administratively and economically disastrous; nevertheless, it was the philosophy he shared with that artistic community – as far as the Indians were concerned both for good and ill –

38. Emily Hahn, *Mabel: A Biography of Mabel Dodge Luhan*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977, p. 112.

39. Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal*, p. 13 and Stineman, *Mary Austin*, pp. 173–6.

40. Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal*, p. 9.

41. Stineman, *Mary Austin: Song of a Maverick*, pp. 173–4.

42. Taylor, *The New Deal*, p. 47.

that shaped his legislation. The political and the cultural are inextricably entwined in this story.

Modernist Otherism, Modernist Postcolonialism

Poetry's 'Indian issue' came out of a changed conception of poetry as well as of the Native Americans, and needs to be seen in the context of similar changes in the visual arts, music, and dance. William Rubin, in the introduction to his sumptuous catalogue of the MOMA exhibition, '*Primitivism*' in *Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, held in 1984, comments that 'no pivotal topic in twentieth-century art has received less serious attention than primitivism – the interest of modern artists in tribal art and culture'.⁴³ That exhibition provoked some angry criticisms for its overall lack of concern with the political implications of the modernist appropriation of other cultures. Nevertheless Rubin was right to draw attention both to the vital importance and frequent neglect of this aspect of modernism. One of the problems in assessing the impact of non-western forms on modernists is the tendency at the end of the twentieth century to think of 'primitivism' in very narrow terms. Rubin himself wants to use it only out of admiration for what he calls 'tribal art' but not, for example, of the fascination with the art of empire-like societies such as the Egyptians and the Aztecs. But to separate off these groups is to impose an anachronistic split in the responses of these writers and artists: in their search for other sources of vitality and inspiration these distinctions were not so important as the shared exoticism and apparent freshness of these other traditions.

In his study of *Primitivism in Modern Art*, Robert Goldwater points out the recurring pattern of this eclectic range, which sometimes included the art of children and the insane. The manifesto of the Munich *Blaue Reiter* group in 1912, for example, linked together 'the art forms of the peasants, of the primitive Italians, of the Japanese, and of the Tahitians'. What these different forms were seen to share, he suggests, was an art which did away 'with surface qualities' and revealed deep and simple essentials which promise creative renewal for the modern western artist.⁴⁴ In a 1909 issue of *Camera Work* the critic Charles H. Caffin described a visit to Matisse's studio, empty except for his paintings, fragments of Egyptian sculpture and African carvings: 'as [Matisse] passes his hand over the wooden figures, he utters one word, "Simplification"'. Caffin expands on this fittingly simple response, explaining that

43. 'Modernist Primitivism: an Introduction', '*Primitivism*' in *Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, New York: Museum of Metropolitan Art, 1984, p. 1. These criticisms are discussed by Michael Newman in "'Primitivism" and Modern Art', *Art Monthly*, May 1985, pp. 6–9.

44. Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (1938), (rev. edn.), New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1967, p. 129.

His simplification is not for the purpose of rendering more vividly the actuality of form: it is to secure a unity of expression in the interpretation of an abstract idea. And he is seeking for the source of the motive and the means of achieving it in primitive art, even in what in our sophistication we too hastily reject as the era of the child-man in art.

Matisse's painting recalls to Caffin's mind his recent experience of seeing Isadora Duncan dance, when he heard her condemned as 'primitive': 'The music critic thought her performance primitive and therefore beneath his notice. It was primitive: old as the world, and it was for that reason I loved it.'⁴⁵ Modernist primitivism, as Caffin suggests, can unite the modernist artist with a whole range of other art forms, from groups or societies whose chief or perhaps only unifying factor is their difference from the convention-bound contemporary world. Perhaps one should invent a neologism, and call it modernist Otherism.

The interest in Native American art was most often part of this broader and wide-ranging search for artistic or spiritual renewal. The American painter Max Weber, who introduced Fauvism and Cubism to the States, wrote in *Camera Work* in 1910, without apparently any sense of mixing categories, that he had 'seen Chinese dolls, Hopi Kachina images, and also Indian quilts and baskets, and other works of savages, much finer in color than the works of the modern painter-colorists'.⁴⁶ Weber, who incorporated Native American motifs in several of his paintings, and was the first, according to Cahill, to respond aesthetically to Pre-Columbian and American Indian art, had himself been taught around the turn of the century by Arthur Wesley Dow.⁴⁷ Dow had earlier painted with the Pont Aven group, where Gauguin was applying Japanese-inspired techniques to his painting of 'simple' Breton peasants and landscapes, before moving on in his primitivistic journey towards the exoticism of Tahiti. Like Gauguin, Dow was looking for alternatives to traditional western norms. His aesthetic combined two main influences, the ideas of the Japanese specialist Ernest Fenollosa, whose protégé he had been, and those of the anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing, whose work with the Zuni in New Mexico had aroused both interest and outrage. It was a combination which was to come together again. Cushing wrote for popular as well as scientific audiences, and his belief in the artistic and symbolic richness of the Zuni traditions was a landmark in the appreciation of Native American culture, but what attracted Dow most was Cushing's belief that he had uncovered fundamental creative principles shared by Occidental and Oriental culture.

45. *Camera Work*, No. 25, 1909, p. 18.

46. *Camera Work*, No. 28, 1910.

47. William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-garde*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1977, pp. 125–26. Gail Levin, 'American Art' in Rubin, *Primitivism in Twentieth-Century Art*, p. 453; Georgia O'Keeffe was also taught by Dow, and later became one of the group of artists and writers in the Southwest associated with Austin and Luhan.

A more significant and useful distinction within modernist primitivism (or what I have called Otherism) than that of the cultural types of its sources is perhaps between the eclectic primitivism and exoticism of cosmopolitan, internationalist modernist artists and the emphasis of a particular heritage to form the basis of a cultural nationalism. Edward Said has written on Yeats as an anti-colonial, nationalist artist in his use of Celtic traditions, to be understood in terms of other postcolonial art movements.⁴⁸ Whilst Said's picture is perhaps too simple, since he virtually ignores the fact, let alone the complexity, of Yeats' relation to this tradition as an Anglo-Irishman, his central point is illuminating.⁴⁹ During the years of high modernism, the rediscovery of Native American culture played a crucial role in the development of modern Latin American art and literature, through, for example, such diverse practitioners as the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, and the half-Quechuan Peruvian poet, César Vallejo.⁵⁰ In the United States it played an integral part in stimulating the growth of what Donald Hall called the 'new American poetry'. But even more than for the Anglo-Irish Yeats, there were, as there had been with romantic nationalism, deep political problems for white Americans who claimed continuity with a culture on whose destruction their country had been built.

Both these modernist primitivisms, the cosmopolitan and the postcolonial, questioned what we have since learnt to call the western 'grand narrative' of progress, in which the present western world represents the highest point of civilisation. Instead they offered an alternative pattern, in which their art was truly modern, yet simultaneously timeless, penetrating to the deep and eternal, as did their privileged sources; their contemporary philistine world was by contrast old-fashioned, hide-bound, locked into the trivial and the past. Eliot praises Pound's poems from the Italian and Provençal, because 'he sees them as contemporary with himself, that is to say, he has grasped certain things in Provence and Italy which are permanent in human nature'.⁵¹ Harriet Monroe talks of the Pound she knew from 1912 onwards as inspired by 'a passion of revolt against Victorian excess', while in fact he was complaining about the time of George V, though in trawl, as he saw it, to the wrong century.⁵² This was the strategy by which modernist

48. Edward Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature: Yeats and Decolonization*, Field Day Pamphlet 15, Derry: Field Day, 1988.

49. Yeats, interestingly enough, reverses one of the repeated parabolas at this period, the move from an admiration of Japanese art (which we now regard as undoubtedly high culture) to folk or to what Rubin calls 'tribal' art (the kinds of works which are still stored most often in ethnographic rather than mainstream museums. Yeats discovered Celtic traditions first, and Japanese later, and it could be argued only becomes truly modernist when they meet.

50. See also Jean Franco, *The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1967, pp. 106–16.

51. T.S. Eliot, 'Preface', *Ezra Pound: Selected Poems*, London: Faber & Faber, 1959, p. 13.

52. Monroe, *Poets and their Art*, p. 18.

writers and artists asserted their values against that of the hegemony: they were in touch with universal values shared with artists of other times and places; the *bourgeoisie* were slaves of custom, limited, superficial and parochial.

This modernist alienation from what they identified as contemporary philistinism and materialism was, as I suggested earlier in this chapter, exacerbated in the American context, not only by their consciousness of living on the periphery of European cultural traditions, but also by a sense of being a country of 'Machine people', as Cahill put it, too absorbed in money-making to care for art. Pound wrote of America in *Patria Mia*, 'if you have any vital interest in art or letters, and happen to like talking about them, you sooner or later leave the country'.⁵³ He went to London, he said, because it was the cultural capital of the United States, moving from the periphery to the centre. Dozens of American writers and artists made the same journey. Yet there was an alternative to what Harriet Monroe called 'the long eastern gazing of our artists'. They could – as Monroe urged them to do – 'go west leaving Europe and New Europe behind'.⁵⁴ As in other postcolonial societies at other moments, some American artists turned to the American continent and to alternative American traditions. The modernist twist, one might say, is that they did it while rejecting 'Americanism' and 'middle-class "barbarians"', and while evoking eclectically (sometimes at least), other non-European forms, most often, as is already apparent, from the Far-East. The basis of this modernist postcolonialism was, however, that there were true American qualities to be discovered in the country's cultural roots – which could include the Indian and the land itself – qualities which the artist shared, or might share, although they were absent from American society's mainstream. American artists could claim their own cultural centre, away from Europe, by reinventing America – just as an American artist in exile, like Eliot, reinvented the European literary tradition.

So the new image of the Indian, which Cahill argued had been established by the early twenties, has to be understood as a counterpart to a different vision of America. It might seem odd to evoke the word postcolonial once again of a country whose independence had been achieved over a century before, and whose European inhabitants, as far as the Native Americans were concerned, were themselves in the position of colonists.⁵⁵ Yet the cultural

53. *Patria Mia*, Chicago. Ralph Fletcher Seymour, 1950, p. 60. The manuscript had originally reached the publisher in 1913, but was then lost.

54. Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World*, New York: Macmillan, 1938, p. 375.

55. See my discussion in the introduction, the strongest case for including the States in the category 'postcolonial' is made in *The Empire Strikes Back*, which argues that 'its relationship with the metropolitan centre as it evolved over the last two centuries has been paradigmatic for post-colonial literatures everywhere'. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice on Postcolonial Literatures*, London & New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 2.

confidence that had been built up in nineteenth-century New England and the WASP eastern seaboard was under strain. The United States was, after all, territorially, demographically and economically a different country from a hundred years earlier, and many of the East-Coast intelligentsia were not at all sure they liked it, particularly not the influx of supposedly ill-educated and culturally dubious immigrants. In terms of cultural self-esteem, the US in 1900 felt itself inferior to Europe in a way that was to be already much less true by 1940. American indigenous modernists, as opposed to expatriate modernists – who rejected their ‘half-savage country’ as Pound put it, and went back to Europe – faced a new postcolonial crisis of confidence, which they solved by reinventing Americanism, and a new version of the Indian as, in Cahill’s phrase, the ‘American primitive’. It was not, one should remember, until 1941 that the nineteenth-century American literary Renaissance was invented.⁵⁶ But if that narrative had not yet been constructed, this was not the first time in American writing that the figure of the Indian had been elided with that of the settler in an attempt to forge an American cultural identity. What is different is that the solitary, self-sufficient fighter that Richard Slotkin describes in *Regeneration through Violence* has been transmuted into a member of a sharing and kindly community: instead of offering violence in a wilderness, he draws beauty out of a harmonious natural world.⁵⁷ Yet because the Americans were colonisers as well as ex-colonials, any such elision was deeply problematic. An American writer who chose to write about Native American themes had not merely cultural difference but a history of war and dispossession as a barrier; in that sense American postcolonial writing has always been different in kind from later post-colonial writing from Africa or India.

The Indian as Poet

I want to pick out some moments in the construction of this new artist/poet Indian before 1917, and then show how in that Indian issue of *Poetry*, that image was both consolidated and given a new inflection by the way the idea of poetry had been shaped so powerfully within the magazine. An appropriate starting point, marking the transition between the nineteenth-century ethnologists’ treatment of Indian culture as a scientific curiosity and the modernist cult of primitive art, might be Frank Hamilton Cushing’s posthumously published *Zuni Folk Tales* (1901). Cushing, whose influence

56. This, of course, as I discussed in chapter three, was in the FO. Matthiessen’s influential book: *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941).

57. Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, passim.

on Arthur Wesley Dow I mentioned earlier, was in fact singled out for praise by Harriet Monroe in the Indian issue of *Poetry* for his skill in combining science and art, but here what I want to stress is the clash between his text and Powell's introduction, to which I referred in chapter four. Cushing was a gifted and poetic writer, and, perhaps more importantly, was the first white American to grasp and communicate to a general public a sense of the rich intricate symbolism of an Indian group. His *Zuni Folk Tales*, although later anthropologists accused him of embellishment, has remained one of the most popular and resonant collections of Indian mythology. This was in spite – or possibly because – of Powell's curiously ambivalent introduction, which makes it clear that he believes they should be read as evidence of the inferiority of Zuni superstition to western science, a relic of an earlier stage of development marking a stage of evolution long prior to Homer. He seems concerned that the reader may not realise that 'rude and savage' tribal mythology is, in itself, 'devoid of glamour and witchery born of poetry', though under Cushing's 'scriptorial wand . . . destined to become part of the living literature of the world'.⁵⁸ Powell's metaphors associate any kind of poetry with the superstitious magic of an earlier evolutionary stage now surpassed (in his view) by science, but he is determined that we realise that the Zuni have reached only the unaesthetic stage of superstition. Paradoxically enough, Powell, like the modernists, implies that primitive myth and poetic artistry share qualities in common different from those valued by the rational world of Victorian science. To a reader of *Poetry*, who turned to this collection as Monroe suggested, there can have been no stronger recommendation.

The work that stirred most interest in Native American arts during the first decade of the century, even engaging the support of the President himself, was the publication in 1907 of Natalie Curtis Burlin's *The Indians' Book*, a collection of translations of songs and legends which aroused widespread interest.⁵⁹ Intriguingly it is to the same year that Arthur Danto dates

58. See above pp. 156 and 165. Frank Hamilton Cushing, *Zuni Folk Tales*, ed. J.W. Powell, 2nd. edn ([1901] New York: Knopf, 1931), pp. vii, ix; see also, David Murray, *Forked Tongues*, pp. 133–41, for a subtle analysis of the science/art conflict in Cushing's attitudes.

59. Natalie Curtis Burlin, *The Indians' Book: Song and Legends of the American Indians Recorded and Edited by Natalie Curtis* (1907), New York: Dover, 1968. The outlines of the new interest in Native American poetry during this period are given by A. Grove Day in his pioneering, if limited, *The Sky Clears: Poetry of the American Indian*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951, pp. 31–34. A longer, more informative but rather uncritical account is given by Michael Castro in, *Interpreting the Indian: Twentieth-Century Poets and the Native American*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983. A more subtle and sophisticated version (though sometimes a little easily dismissive) appears in Arnold Krupat's *The Voice in the Margin*, in a chapter which is largely the republication of his earlier article, 'Native American Literature and the Canon'. I would not agree with all of Krupat's account: Alice Fletcher was extreme, but certainly not an exception, among BAE anthropologists in her support for assimilation;

the European modernist interest in African art, when Picasso first saw the sculptures in the Trocadéro with new eyes.⁶⁰ Natalie Curtis Burlin, a musician who had studied for some years in Europe, had been inspired by the example of Alice Fletcher to give up her intended career as a concert pianist to collect Indian songs and folklore. As in Fletcher's own case, the changes that had already taken place in European music – for Fletcher, particularly in Wagner's music – made it possible to find an approach to Native American music rather earlier than to their poetry, though since their music was essentially vocal both were in practice collected together. Burlin's descriptions of the Indian, sometimes childlike, and sometimes feminised, owe much to Fletcher, though her sense of what their art could contribute to American culture is much stronger. Although Burlin echoes Alice Fletcher's description in *Indian Story and Song* of this poetry as the 'spontaneous' poetry of a childlike race, her collection marks the beginning of a Western aesthetic reading of Native American poetry.

This new conception of Indian poetry as an art-form, instead of the Bureau's more matter-of-fact recording of these texts as cultural evidence, brought losses as well as gains, as Arnold Krupat has noted. An aesthetic or literary approach, he argues, tends to privilege and emphasise that which is *like* what we know already; an anthropological one, that which is *unlike*. Each may miss or misrepresent important features. In a neat application of a kind of Heisenbergian Indeterminacy Principle, he writes that as far as translation goes:

When literary people estheticise science, accuracy and authenticity are inevitably lost in some degree: when anthropologists scientize art, its charm, force and beauty are inevitably lost to some degree.⁶¹

If Burlin's translations were neither scholarly nor exact, nor so revealing of the complexity of the Native Americans as the Bureau anthropologists' transcriptions, she certainly made them recognisably poetic to her readers, even if in a rather faded Victorian way, and argued for their status as art. In *The Indians' Book*, introducing her collection of songs, stories and designs, she insists that 'the Indian is artistic by nature'. She stresses their 'spirituality' and closeness to nature, though also that this 'child-race' is only at the

Mary Austin does not only put forward 'geographical determinism' as an interpretative tool for Indian poetry. Since then Krupat has published a brief but fascinating account of translation of Native American poetry, in which he is interestingly much more tolerant of these early pioneers than he was. Arnold Krupat, 'On the Translation of Native American Song and Story: a Theorized History', in Brian Swann (ed.), *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

60. See Arthur Danto, 'Artifact and Art' in Arthur Danto et al., *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*, New York: The Centre for African Art, 1988, p. 18. However, Robert Goldwater (*Primitivism in Modern Art* (rev. edn.), New York: Vintage Books, 1967) places the beginning of this interest in 1904 or 1905, and with Vlaminck – not such a neat match (p. 86).
61. Krupat, 'On the Translation of Native American Song and Story', p. 4.

beginnings of artistic endeavour: 'the unstudied song of primitive man is as soulful in its purpose as developed art but it is a simple expression of far simpler things'. If Indian art is commendably democratic, it lacks conscious artistry: 'his art is not the luxury of the cultured few, but the unconscious striving of the many to make beautiful the things of daily life'. Yet two of her other points prefigured later responses in significant ways. Firstly, she emphasised the symbolic density of Indian song, where any one image might need a lengthy English explanation, a quality which would be seized with the advent of the imagist movement. Secondly, she suggests, albeit tentatively ('because the art of the Aryan must be Aryan to be the true expression of his race'), that there are ways in which Indian artistry could be the basis of a new American national culture:

the folk-music of any land is a soil from which genius draws sustenance for fresh growth, and the stimulus to the creative mind through contact through this native art should give to America a new and vigorous art impulse. . . . We are a people of great mechanical and inventive genius, but we are not naturally song-makers, poets or designers. Can we afford to lose from our country any sincere and spontaneous art impulse, however crude? The undeveloped talents native to the aboriginal American are precisely those in which the Anglo-Saxon American is deficient. Far ahead of Europe are we in labor-saving devices, but far behind in all art industries. Our patterns and designs are largely imported from France. And here, among us, down-trodden and by us debauched is a real creative artistic genius – the first Americans.⁶²

This Herderian cultural nationalism was deeply influential in nineteenth-century European music, even if it had died out in the States, and presumably it was during her studies in Europe that Curtis had met these ideas. They struck an instant chord with her readers. It was from this passage that the *American Review of Reviews* quoted approvingly in its review of the collection: it lay down a pattern of response to Indian art that would be increasingly influential.⁶³

Natalie Curtis Burlin – and this again was a repeated pattern – was drawn by her interest in Native American art into the political battles over Indian policy. She was one of the early opponents of the policy of disintegration. She was appalled to discover that on the reservations Indians were not allowed to sing their traditional songs, and persuaded the President, Theodore Roosevelt (who wrote a foreword to her book), to make changes in the law.⁶⁴ Her *Indians'*

62. Burlin, *The Indians' Book*, pp. xxi–x.

63. Michael Castro, *Interpreting the Indian: Twentieth-Century Poets and the Native American*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983, p. 11. Franz Boas was a great admirer of Herder, but although Herder's ideas had been so influential in the States in the first half of the nineteenth century, Curtis seems likely to have re-imported them herself.

64. Barbara A. Babcock, Nancy J. Pareo, *Daughters of the Desert: Women Anthropologists and the Native American Southwest, 1880–1980: an illustrated catalogue*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988, p. 95. Burlin's contacts with the president were through her brother, the ethnographic photographer Edward Curtis.

Book, she says, was compiled primarily for the Indians themselves, so that the book, 'when placed in the hands of their children, might help revive for the younger generation that sense of the dignity and worth of their race which is the Indians' birthright'. It has to be said, however, that the introduction at least is clearly directed to Anglo-Saxon Americans, the 'adult race' which she hopes will 'wisely guide' the Indians.⁶⁵ She went on to collect black music and songs in Harlem and Africa, and published a book called *The Dark Continent* in 1920, whose text is an equally disconcerting mixture of liberal idealism and unthinking racism.

A much greater shift in the perception of the Indian artist came in the work of Mary Austin. Austin began her career as a regional writer living in the California desert, with a passionate belief in the value of living close to the natural world, very much in tune with the cult of the wilderness that emerged after the disappearance of the Frontier. She was an ardent feminist, and argued that white civilisation snubbed and discouraged the woman artist. In her autobiography, she describes how it was only by meeting the Paiute Indians, and learning their way of meditation, that she was able to break through her feelings of inferiority and depression to write at all. Her interpretation of their poetry goes back to her understanding of their religion, which she was taught by a Paiute Medicine-Man, having come to despair of Protestant Christianity:

Prayer, to the Medicine-Man, had nothing to do with emotion; it was an act; an outgoing act of the inner self towards something, not a god, towards a responsive activity in the world about you, designated as The-Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man; Wakonda, to use a term adopted by ethnologists – the effective principle of the created universe. This inner act was to be outwardly expressed in bodily acts, in words, in music, rhythm, color, whatever medium served the immediate purpose, or all of them. Prayer so understood and instigated acted with the sureness of a chemical combination.

She learnt, she said, to 'put on the character of an Indian woman . . . getting inside the universe by imitating it. . . . It proved . . . the answer to the problem of creative activity.'⁶⁶ She found in Paiute Indian philosophy an alternative both to western religion and aesthetics as she had known them. All the later points she makes about Indian poetry are bound up in this conception of their inner consciousness; the centrality of rhythm whereby the action of the body shapes consciousness, the imitation of natural forms, the abandonment of intellectualised creativity, creation from what she calls the 'deep self'. When she met William James she found he corroborated her discovery from the Paiute medicine man that 'the true Middle of [her] search was in herself. . . . What I got out of William James and the Medicine-Man was a continuing experience of wholeness, a power to

65. Burlin, *The Indians' Book*, p. xxi.

66. Mary Austin, *Earth Horizon*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1932, p. 277.

expand the least premonitory shiver along the edge of primitive apprehension to the full diapason of spiritual sophistication.⁶⁷

Mary Austin always stressed that the white artist could learn from the Indian: like her, others could rediscover their creative springs through them. In 1903 (the same year as Gertrude Käsebeir's 'Red Man', and the year in which Curtis began her recordings), she published *The Land of Little Rain*, a series of essays about Southern California, a celebration both of the region and of the Indians who lived there. In one chapter she writes of a Paiute woman basket maker:

Every Indian woman is an artist, – sees, feels, creates, but does not philosophize about her processes. Seyavi's bowls are wonders of technical precision inside and out, the palm finds no fault with them, but the subtlest appeal is in the sense that warns us of humanness in the way the design spreads into the flare of the bowl. There used to be an Indian woman at Olancho who made bottle-neck trinket baskets in the rattlesnake pattern, and could accommodate the design to the swelling bowl and flat shoulder of the basket without sensible disproportion, and so cleverly that you might own one a year without thinking how it was done; but Seyavi's baskets had a touch beyond cleverness. The weaver and the warp lived next to the earth and were saturated with the same elements.⁶⁸

An art saturated with the landscape from which it came: this was the aesthetic evoked many times in the following years to breach the divide between Anglo-Saxon and Indian. The racial difference that disturbed Natalie Curtis Burlin was subordinated – the American land, which had been fought over between the whites and Indians, was claimed as their common spiritual home, speaking through them both. In the next few years, Mary Austin taught herself all she could about Indian culture, translated songs, wrote accounts and stories of Indian life. For her, Indian consciousness (in particular, dream states, vision states, their processes of creativity) was not only a source of fascination but a model.⁶⁹

Mary Austin's explorations of Indian culture were always bound up with her struggles as a woman artist. Her own sexual and artistic conflicts underlie her play *The Arrow-Maker*, produced in 1911, which tells the story of a Californian Indian woman shaman, torn between her gifts, her responsibilities and her desires.⁷⁰ Austin's feminism was based on a fierce rejection of the domestic ideal that the earlier American womanliness had entailed, though she continued to believe in the innate moral superiority of

67. Austin, *Earth Horizon*, p. 283.

68. Mary Austin, *Land of Little Rain*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903, p. 95. She also describes with great attention Sayavi's relation with her blanket (p. 99).

69. While Mary Austin emphasised the power of the subconscious and of dreams, in a way which had likenesses to the later interest in automatic writing and surrealism, for her these psychic experiences always led to a mystic oneness with the land and the universe, never to dark and disturbing emotions, and definitely not to anything sexual.

70. Mary Austin, *The Arrow-Maker* (1915), New York: AMS Press, 1969. It is an awkwardly written play, and although it was generally well received, Austin was more conscious of the criticisms that found it inauthentically Indian or stridently feminist.

women. Those ideals, she says, had caused her mother immense pain; she rebelled against 'the contempt in which women's talent is held' and the pressure on them merely to serve man's needs. In her autobiography, she says that when she first became involved with the suffrage movement, she knew the 'English version' better than the American. 'Women in England,' she says, 'had reached a point of revolt against maternity.' She was attracted by their desire to redefine the role of women other than as 'wife and mother'. In her own work she wrote both about the practical implications of this (birth control, reform of marriage and divorce laws and practices) and about the psychological problems such a redefinition posed. In her writing about Native Americans, she, as it were, revolts 'against the contempt in which [their] talent is held', and she finds through their art a way of redefining them and herself as artists.

In 1923, in her extended essay on Native American poetry, *The American Rhythm*, she suggests that Whitman's attempt to develop an American voice was only a clumsy masculine assault on the spirit of the American continent; she, by her feminine attentiveness to the Indians' way of being, has at times 'succeeded in being an Indian', and come in touch with 'the beginning poetry and the becoming poetry of America' which are both part of one process.⁷¹ Whitman, insensitive to the true rhythms of America, could not marry the aboriginal and the new America in his work, but only attempt a drunken rape: 'America was a woman, and the poet, though slightly befuddled by her effect upon him, had proved his manhood upon her.' It is left to her feminine sensitivity to respond to the bodily rhythms of the land and this verse; she as a woman will be able to grasp the true nature of being an American, and a poet. In this feminist recasting of the nineteenth-century imagery of masculinist nationalism, the language in which the Transcendentalists and Whitman rewrote primitivism, making its centre the white American male and burying the anxieties over the dispossession of the Indian, is rewritten yet again to restore the Indian as the originary inhabitant of the American land. Austin had 'became convinced as early as the first years of the present century, that American poetry must inevitably take, at some period of its history, the mold of Amerind verse, which is the mold of the American experience shaped by the American environment'.⁷²

In chapters two and three I drew attention to the paradox, that although the discovery of Native American poets had stimulated the idea of the primitive bard, neither Morton, Schoolcraft or Longfellow nor any of their American contemporaries could allow themselves to imagine Native American poets as tellers of their own tales. They needed to keep the Anglo-American voice in control. Now, with Burlin and Austin, Native

71. Mary Austin, *The American Rhythm*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1923. She was in fact deeply influenced by Emerson, though she subverts his terms.

72. Austin, *The American Rhythm*, pp. 17 and 42. See also p. 40.

Americans as poets and artists begin to be recognised as makers of their own meanings; the interest in poetry is inseparable from the positing of the Indians as centres of their own subjectivity. Yet for all Austin's enthusiasm for Native American poetry, she felt no obligation to find out exactly what it said. She was happy to write her own rather vague 'interpretations', rather than attend with any closeness to what the words might have implied in their original context. The anthropologists and linguists of the period were, in fact, much more sensitive to the centrality of language in the formation of consciousness, certainly of Native American consciousness, than were these writers. Like D.H. Lawrence, who lived at one stage at Taos, they conceived of the Indians as being able to sink below the level of language, to be in touch with a prelinguistic self which the word-tormented modern could no longer reach, or could only reach, if, like Austin, they learnt from the primitive. It is perhaps in the work of linguists like Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf that the most important steps towards an acknowledgement of a plurality of viewpoints and of the particular value of the Native American world view can be found.

Mary Austin was a contradictory figure: in some ways she was extraordinarily open for her day to the possibilities of value not just in Native American art but in their thought; in other respects she was quite racist, deeply anti-semitic, and suspicious of Black Americans and their culture. She differs from almost all the other figures I discuss in the exclusiveness of her interest in Native Americans and the southwest. Her biographer comments on the contrast between her New Mexico house and Luhan's. Austin would only have Indian or southwestern Hispanic art in her house; Luhan (who earlier had for several years dressed entirely in Renaissance clothes) mingled all her artistic interests randomly.⁷³

The Land of Little Rain was much admired: the arts and crafts movement had already had a considerable impact in the States, stimulating interest in Indian artefacts, so there was a context for the appreciation of a craft like basket-making.⁷⁴ But when, between 1903 and 1917 occasional

73. Stineman, *Mary Austin*, p. 155. Austin was certainly one of those women who bear out Simone de Beauvoir's argument that the frustrations of traditional women's lives are more likely to make them nasty than noble. But both the brusque dismissal of her as rhapsodic and reductive, or, alternatively, the equally unhelpful recent sentimentalised versions of her life ignore some real moments of insight in her work. Richard Drinnon says some appreciative things about her, but decides she is a Conquistador at heart, on the basis of a sentence he misinterprets because he has not noticed her feminism. She wrote of one of her pioneer family who had become First Lady: 'this was how American women were trained to win the land from savage hordes and to walk discreetly besides their husbands in the highest offices to which they could be called'. Drinnon thinks she must be in favour, deep down, of taking land from the savage hordes, not realising that is as distasteful to her as walking discreetly behind a husband. Austin was imperialistic in her own way, but there she is using the language of savagism ironically. Drinnon, *Facing Westwards*, pp. 222–3.

74. Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, p. 3.

'Indian' poems, translations or interpretations, by Austin and a few others, were published in little magazines, they had not much impact. One problem was they were mostly in free verse, and until the modernist battle was won over *vers libre* (the French term making clear its aesthetic claims) free verse was looked down on. Whitman was not yet a generally admired poet, and as Harriet Monroe later wrote: 'Free verse and irregular metrics had had a long history in America, but mostly an obscure one, being confined to primitive singers and folk poets.'⁷⁵ It took the radical remaking of the American poetics during the influential opening years of *Poetry* to change that dismissive view.

The Indian as Imagist

When Harriet Monroe first asked Pound for his help with *Poetry*, he wrote to her: 'Are you for American poetry or for poetry? The latter is more important, but it is important that America should boost the form, provided it don't mean a blindness to the art.'⁷⁶ *Poetry* stood, in practice, for both, for an internationalist approach to poetry master-minded by Pound and supported, for the most part, by Monroe, and for the more nationalist promotion of American poetry, encouraged by Monroe, in spite of Pound's intermittent suspicion or ire. Both elements played their part in making a new reading of Native American poetry possible. From the beginning of his poetic career Pound looked for art forms beyond conventional traditions. The word 'primitivist' is not usually associated with Pound, although he so often looked back to the openings and the vigorous beginnings of civilisation to escape what he saw as the diluted and decayed present. Yet many of the poets to which he first turned, going back in time though not yet beyond Europe – to the troubadours, to Cavalcanti, to Villon, to Arnaut Daniel – were the contemporaries of those painters known still as the 'Italian Primitives'. During his early years in London, he went along to the meetings organised by T.E. Hulme in 1908 and 1909 at the Tour d'Eiffel Restaurant in Percy Street, where Japanese haiku or ancient Hebrew poetry were discussed as possible models for a recreated English poetry. At the time, he did not appear to take much notice of such possible sources, preferring those he had already located. By 1911, he was seeing a good deal of HD and Richard Aldington, both with a passion for

75. Monroe, *A Poet's Life*. The debate over *vers libre* did produce a great degree of attention to the formal qualities of Native American verse. See, for example, the response by Eda Lou Walton and T.T. Waterman ('American Indian Poetry' *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 27, 1925) which though rather arch in tone and quite racist about the 'savage', establishes the existence of formal poetic conventions in this poetry.

76. *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound: 1907–1944*, ed. D.D. Paige, London: Faber & Faber, 1950, p. 9.

translating the earliest, most archaic and fragmentary Greek poetry. But in 1912, the year in which he named HD's poetry *imagiste* as well as the year of *Poetry's* launch, he became converted to the idea of the 'modern' and, simultaneously, perhaps significantly so, began to look beyond Europe to the East. He discovered the poetry of the Bengali Rhabindranath Tagore, six of whose poems he sent to *Poetry*, where they were published in December 1912, along with a two-page note by Pound himself, praising this 'eastern expression' which brought 'the pledge of a calm we need over much in an age of steel and mechanics'. The next year, at the house of a Bengali woman poet, Sarojini Naidu, Pound met Mary Fenollosa, Ernest Fenollosa's widow, and was asked by her to become her husband's literary executor, and to edit his unpublished writings. No single literary experience made such an impact on Pound as his meeting with Fenollosa's China. Any inaccuracies in Fenollosa's interpretation of Chinese ideograms or poetry are not the point here. Pound believed, as he later put it, that he had found an alternative to 'western man "defining" by receding' in this Chinese mode of 'putting together concrete objects'.⁷⁷ Fenollosa's essay, 'The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry', which Pound edited (indeed, may have largely written), published and publicised, gave, he said, a 'whole basis of aesthetic' on which he drew for much of his later work.⁷⁸

Pound had already launched the imagist movement before he met Fenollosa's work – though it was his 'hokku-like' poem, 'In the Station of the Metro' which, it has been suggested, attracted Mrs Fenollosa's attention. Imagism, whose main manifesto was published in *Poetry*, presented itself as a highly sophisticated aesthetic movement, yet its poetic practice embodied precisely the stripping down to the essentials that was at the heart of more obviously primitivist modernisms. In 1919 Mary Austin argued that *vers libre* and imagism were primitive forms: she would have been more accurate to have called them primitivist.⁷⁹ What Pound found in Fenollosa's aesthetic had much in common with the earlier American yearning for 'the word one with the thing' (perhaps not coincidentally since Fenollosa was deeply influenced by Emerson), an aesthetic that claimed a direct relation between the American poet's language and his world.⁸⁰ Pound had already called, in *Patria Mia*, and elsewhere, for a Renaissance in the arts which he believed would spring from American culture. Now he saw China as

77. Pound, *Selected Letters*, p. 333.

78. 'The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry', appeared in Ezra Pound. *Instigations*, New York: Boni & Liveright, 1920.

79. Quoted Castro, *Interpreting the Indian*, p. 240. Austin added, 'both of them generically American forms, forms instinctively created by people living in America and freed of outside influences'. See also the discussion of this dispute in Arnold Krupat, *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*, Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989.

80. Lawrence W. Chisolm, *Ernest Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1963.

a possible source and catalyst. As he wrote in *Poetry* in 1914, the first Renaissance had drawn on Latin and Greek, and

the romantic awakening dates from the production of *Ossian*. The last century rediscovered the middle ages. It is possible that this century may find a new Greece in China. In the meantime we have come upon a new table of values. I can only compare this endeavour of criticism to the contemporary search for pure color in painting. . . . Undoubtedly pure color is to be found in Chinese poetry, when we begin to know enough about it: indeed, a shadow of this perfection is already at hand in translations. Liu Ch'e, Chu Yuan, Chia I, and the great *vers libre* writers before the Petrarchan age of Li Po, are a treasury to which the next century may look for as great a stimulus as the renaissance had from the Greeks.⁸¹

For Pound what is important about these Chinese poets was not only what made them distinctive but also what made them similar to the other poets he admired: they had found a way of responding to the world, of creating their art, analogous to the other 'painters' in 'pure color' which he had identified. His use of terms like 'Petrarchan' and *vers libre* underlines his appropriation of them for his own cultural treasury. In *Cathay*, alongside his favourite of that collection, 'Exile's Letter' (which had already appeared in *Poetry*), he republished the Anglo-Saxon 'Seafarer', from his 1912 collection *Ripostes*. Although both were from the same period (about the eighth century AD), in other respects they were from very different worlds, yet for Pound, as he later wrote, they were both major personae, offering him voices through which he could speak.⁸²

Pound himself showed no interest in that Indian issue, but he helped open the way, in the first instance simply by his encouragement of translation, and in particular translation from poetry which lacked stanzaic form and therefore was identified (however mistakenly) as *vers libre*.⁸³ But it was also that he gave a model of the appropriation of other cultures which asked no questions about any but aesthetic responses. In particular his presentation of Chinese poetry became a template by which Native American poetry could be approached. As Hart Crane was to remind his readers at the beginning of *The Bridge*, 'Cathay' was what Columbus thought he had found when he reached the Americas. Perhaps Pound was making a similar error, and far from inventing *Chinese* poetry, as Eliot rather shrewdly suggested he had, he was actually creating a new kind of American verse.⁸⁴ Certainly, after Pound, Native American poetry was read,

81. *Poetry*, February, 1914.

82. Pound, *Selected Letters*, p. 128.

83. The only interest I have discovered that Pound took in Native American literature was an 'Indian' poem in *Hiawatha* rhythm which he contributed to a collection about his family in 1914, and some help he gave to Jaime de Angulo in publishing a piece on Native Americans in about 1950. Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* ([1970] Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, pp. 188, 548). I suspect he would have felt this movement not sufficiently 'hard': Pound was an aggressively masculinist poet, and the feminised representations of the Indians would not have appealed to him at all.

84. 'Preface', *Ezra Pound: Selected Poems*, p. 15.

in a similar elision, in the terms of Pound's 'Cathay'. Yet the Indian issue was in itself part of another line of development of *Poetry*, the westward looking American poets encouraged by Harriet Monroe.⁸⁵ Under Monroe's editorship, *Poetry's* other great achievement, besides its contribution to cosmopolitan high modernism, was its fostering of the experimental verse of writers like Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters, recognising in them the beginnings of a new kind of American poetry, which led to a rebirth of American poetry and to the work of poets like William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, and Charles Olson. For Monroe, poetry which drew on 'aboriginal' sources (as she called them) had an essential part to play in any American Renaissance.⁸⁶

Although the Indian issue of *Poetry* itself contained mainly 'interpretations' rather than 'translations', it also carried an eloquent plea by Harriet Monroe for more exploration and preservation of this literature, and a protest against the government policy of suppressing Indian culture: 'the danger is that the tribes, in the process of so-called civilization will lose all trace of . . . their beautiful primitive poetry'. Monroe drew attention to the 'massive tomes which entomb' the researches of the Bureau of American Ethnology, and suggested a somewhat eclectic list of anthropological texts in which readers would find more poems and myths: though by no means comprehensive, it was this list which formed the basis of later collections. Both Alice Corbin Henderson and Carl Sandburg drew attention to Frances Densmore's translations, which by chance, as I have pointed out, did indeed look remarkably like imagist poems. 'The Indian song', Henderson wrote, 'often means more than it says: it is content to give the image and not to talk about it.' Evoking one of Pound's ultimate shibboleths, she says this poetry is not 'journalistic'.

The next year the first anthology of Native American poetry appeared, inspired, its editor George Cronyn acknowledged, by *Poetry's* Indian issue. A much higher proportion of this collection was taken direct from anthropologists' translations, including an extensive selection from Alice Fletcher's version of the Pawnee *Hako*, which was to become something of a cult work. The anthology also included a range of 'interpretations', including those from *Poetry*.⁸⁷ Reviewing it, Alice Corbin Henderson wrote,

85. She had been disappointed by the lack of American spirit in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', which Pound had sent off to her in October 1914 in a state of high excitement. — It took several months of rage and cajoling for Pound to get her to agree to publish it. As Noel Stock comments, somewhat disapprovingly and certainly unfairly, Monroe 'had very definite ideas about American superiority and she wanted her American poets to exemplify this superiority in rousing verse like Nicholas Vachel Lindsay's "The Fireman's Ball" which had appeared in the July *Poetry*' (p. 211).

86. Monroe, *Poets and Their Art*, p. 257.

87. This was *The Path on the Rainbow* to which I referred in my introduction: see above pp. 3, 198, 201.

Not only is the American Indian a contemporary of ours – a fact too often lost sight of through the use of such terms as the ‘vanishing race’ or that other colorless and far distant sounding word ‘aboriginal’ – but his poetry is very much of our time. Whether it is due to the spirit of the land reacting upon our poets to make them like the earlier owners of soil and sky, or whether it is due to some other cause, certain it is that these Indian poems are very similar in spirit and method to the poetry of our most modern American poets. . . . The whole art character of the Indian is of course more Oriental than European. Perhaps that is why we have failed to appreciate it. It is possible that Indian poetry may be more closely allied to Chinese poetry than to that of any other race: it has the same realism, the same concrete simplicity, and acceptance of the commonplace experience . . . the American Indian stands revealed as a poet of no mean order. . . . His theatrical art of which many of these songs are a component part, is the finest thing we have in this country without exception, the most consummate, primal art.⁸⁸

Henderson here, wary of Austin’s autochthonic trope, is able, by simultaneously identifying the Indian with the modern American artist and naming him as the Oriental, both to claim insight into Indian art and to allow its distance. Like Harriet Monroe, she goes on to argue against government suppression of Indian culture and to ask for more research.

The comparison between Indian poetry and imagism has been much derided. Clearly as far as form goes, Indian poetry was very different. But perhaps that is to miss the point. The provisional identification of this verse with the imagists and the Chinese was on the whole a stepping-stone to more understanding. It is true that in the eclecticism and heterogeneity of modernist primitivism, the syntax, the narrative that was repressed was so often that of colonialist and colonial power: that syntax needs uncovering. Yet it is essential not to fall into the very eurocentrism these modernist reworkings were disrupting, as if this story depended only on western needs or narcissism, and not at all on the cultures these artists encountered. Another way of looking at this period would be to argue that, after a period of inward-looking resistance to other views of the world, not so different on an ideological level from the Japanese severance from the world community, modernism was the beginning of a new realisation that other cultures had value and significance.⁸⁹ Ernest Fenollosa – and it is often forgotten he went to Japan to teach Herbert Spencer and Hegel to the Japanese – believed that the twentieth century would see a new worldwide culture, when east and west would share their heritages. His view was a neo-Hegelian one (Hegel, of course, had a strictly Eurocentric ranking of cultural worth), a dialectic in which east and west would meet to form a new and richer understanding of life and art.⁹⁰ Whilst his sense of Hegelian purpose might to be hard to sustain now, he was right that in

88. *Poetry*, October 1918, p. 44.

89. It is not entirely a new phenomenon, of course, but certainly with a new sense of urgency.

90. Chisolm, *Ernest Fenollosa*, passim.

this century both western power would be less dominant and cultural interchange would increase. When he returned to the States his mission was to bring new insights from the east to his own country. Fenollosa may have been ignorant of Chinese and at times shaky on Japan. Yet how should that be balanced against his visionary sense of what eastern culture had to offer and his communication of that excitement to so many Americans? In a similar way, in looking at these postcolonial, modernist responses to Native American culture, it is essential both to acknowledge the misapprehensions, the self-interest and the sentimentalisations that so often shaped them, and yet at the same time to be aware of the fascination and delight that they record, in the discovery of a new way of imagining and interpreting the world.

This interest in Native American culture initiated both a new desire for increased understanding and knowledge of their traditions, and a political campaign which, working with, though sometimes hindering, Native American organisations, helped to halt the cultural destruction that the US government was practising at that time. But its misreadings had dangers: in some ways idealistic American primitivism remained an instrument of oppression. Whilst these writers praised the primitive, they still accepted the nineteenth-century view that this art presented the beginnings of culture, the work of what Mary Austin called 'Dawn Man'. They wanted to find and fix it in that pure original form. The poems in Cronyn's anthology which were most criticised for their inauthenticity were the only ones by a living Native American. They showed, it was said, how natives always absorbed the worst of white culture.⁹¹ In one sense these modernist primitivists were making a radical break with nineteenth-century eurocentrism by ascribing to the Native Americans the ability to produce works of 'art', that privileged category held to be the embodiment of the finest and highest in the human spirit. Yet, although they realised, with admiration, that Indian 'art' infused their social existence in quite a different way from that in modern society, they repeatedly imposed their own western reified and commodified notion of art on to processes which were part of the symbolic life and cultural dynamic of the Indian groups. Austin and Luhan's relations with the Pueblos were more concerned to preserve their arts than to understand the needs or desires of the artists.

Goldwater, who only deals with European art, suggests that whilst late nineteenth-century primitivism evoked a gentle though exotic arcadia, twentieth-century primitivism celebrated the violent and barbaric.⁹² In those terms, this particular phase of American primitivism, as Cahill's

91. Castro, *Interpreting the Indian*.

92. Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*. Abdelali Dahrouch has argued that Matisse also turns to 'primitive' in search of harmony and purity. 'The Neglected Side: Matisse and Eurocentrism', *Third Text*, 24, Autumn, 1993.

description suggested, has much in common with what Goldwater identifies as the European nineteenth-century conception. One needs only contrast this American primitivism with contemporary or near contemporary European responses to those same cultures to highlight the difference. For Lawrence and the French surrealists the Native American was capable of dark, intense and cruel passions eliminated from views like Cahill's. One reason for this difference might be that the focus of anxiety about the modern world in the States was so much on its raw competitiveness, whilst in Europe it was on its repressive conformity. While this contemporary European primitivism was associated with revolutionary or reactionary politics, in the States concern with the Indian most often went with a liberal desire to make American life more caring and co-operative. In Europe in 1922 it might be difficult to ignore the existence of an economic and psychic waste land, but in America it was still possible to retreat to the relatively untouched Southwest, and admire the Indians who filled the desert with beauty. America's own urban deprivation and growing racism were far away. Perhaps also, however, this American primitivism worked to repress both the violent past and oppressive present, a repression essential to the fantasy of the union of artist and Indian through the land. It has been suggested that John Collier's Indian New Deal was flawed by his idealised view of the communal harmony of Indian groups, which he took from his own experience of the Pueblos and from the philosophy of the New Mexico group.⁹³ Yet perhaps it is even more important to shift perspective, and look at this group's self-image. The problem was not just that they eliminated violence and conflict from their view of the Indian: since they saw Indian culture as a reflection of their own aestheticised, anti-materialist Americanism, they eliminated violence and conflict from their view of themselves, and remained blind to the way they in practice, particularly Austin and Luhan, coerced and fetishised Indian cultures. They never acknowledged how far they were only ready to help the Indians on their own terms, and according to their view of what Indian culture was like, nor even that it was the political legacy of dispossession which gave them that power. Native American historians have argued that the problem with John Collier's Indian Reorganisation Act was that, for all his good intentions and real benefits, he failed to realise how much control he kept in his or the government's hands, or how much he imposed his conception of Indianness on unwilling Indians: he failed to see that his paternalism was a continuation of the oppression of the past.⁹⁴ This occlusion may

93. Taylor, *The New Deal*, passim, and David Murray, *Modern Indians*.

94. Vine Deloria and Clifford Lytle, *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*, New York: Pantheon, 1984. However, they also argue that not enough credit has been given to him for what he did manage to achieve; although flawed, it was a great advance.

perhaps have been intimately bound up with the feminisation of the Indian, with the notion that there could be spheres, women and home, Indian and Pueblo, where violence and brutality were not known. Sexual mores might be changing, but the old assumption of women's gentleness and peace-loving nature was as largely as unquestioned then as by Käsebeir in 1903. In the context of feminist political history, in fact, it has been argued that it was the continuation of that image of the woman's separate peaceful sphere which contributed to the failure of American feminism in the twenties.⁹⁵ It is ironic that the most famous expression of that phase of American primitivism was by the woman who was later to be one of the first to question the relation of gender and culture. In another instance of modernist eclecticism, it was not concerned with Native Americans at all but with the South Seas: Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*.⁹⁶

Boasian Anthropology

Margaret Mead brings me back to anthropology, the other strand in this chapter. If the modernist appropriation of Native American art owed much to certain anthropologists, anthropologists such as Mead were at this period very aware of the literary and artistic world. As Mead herself wrote in her tribute to Ruth Benedict: 'We lived, in a sense, lives in which the arts and sciences fought uneven battles for pre-eminence.'⁹⁷ As she had earlier put it in a letter to Benedict herself, they too were in search of a 'real national culture'.⁹⁸ Mead herself wrote some poetry, and although she decided her gifts were not really poetic, thought her skill as a creative prose writer essential to her ethnography. (Her critics have continued to argue her prose was far too creative.) Ruth Benedict and Edward Sapir were both poets, and both contributed to *Poetry*. Sapir knew Harriet Monroe, and

95. Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, Oxford: Martin Robinson, 1981.

96. I have argued this more fully in 'Coming of Age in America: Margaret Mead and Karen Horney', in *American Cultural Criticism*, ed., David Murray, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995. In that article, I also discuss some links between modernism in the arts and anthropology. In 1925 William Carlos Williams published *In the American Grain*, reinscribing the old stereotypes of the fighting Indian, gallantly killed and passing on his spirit to the right sort of American: no sense of a poetic culture there, though Montezuma's glamour is evoked. It was the beginnings of a new stage of cultural Americanism. If in Williams's violent history the Indian is even more exclusively a reflection of the American writer, at least the account of the American is perhaps more honest.

97. Introduction to *An Anthropologist at Work: the Writings of Ruth Benedict*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1959, p. xvi.

98. See Richard Handler, 'The Dainty and the Hungry Man: Literature and Anthropology in the Work of Edward Sapir' in *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork. History of Anthropology*, Vol. 1, ed. George W. Stocking, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983, and 'Vigorous Male and Aspiring Female: Poetry, Personality and Culture in Edward Sapir and Ruth Benedict' in Stocking (ed.) *Malinowski, etc.* According to Handler, Sapir wrote over 500 poems.

corresponded with her about poetry, and, in 1917, the same year as *Poetry's* Indian issue, published a volume of poetry, *Dreams and Gibes*, which shows in many ways the influence of the new poetry.⁹⁹ Benedict believed her anthropological work pursued the same aims as Virginia Woolf's fictions. But for all these similarities, their approach to what the literary world saw as Indian poetry began from a very different point. In fact, many of the Boasians spent less time than had the Bureau anthropologists recording the kinds of chants and songs that so appealed to the literati.¹⁰⁰ Far more important was the recording of myths, which were translated often into the baldest and most literal of prose.¹⁰¹ The other form of Native American narrative which became of central importance to some of these inter-war anthropologists was the life-story. I want now to look back at the development of Boas's thought and influence to see why that should be.

During the years between the two world wars, the pervasive intellectual drive in American anthropology came from the liberal and enlightened Boasian school. Even before the turn of the century, Franz Boas had begun to argue against the theories of cultural evolution which had been espoused by the Bureau.¹⁰² He refused to accept that 'primitive' societies presented earlier stages of evolution, which the white man had left far behind. Powell had believed that ethnographic data should be used to construct a universal evolutionary ladder, leading from primitive to civilised. Boas rejected this model of human development and the rigid hierarchy of cultures that went with it, maintaining that non-western cultures had their own intrinsic value and validity. Every culture formed a complex whole, and it was the function of ethnological research to collect the data necessary for understanding that totality, data which included customs, rituals, artefacts, myths, songs, as well as some life histories, to create a full and sympathetic picture.

In consequence, where earlier ethnographers such as Henry Schoolcraft or John Wesley Powell wanted to understand the 'savage' mind, Boasian anthropologists were more often interested in understanding the Winnebago or the Papago or the Fox. I said earlier that as cultural relativists, they were deeply opposed to racism, and Franz Boas's own work was informed by his deeply humanitarian revulsion against racial prejudice. He came from a cultured Jewish liberal family, and always affirmed his support for the ideals of 1848. His own experience of anti-semitism must have helped to

99. Mead, *An Anthropologist at Work*.

100. Boas himself concentrated on myth (see p. 233): Ruth Bunzel, however, recorded some very impressive Zuni chants, and Ruth Underhill, as I shall mention later, brought out a non-specialist book about Papago song and chant, *Singing for Power: the Song Magic of the Papago Indians of Southern Arizona* (1938), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

101. See Krupat's discussion of Boas's translation in 'On the Translation of Native American Song and Story', pp. 12–13.

102. According to Kuper, Boas mounted his first attack in 1887 (*Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 131).

form the direction in which his opposition to oppression would develop. On his early expedition to Baffin Land in 1888, he comments on the Eskimo appreciation of beauty and their strong family feeling, writing in his diary: 'And these are "savages" who are supposed to be of no worth compared to Europeans!'¹⁰³ One of his very earliest ethnographical publications ends with the hope his work 'will show that the mind of the "savage" is sensible to the beauties of poetry and music, and that it is only the superficial observer to whom he appears stupid and unfeeling'.¹⁰⁴ The turning point in Boas's intellectual career came with the Spanish-American war of 1898, with what he called his 'rude awakening' to American imperialism. He now saw the US as 'a young giant, eager to grow at the expense of others, and dominated by the same desire of aggrandizement that sways the narrowly confined European states'.¹⁰⁵ From then on there was always a political edge to his confrontations with the Bureau. In 1899 he became a full professor at Columbia; American anthropology came to have its main base in the universities, and hence to be more independent of governmental pressure.¹⁰⁶ Boas had his most explosive confrontation with the anthropological establishment in 1919, when he wrote to *The Nation* in outrage at the discovery that some American anthropologists had used their work to spy for the government in Central America during the First World War. He was, as Stocking puts it 'stripped of membership of the governing council' of the prestigious American Anthropological Association, but by this time was too influential to be seriously damaged.¹⁰⁷ At the end of his life he argued strongly against Nazism (his books were burnt in Munich) and died in 1942 lecturing against racism, collapsing in the arms of a fellow Jew, then a refugee from the Nazis, Claude Lévi-Strauss.¹⁰⁸

The conflict between the Boasians and the Bureau, it has been pointed out, was in itself divided on racial grounds, the Bureau dominated by WASPs and the Boasians largely immigrants, particularly Germans, many of them Jewish.¹⁰⁹ After the letter to *The Nation* W.H. Holmes, then director of

103. Quoted Douglas Cole, 'The Value of a Person lies in his *Herzenbildung*: Franz Boas Baffin Island Letter-Diary' in *Observers Observed*, p. 38.

104. 'Poetry and Science of Some North American Indian Tribes', *Science*, No. 230, 1887, p. 385.

105. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian Institution and the American Indian*, p. 283.

106. Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 132. Anthropologists were involved with the administration of the New Deal. Ruth Underhill, for example, was employed as one of a group of Applied Anthropologists: Taylor, *The New Deal*, p. 37.

107. Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, pp. 148–9 and George W. Stocking, 'The Scientific Reaction against Cultural Anthropology, 1919–20', in *Race, Culture and Evolution*.

108. Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 151. I have illustrated this anti-racism from Boas alone, but it was true of his followers too. For example, Ruth Benedict's famous work, *Patterns of Culture*, published in 1935, begins with an argument against the notion of racial purity: in 1942, the year of Boas's death, she published a direct attack on Nazism, *Race and Racism*.

109. Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 141.

the BAE, actually called for an end of the 'Hun regime' in anthropology.¹¹⁰ One element in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American racism had always been the fear of racial contamination through the waves of immigration from non-Anglos into the States.¹¹¹ In 1881, Edward Freeman, 'the English pontiff of the international Teutophile school', reported with satisfaction on his visit to the States that 'very many approved . . . when I suggested that the best remedy for whatever was amiss would be if every Irishman should kill a negro and be hanged for it'.¹¹² Ironically, of course, after the First World War and substantial German immigration, Anglo-Saxons (ideologically) ceased to include Germans, even German gentiles; the Huns were, after all, an Asiatic tribe.

In 1904, the same year as WJ McGee's statement, Boas delivered a lecture on the history of anthropology, in which he defined its two separate traditions.¹¹³ One was that of historical anthropology, which he dated back to Herder. In this tradition, which was the one in which he placed himself, the particularity of a culture, in a specific time and place, is what is of importance – the product of a history, and of a geographically-located history. The other tradition was that of generalist or universalist anthropology, which seeks a universal pattern under the surface of these differences. This was the tradition in which he placed the cultural evolutionists.¹¹⁴ These work on the assumptions of Newtonian inductive science, believing laws can be deduced from the observation of specific cases, examples whose interest is only to establish the general laws. This view of science, Boas argued, had already been rendered obsolete by Darwin. What is now to be observed is change and variation, not static laws. It is impossible not to admire the brilliance of this manoeuvre whereby evolution undermines the evolutionists. The 'aesthetic' element in the historical Herderian approach, the 'close conception of the individual event' becomes the more truly scientific.¹¹⁵

110. Kuper, *Invention of Primitive Society*, p. 149.

111. Carroll and Noble, *The Free and the Unfree*.

112. Eric F. Goldman, 'Democratic Bifocalism: a Romantic Idea and American Historiography in *Romanticism in America: Papers Contributed to a Symposium held at the Baltimore Museum of Arts*, ed. George Boas, New York: Russell and Russell, 1956, p. 7.

113. Franz Boas, 'The History of Anthropology' in *A Franz Boas Reader: the Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883–1911*, ed. George Stocking, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

114. It also includes, Boas says, those like Bastian who seek universal elementary innate ideas.

115. Krupat argues that Boas never decides whether or not his work can be thought of as 'scientific' in the sense of leading to general laws, continuing all his life to offer contradictory views (*Ethnocriticism* p. 93), and he suggests this is another way in which Boas can be compared to the modernists (p. 100). Krupat has much of interest to say on Boas, but his efforts in *Ethnocriticism* to recuperate the idea of anthropology as a science, and Boasians as scientific anthropologists, seem to me misplaced. (See above pp. 200–201.) When Boas's followers said he was scientific, they meant he was right: when the neo-evolutionists said he was unscientific, they meant he was wrong. These were rhetorical and subjective rather than substantive and objective claims. To attempt to call the Boasians empirical is only to highlight the problems with empiricism. They claimed to record facts, but those 'facts'

Boas brought to anthropology the sense of richness, diversity and multiplicity which he found in Darwin, whose vision of endlessly varied fecundity, Gillian Beer has argued, was almost as influential as his developmental model.¹¹⁶ Boas continues the tradition that I have shown dating back to Herder and beyond, of the fascination with the detail and specificity of difference, which was found in the cult of the picturesque and of early primitivism, and in what I have called the ethnographic imagination.¹¹⁷ For Boas, as in this tradition, the difference of a culture is bound up with place and history.¹¹⁸ What has changed (not perhaps from Herder, but from others at whom I have looked in this book) is the sense that Boas has of the complexity of every culture. As his student Sapir put it:

We learn to see a given society . . . as a complex of historical processes that is only to be unravelled, and then in insignificant degree, through a minute weighing of the concrete, interacting features of that society, and through the patient following of one of numerous threads that inevitably bind it to its geographical neighbours.¹¹⁹

Yet what is most important to Boas (and here one can see a continuity with the Bureau's work) is to understand how the inhabitants of that society understand their world. But there were other influences which led to this concern with consciousness. Boas's training as a German physicist must have meant he was aware of the pre-Einsteinian questioning of representation and objectivity that was an important element in late nineteenth-century German physics.¹²⁰ This is precisely the questioning he brought

were highly selective ones; in any case their object of study was not the groups they met, but what the groups had been. They are better described as conjectural historians, than as 'scientists'; weavers of fictions rather than patient recorders of objective data.

116. Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983. Marilyn Strathern also invokes Beer's work on Darwin to make a similar claim for Frazer's plenitude, which makes an intriguing link between what are generally thought of as totally different sorts of anthropologists. See her article, 'Out of Context: Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology' in Manganaro, *Modernist Anthropology*, pp. 113–15.
117. Krupat draws attention to the idea of the 'affective' impulse which Boas put forward in an early article as the drive behind the human as opposed to the natural sciences. Those in the human sciences, like the anthropologist, 'hold to the phenomenon which is the object of his study . . . and lovingly tries to penetrate its secrets . . . This occupation with the object of his affection affords him . . . delight.' Krupat comments: 'It is hard to resist noticing the erotic dimension of Boas's description of the cosmographical romance', *Ethnocriticism*, p. 92.
118. As Boas put it in 1927, 'Each culture can be understood only as an historical growth determined by the social and geographical environment in which each people is placed and by the way in which it develops the cultural material that comes into its possession from outside or through its own creativeness.' (*Primitive Art* (1927), New York: Dover, 1955, p. 4.)
119. Quoted Richard Handler, 'The Dainty and the Hungry Man: Literature and Anthropology in the Work of Edward Sapir' in *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork. History of Anthropology*, Vol. 1, ed. George W. Stocking, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983, p. 214.
120. Gillian Beer is at present writing on the effects of these ideas on English intellectuals in the late nineteenth century, and to her I owe the idea that the questioning of representation that we have been accustomed to think of as modernism in fact goes back to

to his own area of psychophysics, the study of perception.¹²¹ For his whole career, the centre of his work was the study of the relative and culture-bound nature of perception, but the perception with which he is concerned broadens from that of the colour of sea-water to the perception of 'world-views'. Stocking, in his second version of his article on Boas's development from physics to ethnology shows Boas's work on 'sound-apperception' as a crucial transitional step. This is the work in which Boas identifies the centrality in any language system of what would later be called phonemes, culturally rather than physically differentiated sounds. It is out of this combined awareness of the relativity of perception and the centrality of language that emerges what I have called the 'modernist' dimension in Boasian anthropology – the concern with subjectivity expressed through words (which shows itself most explicitly in Sapir and Whorf's theory that our language shapes our perception of reality). George Stocking describes the Boasian 'approach' as one which 'saw ethnography as the construction of a body of *textual material* directly expressive of the *native mind*, produced with the active acknowledged assistance of native ethnographic intermediaries' (my emphasis).¹²² Boas himself put most emphasis on the collection of myths, producing for example what Stocking calls the 'five-foot shelf' of Kwakiutl texts with the help of George Hunt; but for many of his followers, native autobiography seemed an ideal form of 'textual material directly expressive of the native mind'.

Yet although the Boasians wanted to understand the subjectivity of the Native Americans, their own subjectivity was not seen as part of the process. Just as their ethnographies tried to underplay or evade the changes brought about in Native American culture by the impact of American colonialism, so there was little acknowledgement of the process of gaining information, of their own subjective responses, of the experience of encountering and exchange. Ethnographic authority entailed an authoritative gaze. For all Boas's own and his followers' opposition to racism, the anthropological work of his school remained in some ways unable to challenge the oppression of those whose cultures they studied. The usual accusation levelled against the Boasian school – that they haphazardly heaped up 'facts' for their own sake – does not really explain the problem, but perhaps

the later decades of the nineteenth century. I am grateful to her for discussing her work with me. I am also grateful to my brother, John Martin, and to my son, Ben Carr, for discussing the philosophy of mathematics and science with me.

121. His doctoral research was on the colour of sea-water. Stocking has difficulty in accepting a well-known story that one of Boas's reasons for his original visit to the Eskimos was to discover how they saw it. It seems to me to fit in precisely with how I understand Boas's intellectual trajectory. Even if it were not true, the fact that Boas himself repeatedly endorsed this story must be significant. See George W. Stocking 'From Physics to Ethnology', first published in the *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences*, and later reprinted and expanded in *Race, Culture and Evolution*.
122. Stocking, *Observers Observed*, pp. 10–11.

their definition of a fact in some way does.¹²³ An anthropological 'fact' is no self-evident commodity. Boasians' 'facts' included a wealth of detail about aesthetic, emotional, and conceptual life and the close study of language and oral traditions. But economic pressures and power structures were much less important, and the contemporary historical reality of relations between Native Americans and white society went largely unrecorded. Although their commitment to cultural relativism was an act of political liberalism, in their analysis of Indian cultures they ignored the politics of colonialism.

Like the 'salvage anthropology' of the Bureau, most Boasian anthropologists in this period continued to search for Native American culture in what they saw as its 'real' form, that is, its form before contact with Europeans, which might be very different from its actual contemporary practice and position. Indeed, the Boasians' very anxiety to document these 'different' cultures in their totality gave a new urgency to this pursuit of the past, which they then often continued to write in what has been called the ethnographer's present. They were forever pursuing an essence, a discrete and integral whole that had perhaps never existed. In this atomistic view, the lines of the existing power relations remained invisible. The actual conditions in which Native Americans lived in the United States were, on the whole, ignored in favour of a reconstruction of what might have been their past.¹²⁴ In this they have ideological links with the more overtly primitivistic artistic movement of the southwest. The visual equivalent between 1907 and 1930 was the romantic photography of Edward Curtis, who would persuade the Indians to change their usual westernised clothes for the still carefully preserved traditional costumes, and then pose them, not in front of reservation shacks, but against a natural background of rocks, trees or water.¹²⁵

Boasians had the strengths and weaknesses of much early twentieth-century liberal humanism. They reacted, like many other intellectuals,

123. Here I differ from Krupat's comments in *For Those Who Come After*, p. 77. The reaction against Boas's apparently atheoretical work in our period of high-theorising has been extensive, but in many ways the limitations of his viewpoint in coming to terms with the historical process of dispossession were shared equally by British structural anthropologists. See Paul Bonte, 'From Ethnology to Anthropology: on Critical Approaches in the Human Sciences, Part I', in *Critique of Anthropology*, No. 2, Autumn 1974. Boas's own uncertainty about actual autobiography springs from his awareness of the problem of using the idiosyncratic individual memory for the kind of general truths he sought, and his caution did not inhibit the impetus given to such life-histories by his 'desire to grasp the meaning of a culture as a whole . . . [to] understand the individual as living in his culture; and the culture as lived by individuals' (Boas's Preface to Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*, 1961, p. x).

124. Boasians took account of historical developments within Native American culture, but rarely in what later anthropologists euphemistically call its acculturation.

125. He too was continuing an earlier tradition, the one which I mentioned earlier in this chapter of the photographers in Washington who specialised in taking photographs of Indians when they came to sign treaties or deliver petitions with scenic backdrops, suitable props such as papier-mâché boulders and a box of Indian costumes so they would look as the America public wanted to see them: real Indians. See p. 205.

against the reductiveness of nineteenth-century positivism, no longer believing that human societies could be explained by scientific laws deduced from a few observations. Their imaginations were seized by the rich variety and heterogeneity of social groups, making them wary of premature, oversimplified conclusions. Boas in particular was reluctant to advance theoretical explanations of social structures, stressing rather the need to gather as much information as possible in order to understand a culture's complexities. In this reluctance, Boas perhaps reveals his deep perturbation at the modernist crisis of belief in representation that he met in his scientific work. Boas did not simply turn from positivist science to subjective humanism, as is sometimes suggested.¹²⁶ He turned from a science that was beginning to question its representations to a study of cultures which tried in its density of description to evade the issue of representations altogether. He could not accept, or perhaps could not reach, the postmodernist scientist's position that representation is impossible but necessary; in other words that though mathematics, for example, can never coincide with the material world, it is pragmatically useful, a basic tool in our culture, but one to be used with self-conscious awareness that it is a provisional artifice. Boas came to reject science as a useful explanatory mode because it is 'the unattainable ideal of the discovery of pure relationships of cause and effect'.¹²⁷ But ironically, as a result, in his work he often himself seems to construct an equally impossible ideal, that is, never to foreclose by projecting a shape upon a culture, but to go on with the accumulation of data until in the end representation and the thing itself will become identical. In his work, Krupat has pointed out, there is 'a refusal of closure as somehow a violation of the way things "really" are'.¹²⁸ This conflict in his programme, between the desire to 'see a culture as a whole' in the sense of a *gestalt* and in the sense of a totality, that is, everything there is to that culture, regardless of whether or not that everything can be represented or even conceived, was felt very acutely by Edward Sapir, in what he defined as a conflict between his 'aesthetic' desire to shape his knowledge and his 'scientific' duty not to come to premature conclusions.¹²⁹

Representations are, however, unavoidable, and if not used self-consciously will shape ideas unconsciously. Although the overall attitude of these anthropologists was sympathetic to Native American culture, they were part of the power structure that continued to oppress it; even as immigrants, they were naturalised into many of the beliefs and discourses that supported and legitimated that power. Although in many respects they

126. See for example, Maurice Bloch, *Marxism and Anthropology: the History of a Relationship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, though Bloch himself quotes and then modifies that view.

127. Boas, *Primitive Art*, p. 2.

128. Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, p. 90.

129. Handler, 'The Dainty and the Hungry Man', p. 214.

were alert to the prejudices of their predecessors, that inheritance needs to be borne in mind when approaching their texts.¹³⁰ Even the idea that cultures were to be seen as wholes is not a transparent fact. These cultures were at best ragged at the edges, and most often splintered and reft. What Clifford has named post-culturism was already in being. But what the Boasians wanted was to recreate these cultures' former 'structural order and symbolic pattern' not record their present 'conflict, disorder and emergence'.¹³¹ The response of these anthropologists was not utterly unlike that of the Taos colony to the plight of contemporary Indians, the majority of whom were now of mixed blood. By an idealisation of an homogeneous and bounded past the guilt of a present where Anglo- and Native Americans' lives were intricately entwined could be perhaps evaded. This process can be seen at work in Ruth Underhill's framing of Maria Chona's autobiography.

Native American Autobiography

In the last few years there has been a growing interest in Native American autobiography. This is partly a response to the libertarian movements (including feminism and postcolonialism) which have emphasised the need to listen to the voices of the oppressed, and is also linked to the development of postmodern ethnography, which from a different viewpoint looks for the 'native's voice' in a way that anthropology has neglected for some time. But it is also a historical fact that autobiographies of one sort or another were the main genre of written Native American texts until after the Second World War. As for African Americans, autobiography was their prelude to entering into more highly regarded white literary forms. Several different kinds of work are described by the term 'Native American autobiography'. Their production was complex, and the interwoven strands that form them are not easily unravelled. I would distinguish three main forms: first, some early self-written accounts by Christianised Indians; second, a group of life histories and personal recollections recorded by anthropologists, largely during the inter-war period; and third, more recent autobiographies written and published by Native Americans, some of which are in the Anglo-American autobiographical tradition, whilst others, like those by N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko, draw on Native American traditions to compose life stories which compass a rather

130. These anthropologists could in other ways still slip insidiously into traditional constructions of the Indian, whether as backward savage or authentic primitive. Additionally, in trying to grasp the distinctiveness of other societies, some of Boas's followers projected a homogeneity of character that did not exist, most famously, perhaps, in Ruth Bunzel and Ruth Benedict's idealisation of the tranquility of Zuni life.

131. James Clifford, 'The Others: Beyond the "Salvage" Paradigm', *Third Text*, 6, Spring 1989.

different view of the self from that of the west.¹³² The autobiographies I shall look at here belong to the second group.

Autobiography, as the European or Anglo-American tradition knows it, was not an indigenous Native American form. As Murray says, 'The concept of an individual life as an unfolding story which can be isolated, recalled and retold, made into a product for contemplation, is not one necessarily shared by other cultures, and in particular not by oral cultures.'¹³³ Yet, as H. David Brumble has argued convincingly, there were a number of traditional forms of life stories told by Native American groups. He notes the existence of six different forms: coup tales, which are accounts of bravery in warfare; simple story-telling about one's experiences; self-examinations; self-vindications; educational story-telling; and, the most elaborate form, the story of the acquisition of powers, either through vision quests or a shaman's initiatory experiences.¹³⁴ Hertha Wong suggests as well rather different forms of life recording, through multiple naming, on robes, on tipis, on shields, and in other uses of pictographs.¹³⁵ One might also mention shamanic songs themselves, which retell the shaman's visionary journeys, and even the eighteenth century's favourite, the death-songs.

None of these may seem very like the autobiographies recorded by anthropologists in the 1920s and 1930s. These accounts were solicited, translated, and edited by white anthropologists and their assistants. Such life-stories were valued within the profession because they gave an added imprimatur of authenticity to a 'total' cultural picture based on the anthropologist's observations. Published with introductions and notes of varying length, these autobiographies could endorse and validate the anthropologists' interpretation of Native American life.

Collecting an autobiography in that period entailed finding a 'typical' figure who could represent not just a present tribal group but the 'true' nature of that group before its disruption. This is less oppressive than the assumptions of cultural evolution, where such an individual would have only represented an evolutionary stage, but it was still an impossibly contradictory task. Towards World War II, as interest grew in psychology (the 'culture and personality' movement in anthropology), the problems that hover round this use of first-person narrative became harder to ignore. Boas himself was unsure of his followers' use of this form, because the individual might not be representative of the group (indeed might be 'aberrant', as Ruth Underhill emphatically

132. See N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969, and *The Names: A Memoir*, New York: Harper & Row, 1976; Leslie Marmon Silko, *Storyteller*, New York: Seaver Books, 1981. See also: Julie Cruikshank, *Life Lived like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Elders* in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith and Annie Ned, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

133. Murray, *Forked Tongues*, p. 65.

134. H. David Brumble, *American Indian Autobiography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p. 22.

135. Hertha Wong, *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Tradition and Innovation in Native American Autobiography*, New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

ensures her readers that Maria Chona is not). This is one of the arguments Clifford Geertz uses in defending his own interpretative anthropology against the earlier tradition of a search for the 'native's point of view'.¹³⁶ The very form of autobiography subverts the aim of exemplifying a representative other. The subject of the life-story becomes a comparable self, asking to be understood in terms of Western individualism. Paul Radin, for example, changed his view of life-stories over the years, from his insistence on the typicality of Crashing Thunder's autobiography, which 'should be taken as an inside view of Winnebago culture, rather than a careful analysis of a human life',¹³⁷ to his later recognition that it was impossible to escape particularity: 'It is not, for instance, a Crow Indian who has made such and such a statement, uttered such and such a prayer, but a particular Crow Indian. It is this particularity that is the essence of all history.'¹³⁸ Radin's move to history is a symptom of the problems anthropology faced in writing about dispossessed people, apparently from their viewpoint yet without acknowledging the process and results of their dispossession. In nineteenth-century Indian autobiographies the narrative structure moves toward closure, as Arnold Krupat has shown, with the acceptance of the inevitable disappearance of the Indian.¹³⁹ At this later period no coda can so easily resolve the contradictions of the texts.

Ruth Underhill's autobiography of Maria Chona was in itself unusual in this group, as the autobiography of a woman. The general assumption, even among the liberal Boasians who did so much to support the presence of women in anthropology, was that men were representative of their cultural group in a way women could not be; women featured at best as a subgroup. (This was the same habit of mind which had produced the syllogism: all Indians means all male Indians, therefore all Indians are hunters.) For this reason far fewer life histories of women exist, and those that do concentrate on 'women's concerns' – childbirth, marriage, first menstruation. Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen Sands' account of Native American women's autobiographies suggests this subject-matter indicates that these women were less interested in contemporary events than were the men – a dubious supposition, for these are not texts from which such straightforward deductions can be made.¹⁴⁰ There is

136. See "'From the Native's Point of View": on the Nature of Anthropological Understanding', in Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology*, New York: Basic Books, 1983.

137. Radin quoted by Clyde Kluckhohn, 'The Personal Document in Anthropological Science', in *The Use of Personal Documents in History, Science, and Sociology*, ed. L. Gottshalk, New York: Social Science Research Council, 1947, p. 87.

138. Radin quoted by Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968, p. 300.

139. Krupat, *For Those Who Come After*, p. 48.

140. Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen Sands, *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. This book contains much valuable information, though I feel their reading of these texts never takes on the complex circumstances of their production.

little to indicate that anthropologists would interview female informants about public events.

Reading these texts now, it is essential to be aware that they have been structured, consciously or unconsciously, to serve particular 'white' purposes, and to give credence to particular 'white' views. How then does one read – or deconstruct – such texts? I am certainly not arguing that the 'real' Native American women are to be discovered behind the layers of anthropological distortions. Such an ambitious and dubious aim would pursue as volatile an essence as the Boasian quest for 'culture as a whole'. It hardly advances on Clyde Kluckhohn's illusory wish to separate out in these autobiographies what is 'individual' from what is 'cultural': human subjects are formed within culture and are not separable from it. All the same, as David Brumble suggests, these life-stories may be shaped by Native conventions as well as those of the anthropologist. They are bicultural. Although there may be no authentic Indian 'presence' in these texts, they are intertextual, and it may be possible to discern to some extent how these texts interweave. More than one way of narrating the story of a self may be at work.

These life-stories present one aspect of a problem which feminist critics have identified in reading any women's autobiographies: interpreting a text in which a marginalised subject speaks a dominant discourse. There have been two main approaches to such texts among feminists over the last twenty years, one which might be called the Enlightenment response and the other the post-structuralist. Some feminist critics – particularly pioneer feminist literary critics in the United States during the 1970s – stressed the imperative right of women to have a 'voice', their need to express their different experience, and the importance of uncovering suppressed and forgotten female writing. This parallels very closely the concern of recent anthropologists, and particularly feminist anthropologists, to attend to the experience of the groups they observe, and to give a space to the 'voices' of the observed.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, the feminist literary theory that emerged under the influence of French post-structuralism sees such privileging of the expressive as naïve and treacherous realism: texts, it is argued, give no direct access to an 'author' or to 'true' women's experience. To ignore the formation of women's texts within a phallogocentric discourse is to collude with that discourse. It is only in the gaps and ruptures that what is excluded or unnamed may emerge. Like most feminist critics today, I am conscious of the heritage of both these approaches. Reading these texts, with their doubly marginalised subjects, one must, like the latter critics, employ Ricoeur's 'hermeneutics of suspicion' rather than expect any easy access to native subjectivity. But also, like the former, one must recognise the political importance of these women's potential challenge to Western and patriarchal assumptions.

141. See Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology*, for a full discussion of this issue within feminist anthropology.

But when one approaches texts inscribed by cultural as well as gender difference, there are other factors to take into account as well. Perhaps the analogy could be more closely made with nineteenth-century slave narratives, which were often by women: these texts were of crucial importance in testifying both to the slave's humanity and to the slave's oppression, yet, because of these narratives' role in the abolition debate, were necessarily framed to a white audience's view of acceptable black selfhood.¹⁴² All the same, as Toni Morrison, for one, has argued, such autobiographical narratives played a vital part in the evolving of later African American fictional forms and strategies, a necessary step in finding a language and a position from which to write.¹⁴³ The point perhaps is to realise that one must not reinvoké the Austin/Luhan shibboleth – that what is not *authentic* is worthless, what is not *truly* Indian is tawdry. Any life-story is told for an audience, framed by cultural expectation, moulded by generic pressures. That does not mean it is not worth reading.

Jacqueline Rose has argued that the revolutionary catalyst of Freud's work was his 'talking cure'. His case histories have become valuable to feminists because Freud allowed his patients to become subjects who spoke.¹⁴⁴ The analogy between the case history and the Indian autobiography is an important one; they grow out of the same form, the scientific and medical case study of the nineteenth century. Although Freud's cases are presented as dialogues and narratives, and the autobiographies in apparently discrete voices (the informant's text, the anthropologist's appendices), the ordering of the material shares many similarities.¹⁴⁵ The overall structure is that of the analyst's or anthropologist's explanation; it is in the byways and interstices that other possibilities and desires emerge. Postmodern anthropologists invoke Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic text for their work. These earlier anthropologists present the autobiographies they collected as monologic, solely the words of the Native American speaker. They are not that, but they are at least dialogic, and in that their value lies.¹⁴⁶

142. See the discussion of slave narratives in Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Criticism, Theory, Practice*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, pp. 288–91.
143. Toni Morrison 'Rootedness: the Ancestor as Foundation' in *Black Women Writers: Arguments and Interviews*, ed. Mari Evans (1984), London: Pluto Press, 1985, pp. 339–40.
144. Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, London: Verso, 1987.
145. Krupat, in *For Those Who Come After*, has argued that the analogy should be with legal cases, but I think that is mistaken. As I argued above, in the US ethnography developed on analogy with natural history, not as in Britain, as a branch of legal studies. The ethnographic life-history is a US and not a British form.
146. On dialogics in these texts see Arnold Krupat, 'The Dialogic of Silko's *Storyteller*' in *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Literature*, ed. Gerald Vizenor, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989 and in chapter five, 'Monologue and Dialogue in Native American Autobiography' of his book, *The Voice in the Margin*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. (Krupat has an interesting and important argument about the possibility of the construction of a 'collective subject' through such texts, as alternatives to the bourgeois individual ego.) See also chapter seven, 'Dialogues and Dialogics' in Murray, *Forked Tongues*.

Autobiography of a Papago Woman

The autobiographies that were collected by anthropologists during this period vary in purpose and structure. For some anthropologists they were simply an alternative net for anthropological facts – facts which might or might not include the parameters of a different world view, or emotional experiences. The only link some had with the Western literary genre would be the title. For other anthropologists, the very naming of these accounts as ‘autobiographies’ claims, and produces, likeness to the Western genre. The text I look at here is a particularly striking example of this transmutation. The older life-and-times, first-person history has always been primarily associated with men, whose lives are more obviously touched by public events. Women informants were not encouraged to frame their lives in that way. Their lives are more easily restructured as romantic autobiography, the secular but still veridical descendant of the confession. In its emphasis on childhood, natural surroundings, peaks of experience, and introspection, it is already a ‘feminised’ form. Its conventions figure both in the production and reading of these texts.

Ruth Underhill draws extensively on this model for *The Autobiography of a Papago Woman*, which begins with a brief, vivid description of Maria Chona’s childhood home, and preserves this awareness of place throughout.¹⁴⁷ Chona’s consciousness is the centre of the story: we are given her reaction to events, not merely told how or why they happen. The story moves from heightened moment to heightened moment, giving most space to the excitements, delights and pains of her earlier life, and ending with the melancholy regretfulness of age.

Underhill collected this life-story when she was sent by Boas, as what we would now call a ‘mature’ graduate student, on her first field trip to the Southwest. She spent several months in Arizona with the Papago in 1931, returning intermittently over the next four years. Maria Chona, who acted as her ‘informant, hostess, guide’, was almost ninety, somewhat confused, but an impressive character, still proud of her father’s position as government-appointed chief of her village. She knew little English; Ruth Underhill was just becoming acquainted with Papago; but they both spoke some Spanish, and were helped by local interpreters. (Whilst in theory mastery of language was

147. *The Autobiography of a Papago Woman*, *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, No. 46, 1936. (Referred to in text as PW) Republished with additional introductions and an afterword as *Papago Woman*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979. For an example of a life-story with no links with western literary genre, see Truman Michelson’s ‘Autobiography of a Fox Woman’, about which I have written in ‘In Other Words: Native American Women’s Autobiography’ in *Life/Lines: Theoretical Essays on Women’s Autobiography*, edited by Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, Ithaca: University of Cornell Press, 1988. Much of my discussion of Ruth Underhill first appeared there, though I come to rather different conclusions here.

essential for the Boasians, in practice their grasp could be uncertain – even, it is now suggested, in the case of Boas himself.)¹⁴⁸ In 1936 the autobiography was published as a professional anthropological paper in a highly respected series, the *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*.

Underhill claims no literal fidelity to Chona's random and repetitive memories, admitting frankly that the arrangement and emphases are her own. She is telling an Indian tale 'to satisfy whites, rather than Indians' (PW:4). She weaves in the natural descriptions characteristic of urban culture, not found in Papago or other Native American literary forms, where the surrounding region may provide a symbolic landscape, but is not overtly described.¹⁴⁹ The picturesque atmosphere owes much to the many colourful small details she has elicited – tattooing with cactus thorns and greasewood juice, Gauguinesque girls with their red-painted bare breasts – and to her evocative translations of names – places such as 'Where the Water Whirls', friends called 'Leaf Buds', 'Rustling Leaves', 'Windy Rainbow', or 'Dawn Mist', dates like the 'month of the Pleasant Cold', or 'the year the world went wrong'. She candidly acknowledged her reworking, her excisions, her imperfect knowledge of the language, and the result has been very variously appraised. L.L. Langness called this memoir one of the 'finest professional documents' of its time.¹⁵⁰ Clyde Kluckhohn more cautiously noted that her 'treatment has surely enhanced the literary effectiveness of the story (from a European point of view) but equally surely the scientific value has been diminished'.¹⁵¹

Underhill certainly tells Chona's story skilfully, introducing information about war ceremonies, rain-making, medicine men and other aspects of Papago life unobtrusively into the flow. Chona recounts her childhood with a hero-father, meekly conscientious mother, the sisters and brothers of her extended family. She describes her nerve-wracking arranged marriage to a shaman, whom she later came to love deeply. To survive, they would go each dry season to work in Mexico. Though she had six children, only one daughter survived. When her husband brought home a second wife, Chona left, taking her daughter, and a butcher's knife in case her husband followed. Her second arranged marriage was to a much older, though richer man, a singer, for whom she had little affection. She pined for her former husband, though was somewhat consoled by the births of several healthy children. The winters were spent working profitably for whites in Tucson. Back home

148. See Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, p. 96.

149. Bataille and Sands say of this account: 'Like all works of American Indian Literature, Maria Chona's autobiography is permeated with a sense of place, the inextricable weaving of language and landscape, the concept that the land is not merely the setting for the story, but that the story is formed and shaped by the land, and the land is given significance and vitality in language' (*American Indian Women*, p. 49). This is a mystifying and sentimental confusion of two separate cultural traditions.

150. L.L. Langness, *The Life History in Anthropological Science*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, p. 9.

151. Kluckhohn, 'The Use of the Personal Document', p. 90.

one summer, when their group was decimated by a white disease, 'falling-sickness', she discovered her own gifts as a song-maker and shaman, particularly her skill in curing babies. In this she took great pride, and through it gained prestige. Now a widow, she lives with her daughter. The account ends poignantly with Chona saying. 'It is not good to be old. Not beautiful. When you come again I will not be here' (PW:86).

Underhill's handling of her material – in some ways so painstaking, in others so cavalier – springs from complex motivations. Although the story was published in a professional forum, its appearance there, naked of the expected accompanying notes, is a clear statement of Underhill's individualistic approach to anthropology. Not for her the 142 footnotes that went into Kluckhohn and Leland Wyman's paper in the same volume. If Boasian anthropology could be construed as either a social science or one of the humanities, for her it was very much the latter. Her unconventional presentation was bold for a graduate student, young in the subject if not in years, but it also indicated how closely she was in sympathy with the Boasian desire to understand the Native American experiential world. Ruth Benedict wrote an introduction to the autobiography in 1933 (although it was not published until the republication of the autobiography in 1979), in which she praises the work in terms that strikingly recall Virginia Woolf's essay on the fact-laden realism of 'Modern Fiction' through which 'life escapes'. In the past, Benedict says, anthropology has detailed kinship, agricultural, ritual patterns – the 'formal outlines' of a culture – but 'too often in this business-like account everything is told except the essential matter; all that is left out is what manner of men and women these are, and how they live and die and pursue their chosen goals' (PW:vii).

When Ruth Underhill went into anthropology, after various experiences of welfare work ('to know more about PEOPLE' as she later wrote) she 'fell permanently in love' with the Papago (PW:ix-x). Besides her anthropological works, she went on to produce a number of popular books, and later television programmes, whose aim was to draw the white public into an imaginative appreciation of Native American culture and people. Ruth Benedict commended this autobiography's scholarly value, but what is vital for Underhill is not just accumulation of 'objective' ethnography but that her text should convey Maria Chona's human dignity and worth. She wants to extend knowledge, but in order to evoke sympathetic insight. Not surprisingly, she was glad to republish the autobiography in 1979 in a more accessible format, adding extra explanatory chapters and an introduction that served as her own brief autobiography (though still no notes).

This fusion of professional and humanistic zeal finds expression at this early stage of her career in language close to that of modernist primitivism. She shares with some of the writers of the period the desire to hold on to a romantic and unblemished Indian world, at one with the beauty of its

natural surroundings.¹⁵² As I said earlier in this chapter, in the 1920s and 30s it was the Southwest desert cultures, of which the Papago was one, which became the focus of a revival of artistic primitivism: Mary Austin, Mabel Dodge Luhan, D.H. Lawrence, had all already written admiringly of an instinctual link between these people and their land, which contrasted so tellingly with twentieth-century rootlessness. Ruth Underhill was attracted by the Papago as one of the least acculturated groups of Native Americans. Like the Pueblos, their culture had been only slightly modified by the Spaniards of Mexico, who had little concern for their impoverished northern territories. After the transfer of the territory in 1853, the United States government was slow to regulate the lives of these peaceable groups. But changes – to Underhill’s regret – had come. During the period that Underhill was writing this autobiography she was for part of the time employed as an Applied Anthropologist to help administer the new procedures brought in under the Indian Reorganisation Act for the Papago, so she was well aware of their contemporary problems.¹⁵³ But Underhill dwells on the Papago’s poetic past, avoiding if she can the current modernisation of their culture. In *Singing for Power*, an account of Papago rituals based on the same research, she writes:

In describing the ceremonies, I do so in the present tense. There has been a change, almost within a generation. People who went naked under the Arizona sun have put on the white man’s clothing and built adobe houses. . . . I have preferred to use the method of the old men who gave me the poetry and to draw the picture as though all of it were still to be found in the present. . . . The beauty of the ceremony came from the loneliness of the naked figures against the stark desert. Blue jeans, calico dresses, and the waiting automobiles of the Whites make them look pathetic. Yet they are majestic. Therefore I have felt that their words, holding both sound and meaning and containing much of that majesty, should be preserved.¹⁵⁴

Chona, at ninety, has memories and words which go back long before jeans and automobiles to that unsullied ‘majesty’.

Ruth Underhill’s text embodies the period’s primitivist critique of modern life. She stresses the Papago’s sensitivity to natural rhythms, and the calm, peaceful tempo of their lives.¹⁵⁵ Underhill has chosen to emphasise the rituals and harmonies of Chona’s life. Relations with government officials, references to

152. In *Modern Indians*, David Murray discusses this approach to the Indian, with its ‘contrast between past cultural coherence and present degradation. . . . Proper, pure Indians are noble. Anything less does not deserve to exist. Eventually many of the Indians subjected to this idealisation tired of their role. One publicly offered to exchange his home for Mabel Luhan’s, with its mod. cons., when she tried to block the modernisation of the Taos Pueblo by the introduction of sanitation’ (pp. 7 and 15).

153. Taylor, *New Deal*, pp. 51, 77–8.

154. Underhill, *Singing for Power*, pp. 8, 19.

155. Ruth Underhill, who was deeply affected by her experiences in the Red Cross in Italy during the First World War, also stresses their perception of the literally awe-ful responsibilities of those who take life in war.

the support the Papago gave to the US against the Apache, the eventual establishment of the reservation – all which must have been part of Chona's experience – never appear. The dual allegiance of the Papago to Catholic and native religious rituals is touched on only evasively. Shortages, most bereavements, illnesses (apart from their shamanic cures) are passed over. The only distresses that the narrative encompasses are romantic ones – Chona's mourning for her first husband, not abated until the second husband severely lectures his rival's bones; her loss of a son, drawn to his death by the dangerous charm of a 'wild woman'; the muted sadness as she herself faces death. Yet, although Underhill concentrates on the past, although the presence of the whites is so subdued that even the work done for them in Tucson is never specified, the Papago's oppression by the Euro-Americans cannot be entirely effaced. It emerges obliquely, in scattered references to the disruptive power of white urban culture, white sicknesses and white alcohol.

Underhill was not unusual among Boasian anthropologists in seeking the pure essence of the precolonial. Ruth Benedict's introduction actually recommends the autobiography by saying 'Chona spent her girlhood . . . under conditions differing very little from those of pre-Spanish days' (PW:vii). Significantly, when Ruth Underhill later wrote her own first-person account of her time with Chona, in which she of necessity had to acknowledge the westernised Papago life she experienced herself, she relies even more heavily on a romantic sense of place than in the autobiography itself. She begins her account:

'I was born there,' breathed Chona reverentially, 'on the Land.' (PW:3)

The details of her own visits to the modern versions of traditional ceremonies are submerged into an exotic landscape.

Ahead rose the feathery green of a paloverde tree, with a stump of thorny sahuaro cuddled beneath it. . . . Before us was a gentle hillside without undergrowth . . . I saw Lulita eying the tops of the cacti where white flowers once had been. Now there were red fruits, pear-shaped, perching against the tops. . . . It was wonderful to sleep that night under the open sky. . . . Its color was deep indigo, not black; and the stars were almost within reach of one's hand. (AWP:19)

Here again the conflict between the Papago and the whites over the land (central to the account, because getting access to the reservation is one of Underhill's main problems) becomes an indication of whites' spiritual insensitivity, but not of political exploitation.

Another dynamic behind this account is Ruth Underhill's fascination with Maria Chona as an individual and a woman, her sense, as she put it later, that they were 'two of a kind'.¹⁵⁶ Underhill was keenly aware that anthropologists had shown little professional interest in women. In an introduction to Nancy Lurie's *Mountain Wolf Woman* in 1961 she wrote:

156. Bataille and Sands, *American Indian Women*, p. 64.

In early monographs that tried to map and relate the patterns of American Indian life, women often appear merely as links in the kinship system. The ceremonial spotlight caught them briefly at the high points of puberty, childbirth and widowhood, and the economic spotlight when their marriages were arranged and paid for. Otherwise they formed, in most cases, an undifferentiated mass of female workers, excluded from council, and often, from ceremonies.

True, women could be shamans in California and, to a lesser degree, in some other areas. True, the women of the Plains and of the Pueblos had some ceremonies of their own. Still even in matrilineal and matrilocal society, the main figures in war, government and ceremony were men. So were the ethnologists who studied them.¹⁵⁷

Even women anthropologists usually worked with male informants, she notes. Underhill is intrigued by Chona as a Papago woman, but not because she is in search of typical, traditional female customs, which have a limited place in the text. On the contrary, she is attracted by Chona because, like Underhill herself, she is an unusual, ambitious and forceful woman, who does not entirely conform to her society's expectations, and yet retains respect and prestige. As with Morton and her Indians, Chona is to be admired because she is unlike the modern world, but like Underhill herself.

In the brief autobiographical note that precedes the 1979 edition, Underhill described how, as a young woman leaving Vassar before the First World War, she rejected the two professions offered her: 'The choice was marriage or teaching. Both looked tame' (PW:ix). She turned to more adventurous activities, including working for the Red Cross in Italy. Two decades later, enjoyably yet nervously conscious of her maverick position as an older woman setting out in this still new and bizarre profession, with a personality 'inclined to be independent and executive' (as she says of Chona), she found an *alter ego* in this proud and decisive woman, who, among a people who gave women comparatively limited power, 'ruled her whole connection with a competent hand' (PW:34).

Chona's ambition is shown chiefly in her desire to be a maker of songs. Ruth Underhill admired passionately the Papago's high regard for poetry and song, contrasting them again with soulless modern society:

The honoured men are singers. The man who has fought for his people gets no honor from that fact, but only from the attendant fact that he was able to 'receive' – or compose, shall we say – a song. We who take the structure of our own society as a sample of 'human nature' might pause over this idea. What of a society which puts no premium whatever on aggressiveness and where the practical man is valued only if he is also a poet? What of a society where the misfit, wandering hopelessly on the outskirts of life, is not the artist, but the unimaginative young business man? This society not only exists but has existed for hundreds of years.¹⁵⁸

Underhill interweaves Chona's story with songs, as Papago myths do, and Chona's 'urge to accomplish' as a song-maker is an important recurring

157. *Mountain Wolf Woman, Sister of Crashing Thunder: the Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian*, ed. Nancy Oestrich Lurie, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961, p. vii.

158. Underhill, *Singing for Power*, pp. 7–8.

motif. For Underhill, whose own writing is so self-consciously literary, this is an extra strand to her identification with Chona. That Chona was, she suggests, only partially successful, lacking sufficient opportunity and possibly even talent, is perhaps another.

This empathy with Chona has an important, though oblique, influence on the text. Underhill was perturbed by the clash between her admiration for Papago culture and her unease at the position of their women, and, in her 1936 preface, says one of her main concerns is to see how Papago women coped with their people's 'fear of woman's impurity with all its consequent social adjustment'.¹⁵⁹ Although in the introductions she lays increasing emphasis on Maria Chona's toughness and independence, she is well aware that Chona cannot be constructed on the model of the Western feminists, with their demand for equal opportunities and power. Underhill realises that, by the time she meets Chona, her age has made possible a forcefulness unacceptable in a younger Papago woman. Chona's moment of decision when she leaves her first husband is dramatically told, and her self-possession always underlined. But, in general, within the autobiography itself she is shown accepting male directives, about whom to marry, how to avoid contaminating men, when she should have her shaman's crystals cut out, how as a woman she must work the harder. In her anxious honesty Underhill here abandons her literary paring down of repetitions, leaving as a leitmotif Chona's reiterated declarations of her acceptance of a woman's lot.

This problem nags away not only within the main text but also in Underhill's accompanying writing. In her original introduction, following Ruth Benedict's arguments in *Patterns of Culture*, she says merely that, although Chona was not 'the ideal Papago type' of woman,¹⁶⁰ 'in the end she did all that her culture would allow her towards satisfying her desires and she was not unhappy' (PW:34). By 1961 she has found a white American analogy by which to make sense of this lack of outrage at confinement within conventional womanly roles: 'In most cases, the Indian woman's life appeared very similar to our pioneer great-grandmothers. Her work, like theirs, was done apart from men.'¹⁶¹ In the 1979 edition, she worries at the issue both in the introduction and afterword. She finally reconstructs a conversation with Chona in which she, the westerner, is routed by the Papago insistence that women need no share of male social or ceremonial power because women have babies: "'We made the men". That delightful attitude I should have been glad to take home with me', she says carefully, protected by the qualifying conditional (PW:91). Pointing out that Papago

159. *Autobiography of a Papago Woman*, p. 3. This fear is referred to in the 1979 edition, but much less emphasis is placed on it.

160. For Benedict the configurations of a culture naturalise and encourage certain forms of behaviour; individuals largely go along with these, with greater or less ease depending on the degree to which their personality coincides with the social norm.

161. Introduction to Lurie, *Mountain Wolf Woman*, p. vii.

women are now beginning to take on positions of authority, she suggests that their move towards equality will be accomplished through the Papago 'peaceful' way. In this brief passage, without ever abandoning her Western rational commitment to equality, she lets the emotional dynamics reassert Papago moral superiority.

The concern which Underhill expressed in the 1936 version about the Papago belief in 'women's impurity', as she puts it, in terms strikingly like those of traditional Christianity, is abated in this later work. She accepts that her western rationalism is inadequate for an understanding of a Papago woman's life. In Bataille and Sands' book on American Indian women's autobiography, their essentialist, separatist feminism leads them to idealise the role of Native American women, particularly their pride in women's maternal power. They misread Chona's life in these terms. Ignoring the events recorded in her story they write:

Of all the autobiographies of American Indian women, Maria Chona's *Papago Woman* best demonstrates the power and strength of traditional Indian women within their own society. . . . The contemporary reader must wonder at the independence and mobility of Maria Chona's life, especially in the light of the stereotypes of Indian women as domestic drudges.¹⁶²

Their desire to avoid that stereotype is understandable and admirable, but in yet again using the Native American as a critique of western faults, they refuse to see her in her psychological, social and colonial complexity.

The literary, primitivist, and early feminist discourses that in one way or another frame this tale claim to present Chona's subjectivity, yet they point to what they cannot encompass – the central oppressive power in Chona's life, which is that of the Euro-Americans, not of Papago men. Underhill can create symbolic liberation for Chona from male domination only by having her defeat the white woman. Underhill's disturbance at the flaw in her imaged Papago world is the register of her unease at her colonial relationship to it.

The text throughout undermines the notion of the separate, complete wholeness of Papago life, in spite of Underhill's desire to emphasise their otherness. Underhill is very much a cultural relativist in her desire to challenge western notions of human nature. Following Margaret Mead's influential work, she frequently alerts her readers to the difference of cultural norms. Much emphasis, for example, is given in the text to Shining Evening, Chona's man-woman brother-in-law. Papago shamans, she points out, traditionally have four wives, although other Papago men only one. Yet when, in the introduction, Underhill commended Chona's bravery in leaving her first husband in a way considered 'unnatural' for a Papago shaman's wife, she is already straining the concept 'natural' for what was an atypical Papago marriage. In western cultures Roman Catholic priests are celibate, but no-one suggests it is 'unnatural' when one renounces his vows to marry. More importantly, the Papago, though less

162. Bataille and Sands, *American Indian Women*, p. 51.

westernised than many Native American groups, were, this story itself shows, in much closer contact with white mores than Underhill cares to acknowledge in her general statements. Before this time, Chona has had her baby baptised by a priest ('we were modern'), and has given her father (who was, after all, a US government appointee and named José Maria) a Christian-influenced burial. For Maria Chona, colonial disruption had already called into question the notion of the 'natural'. Chona is clearly not seen as deviant by her pluralistic community, as Underhill asserts this herself in her introduction when she points out that Chona is not the kind of 'aberrant' informant on whom earlier anthropologists naïvely relied. Yet Underhill's use of 'aberrant' denotes her belief in a unified culture, which her text scarcely bears out.

Why did Chona tell her story to Underhill? It is perhaps not surprising that an old woman, proud of her family and people, would enjoy recounting her early days – though there are reports of her irritation at Underhill's repetitive questioning. Underhill's text makes the question difficult to answer in a definite way: just because she has taken so much care in creating a 'Chona' her white readers will respect and admire, she presents a text which is in many ways homogeneously and opaquely her own. Ironically, Underhill is a more successful coloniser than explorer of the Native American mind. Chona may or may not have been the observant child and resourceful, stoical woman Underhill has drawn from 'the disjointed statements of an ancient Papago woman, too old to organise and tell a connected story'. What is certain is that large parts of Chona's life are yet again silenced. The text is full of fascinating, intriguing details of Papago life, which in factual terms are undoubtedly largely reliable. It is what Underhill aimed for most, Chona's innerness, that fragments and dissipates. The possibility of such a coherent, graspable identity dissolves in the multistranded, pluralistic world in which Maria Chona exists.

Yet, even if Chona is ultimately unknowable, I think one can hazard a guess at the narrative within which she herself framed her life-story. Although Chona, as Brumble says of Two-Leggings, is perhaps not so much telling the story as the stories of her life, one of those is clearly the narrative which according to Brumble is the most complex and important of Native American forms of the life-story, that of the shaman's acquisition of his or her powers. This narrative emerges in spite of Underhill's surprisingly dismissive attitude to Chona's powers as a poet and shaman. 'Chona was no poet by nature. . . . She learned a manipulation of sick babies that was much respected. Very possibly she had observed its performance by her first husband . . . but did not . . . recognise this' (PW:34). In ironic contrast to Underhill's expressed contempt for the businesslike, what she actually seems to acknowledge most in Chona is her 'competence'. Yet the life-history itself stresses the centrality of Chona's visions (in one of which the Virgin Mary figured) in resolving crises and regaining self-respect.

Why does Underhill downplay what seems likely to have been of deepest importance to Chona? I think there are possibly two reasons. One goes back to Rachel Blau DuPlessis' point which I quoted earlier in the chapter: that one convention the modernists rarely questioned was the ascription of gender roles. Although Underhill is a professional woman, her attitude to gender itself is not in any way radical. Americans, after all, before and since Jefferson had expressed disapproval at the Native American treatment of their women, often according to Lucy Maddox as a covert warning to white American women not to subvert the civilised order by entering the world of work. Most feminists of the suffragette years had demanded political rights but did not question gender definition. Although it was while Underhill was writing up this autobiography that Mead produced, in 1935, the first text to argue that gender was culturally constructed, her ground-breaking *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*,¹⁶³ Underhill does not seem to be able to take the possibility of a Native American woman poet any more seriously than most male modernists could.¹⁶⁴ Underhill, in spite of her intellectual assertions, finds it hard to maintain a woman's autonomous worth. In 1936, she justifies her recounting of a woman's life by reference to Chona's powerful husband and father. She speaks, significantly, of a singer as the 'honoured man' not woman, and of course is technically justified in that the majority were men. Yet one of the most impressive Native American shaman whose work has been recorded was the Papago woman, Owl Woman, of whom I spoke in the last chapter.

Yet I think perhaps there is another reason why Underhill does not particularly want to think of Chona as a poet or artist: she prefers to describe the Papago's poetic ambience rather than their active creation. This is not to say she belittles their literary traditions – far from it. She is even more aware than Alice Fletcher that she is dealing with a people with an impressive literature, with its own long history. Their songs, she says, 'are handed down from singer to singer more carefully than were the epics of Homer'. Some are centuries old, and contain parallel phrases to Aztec prayers. Like the modernists, she can admire 'the brief, brilliant accuracy' of their songs which she compares to Chinese.¹⁶⁵ She knows there are certain men who have inherited the charge of the telling and singing of myths and songs, but she sees them as part of a way of life of harmony and continuity, rather than as creative individuals. She puts all her emphasis on the harmony brought by communal and ceremonial poetry, and avoids the much more disturbing experiences of the shaman. Like Owl Woman,

163. Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, London: Routledge & Sons, 1935.

164. In this she contrasts with Mary Austin, for her generation a much more intense feminist than Underhill, who was particularly interested in the woman Native American artist.

165. *Singing for Power*, pp. 11–12, 15.

Chona originally became a shaman after a personal trauma, but we find out nothing about it.¹⁶⁶ Underhill comments unusually laconically: 'In childhood she had a minor maladjustment, soon overcome: she began to sing songs' (PW:34). Clearly the role of the poet is very different in Indian cultures from Western, and Underhill is right to stress that their kind of creativity does not necessarily share the insistent individualism of Western modernist art. Yet when in Chona she meets someone whose gifts as a shaman are central to her story, she passes that over. For her the Papago are not so important as *artists* as they are as a *work of art*. She would agree, I think, with Margaret Mead and Ruth Bunzel when they wrote:

The arts of primitive peoples, while interesting theoretically and sometimes aesthetically arresting, do not produce the consciously created masterpieces of the great civilizations. Among preliterate peoples, composers and poets work within traditional styles and contribute anonymously to their uniqueness. It is rather primitive cultures as whole aesthetic compositions that compare dramatically with the more individualized work of great artists, poets and musicians in the Great Tradition.¹⁶⁷

Underhill, like the other Boasian anthropologists, has as her aim the creation of this aesthetic composition, though she would defend it as a re-creation. Earlier in this book I pointed out the closeness between earlier poetic primitivism and ethnography. A poet writing in the primitivist tradition recognised, as Boas put it in his 'History of Anthropology', the 'aesthetic' pleasure in grasping the particularity of another way of being. The Boasian ethnographers, like the primitivist poets, create through their writing a world which possesses the virtues lost by modernity, a world which, as they write, has already vanished into the past. Many of the Boasians admired and loved the cultures they describe. But their humanitarian, libertarian ideals cannot come to terms with the guilt of the legacy of dispossession in the present lives of those they study. Like other primitivists, they cope with this dilemma by the idealisation of those cultures, and by transforming a conflictual present into an untroubled past. In Underhill's texts, as in the others I have looked at here, colonial power is ignored, though its presence cannot be repressed.

This autobiography exemplifies the contradiction that is present in all these primitivist, ethnographic texts. On the one hand the desire to listen to what this other culture has to say, to find out what they can offer in place of the destructiveness and dehumanisation of western life, and on the other, the anxious need to speak for these Indians, to hold at arms'

166. In *Papago Indian Religion* (Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology Series, 33 (1938), New York: AMS Press, 1946, p. 67), Underhill comments that women rarely become shamans until past child-bearing; their healing, she says, is, as with white women doctors, often confined to the care of children. This again was not true of Owl Woman.

167. Margaret Mead and Ruth L. Bunzel (ed.), *The Golden Age of American Anthropology*, New York: Braziller, 1960, p. 9.

length the radical questioning that allowing them to use their own words might bring. All the texts I have considered are written by liberal, humane individuals who find it impossibly painful to accept their own position as part of an oppressive group. In deciding to record autobiographies, these anthropologists at least attempted to present the Native Americans as the subjects of their own lives, an attempt which allows the Indians' perspective – or even the possibility of their perspective – to challenge Western preconceptions, including the anthropologists' own. Autobiography inevitably makes an ahistorical primitivism impossible. Subjects can only live in history, and the multistranded production of these texts denies the myth of separate existence. Yet Underhill has to reframe these words, to hold that history at bay, to maintain as far as she can that myth of Indian wholeness. Even this autobiography is an elegy, and ends with Chona's melancholy lament at the loss of beauty in the present. To return to the image I took from Gray's 'Bard', there is always an Edward I at the edges of these texts, even if the deep desire of the liberals of Underhill's generation and earlier was to create a picture of the world before Edward I – in this case, the Anglo-American – had reached it.

Conclusion

All the Euro-American texts I have looked at in this book, from Henry Knox's onwards, depicted the disappearance of the Indian and Indian culture as a 'melancholy fact'. It is only at the time that Ruth Underhill was writing that a pluralistic society began to seem a practical possibility. Even then, many Anglo-Americans, like Mary Austin, wanted the preservation of pure Indian nuggets, living museum exhibits, and thought that, as far as Native Americans were concerned, modernisation, mixed race and moral corruption were synonymous. But, as N. Scott Momaday, the first Native American novelist to win the Pulitzer prize, has said, 'we are all half-breeds now'. Native Americans and their cultures have not disappeared, but neither are they, nor any western culture, isolated and unchanged.

I talked in my introduction about the United States in 1789 as both a postcolonial nation and an aggressive empire. At the beginning of my narrative, Americans were trying to invent themselves as a people; the Native Americans were resisting colonialism, as they are still doing today. Even if America can now no longer be usefully understood as a post-colonial country, perhaps it should be seen as a post-postcolonial one: the imperative of self-invention is still there. Linda Hutcheon has written in relation to Canada, that 'when Canada is called postcolonial today the reference is very rarely to the Native culture, which might be the more accurate use of the term. . . . Native and Metis writers are today demanding

a voice . . . and perhaps, given their articulation of the damage to Indian culture and peoples done by the colonizers . . . theirs should be considered the resisting, postcolonial voice of Canada'.¹⁶⁸ With the qualification that the situation of the Native Americans can hardly be considered post-colonial anywhere in the Americas, even if it is certainly anti-colonial, this is equally true of the native peoples of the United States. Native Americans are still seriously disadvantaged. Land disputes still occur, and, as David Murray says: 'on every available indicator – poverty, illness, life-expectancy, educational attainment – Indians are the most deprived group in the United States'.¹⁶⁹ Yet at the present time there is more interest than ever before in Native American literature, and what Krupat calls 'native American verbal expression' plays an increasing part in resisting cultural oppression by white America. In spite of Ruth Underhill's evocation of Chona's strength within her own culture, she ultimately could not accept her as an agent between cultures. Underhill was retelling the story of a poet, but she preferred to think of her as a poem. It was the same kind of refusal to acknowledge agency and independence that Pound showed when he similarly said of HD: 'You are a poem, though your poem's nought.' Now the poets and other writers are engaging in dialogue, more – though by no means completely – on their own terms.

The years which limit my narrative, 1789 and 1936, the dates of the first US Congress and of the publication of 'The Autobiography of a Papago Woman', are also, by a curious chance, two of the most resonant dates in the history of the struggle for liberty in the west: the French Revolution and the Spanish Civil War. Both were visionary moments, even if, in different ways, their aims were frustrated. Yet the effects of both of them are with us today. I have written the word 'conclusion', but it is of course illusory. This book is at an end, but its story is not. Since the Second World War, with the development of a body of Native American English language writing, a new era in Native American literature has begun. But western imperialism is not at an end, even if there is perhaps more acceptance of the possibility of differences co-habiting and mingling. Adam Kuper talked at the end of *The Invention of Primitive Society* of the 'twilight refuges' which still sheltered that illusion. Whilst Native American rights are regularly infringed, as they ever were, Native Americans are still evoked, in an ecological haze, as a new version of the natural, unsullied counter-American self. And there are still dark spots in the American psyche where the ghost of the Native American savage has remained, the vessel for white fantasies, guilts and fears, projected on to Vietnamese, Sandanistas, the underclass; the return of

168. Linda Hutcheon, "Circling the Downspout of Empire" in *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, eds. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffen, Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990, p. 172.

169. David Murray, *Modern Indians*, p. 5.

the repressed knowledge of a violent and often brutal history. The late twentieth-century version of Social Darwinism is Development Theory. Underdeveloped cultures will perish: hope for the future lies only in economic 'reform', the IMF and the western and Pacific Rim controlled 'free' market. The GATT agreement is our equivalent of the Dawes Act: taking from the underprivileged in the guise of saving them from themselves. For much of the twentieth century the defining other of the United States was a different Red man, the Soviet, one who like the Native American had an entirely wrong and equally terrifying attitude to property, but, unlike them, committed to a belief in development which was a mirror-image of the capitalist one. The threat from the east is a different one now, economic rather than ideological. Anne McClintock argues that the proliferation of 'post-words' at the present moment is a symptom of the collapse of belief in progress either of the western or Marxist kind. Perhaps 'progress' as a consoling myth or vision has gone, certainly both among contemporary intellectuals, and those who, in new versions of redemptive history, turn to fundamentalism for regeneration. Yet the deeper western belief in inexorable onward movement is still there. As Johannes Fabian insists, the temporal distinctions remain in place: advanced/backward, developed/underdeveloped, literate/pre-literate, hot/cold, West/the Rest. McClintock cites the west's changed relationship with Third World countries as evidence of the collapse of the notion of progress, with the abandonment of a policy of aid for the development of all towards industrialised modernisation for one based on the assumption that some countries will only and inevitably become poorer. But it has been central to the history I have drawn here that American onward-and-upward Manifest Destiny always depended on abandoning (when not eliminating) those who did not keep up, wringing one's hands maybe, but nonetheless, leaving the backward to self-destruct through their own pitiful refusal to identify themselves with the Providential Nation.

Nevertheless, the west's homogeneous hold on power is waning, and that is surely one reason that its cultural forms have been so influenced in this century by non-western forms. But perhaps it is also, as Said suggests, that increased contact with other cultures, often through the process of colonialism, has had its own impact. It is a truism of the politics of translation that translation is a process largely from the dominant to the less-powerful language. Yet one of the fascinating and most telling features of early modernism was, I would argue, its passion for translation from other politically less powerful, or temporally or culturally 'backward groups'. Those early modernists were not just nailing together their random collages from the detritus of a ransacked empire – though there was something of that – but, as western meanings decayed and tumbled, there was a growing awareness that there were other ways to construe the world, other languages

that might form other meanings. But now to return to Ruth Underhill and her efforts to make orderly Maria Chona's telling of her life. More recent Native American autobiographies suggest that perhaps Underhill was trying to impose a narrow, privatised western notion of the self on to a culture for whom a life only had meaning in relation to other people, other histories. Perhaps Chona's way of telling her life was not as random as Underhill thought; it may have been she who did not see the connections. Some more flexibly recorded oral life-stories from Alaska are, like those published by Momaday and Silko, discontinuous, multiform accounts, which bring together family history, myths of origin, topography, personal experience, traditional tales.¹⁷⁰ The 'self' here is not something that can be isolated from family relationships, surroundings, history (including colonial history), roots or from the stories by which a culture makes sense of life. Although quite different from the traditional western autobiography, the forms that these life-stories take is so similar to what the western tradition now thinks of as modernist, or even more, postmodernist, that the structure feels recognisable, even when the details of behaviour or myth are obscure. It might be argued that western postmodernist forms have influenced their shape, but I would suggest it is at least likely to be mutual, that western perceptions and narrative strategies have been changed by contact with other forms. For the last hundred years, the western narrative, based on linear time, univocal discourse and individual progress has been questioned and reworked by writers and artists, both those writing in the metropolis and those writing back to it, and the creative energies have increasingly come from those not of the west. Narrative is a form of epistemology; it shapes the way we understand the world. That is why it is imperative to deconstruct the narratives that have naturalised colonial power. That is why it has been so essential for those in opposition to a colonial power to go on re-telling and re-inventing their own stories. And that is why, faced with the contradictions of their own society, these Euro-Americans tried to listen, even if in the end they found it too disturbing to let themselves hear. As one of those Alaskan women put it, 'The way I tell stories is what I know.'

170. See note 132, p. 236. See also my review of Julie Cruikshank's *Life Lived Like a Story* in *Women: A Cultural Review*, 4/1, 1993, pp. 95–101, for a discussion of these issues.

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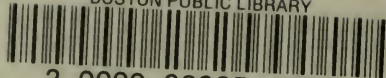
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