

NATIONAL AND RACIAL IDENTITY AND THE DESIRE FOR EXPANSION:
A STUDY OF AMERICAN TRAVEL NARRATIVES, 1790-1850

A Dissertation

by

JIN MAN JEONG

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2011

Major Subject: English

National and Racial Identity and the Desire for Expansion: A Study of American Travel

Narratives, 1790-1850

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ABSTRACT

National and Racial Identity and the Desire for Expansion: A Study of American Travel
Narratives, 1790-1850. (May 2011)

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This dissertation aims to investigate the shaping of a national literature within travel narratives written by William Bartram, Washington Irving, George Catlin, Thomas L. McKenney, Thomas Jefferson Farnham, and Francis Parkman. I focus attention on two issues: (1) National and racial identity, and (2) Territorial, cultural, and capitalist expansionism. National and racial identity construction is examined by clarifying how the narratives' underlying voices—the National Symbolic and the Racial Symbolic—encourage the reading public to embrace the values vital in forging American collective identity. Identity invention is also seen in romantic representations of the American landscape and Native Americans. Between 1790 and 1850, the widespread trope of the Noble Savage and “distantiation” working in the Burkean aesthetics of the sublime were used as ideological frames for viewing “Others,” crucial in defining the American “self” by making the white Americans' shift of association/dissociation with their primitivized Others possible. In order to analyze the narratives' representation of expansionism as a national desire, this study investigates

how romantic rhetoric and the appeal to morality (or the Law) were employed as decisive ideological foundations for rationalizing expansionism.

Chapter I establishes the legitimacy of evaluating travel narratives as a significant part of America's national literature. Chapter II reveals that democracy, masculine robustness, and the myth that Americans are a chosen people of progress are featured aspects in the portrayals of American pathfinders. Chapter III shows that the racial identity of "civilized whites" is forged in accordance with a miscegenation taboo informing negative portrayals of half-breeds and racial boundary crossing. Chapter IV illustrates that American freedom, simplicity, wholesome civilization, and youthfulness are presented as national characteristics through adapting the romantic tropes of the Noble Savage and the aesthetics of the sublime. Chapter V investigates the perverse mode of desiring in the iterative triangular relationship between romanticism, morality, and expansionism—the nation's civilizing project *par excellence*. Chapter VI appraises the travel narratives' roles in defining American selfhood and reflecting (and promoting) an imperialistic desire for expansion.

For my parents, Myungjo Jeong and Boksoon Shin, with love and gratitude for their support and encouragement

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: OVERLAND TRAVEL NARRATIVES AS A NATIONAL
LITERATURE

This study explores how American overland travel narratives from 1790 to 1850 contributed to the establishment of a national literature, how those narratives led white Americans to shape their national and racial identity, and how the narratives represented and promoted American expansionism.

From the beginning of nation-building in the 1780s through the mid-nineteenth century, America gained enormous territories from Britain, France, Spain, and Mexico, and solved the Oregon dispute (1818-1846) with Britain, thereby acquiring virtually the entire territory of the present-day United States. While moving further into these newly acquired territories, Americans inevitably encountered trouble with Native Americans who claimed their right to live in their inherited lands. Also Americans had to compete with British fur companies in the loosely bordered areas of the Far West not only to achieve economic hegemony but to secure the promised “passage to India.” Under these conditions, shaping a distinctive American character became imperative at the level of the individual, the family, and the nation. Calls for nationalism involved constructing a national literature, as recognized by intellectuals such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Ellery Channing, and Margaret Fuller.¹ I am arguing in this study that romantic travel

This dissertation follows the style of the *MLA Handbook*.

¹ According to Benjamin T. Spencer, after the War of 1812 and in periods of national expansion, the call for American national literature was most enthusiastic (“A National

narratives of the formative period attempted to meet the demand for such a national literature.²

In this study, six American travel writers' works will be mainly discussed because their narratives were influential in constructing a national literature given their explicit and implicit meaning for national self-definition and expansionism. From 1773 to 1778, William Bartram traveled through the South—Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, owned then by Spain, and more than a decade later published his *Travels* (1791). Washington Irving traveled to what is now Oklahoma in 1832, after his return from his sojourn in Europe for seventeen years. Irving accompanied Henry L. Ellsworth, a commissioner of the newly formed Board of Indian Affairs, who had a mission to report on the progress of Indian removal, and other two companions, Albert-Alexander de Pourtalès (a young Swiss) and Charles Joseph Latrobe (Portalès's English tutor). Irving published his *A Tour on the Prairies* in 1835. Irving also published two additional Western narratives, *Astoria* (1836) and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837). The former is a

Literature, 1837-1855" 125). The necessity of "a self-reliant literary nationalism" (Spencer 126) was proclaimed conspicuously by Emerson in his "The American Scholar" (1837). O. W. Holmes in his *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1855) calls it "our Declaration of Literary Independence" (qtd. in Spencer 127). For other contemporary intellectuals' distinct awareness of the need to shape national literature, see also Channing, "Remarks on National Literature" (1830) and Fuller, "American Literature: Its Position in the Present Time, and Prospects for the Future" (1846).

² Supporting my argument, Eric J. Sundquist observes that travel narratives in the first-half of the nineteenth century can be considered the nation's first national literature: "Written in the form of diaries, journals, formal reports, travel narratives, and fiction, and composed by trappers, adventurers, scientists, common pioneers, soldiers, and professional writers, the literature detailing the exploration of the territories opened to conquest by the American Revolution and the Louisiana Purchase, and later by treaty and war with Great Britain and Mexico, may claim to be the new republic's first national literature" (*Empire and Slavery* 12).

historical account of the expedition financed by John Jacob Astor from 1810 until 1813 to establish a post for fur trade at the mouth of the Columbia River. For *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving combined his knowledge of the West based on his reading, experience, and other sources with Captain Bonneville's own manuscript, which he purchased for \$1,000. In the same period when Irving traveled through Oklahoma territory, George Catlin journeyed to the mouth of the Upper Missouri (the present Montana-North Dakota border) on the steamboat *Yellow Stone* and produced his *Letters and Notes* (1841), in addition to his numerous graphic representations portraying Indians' life and customs. Thomas L. McKenney, as the Head of the Office of Indian Affairs, traveled to Fon du Lac at the western end of Lake Superior in the summer of 1826 with Lewis Cass, Governor of Michigan, in order to make a treaty with the Chippewas, and the next year he traveled through the South and held councils with the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks to persuade them to remove west of the Mississippi. Based on his travels among the northern and southern tribes, he published *Sketches of a Tour to the Lakes* (1827) and *Memoirs, Official, and Personal* (1846). In 1839, Thomas Jefferson Farnham traveled along the Oregon Trail into the Oregon Territory. Afterward, he traveled to the Sandwich Islands and Monterey, California. *Travels in the Great Western Prairies* (1841) and *Travels in California and Scenes in the Pacific Ocean* (1844) were based on his visits to Oregon and California. In his *The Oregon Trail* (1849), Francis Parkman recorded his 5-month journey of 1846 along the emigrant trail. Notably, all the authors of the travel narratives commonly described the frontier landscape, Indians, and frontiersmen they met from their romantic perspectives.

Clearly, it would be wrong to dismiss these travel narratives, however “romantic” they may appear at times, as escapist literature. European romanticism, with its escapist and nostalgic impulses, generally questions “civilization” or sees it as corrupt. However, the American romantic tendency represented in travel narratives departs from European Romanticism in this regard. American travel literature endorses national “order,” such as the political discourse of Jacksonian democracy, legal discourse like anti-miscegenation laws or the Indian Removal Act, and the prevalent socio-cultural discourse of Manifest Destiny (Providence or God’s inevitable design for white Americans’ prosperity). By doing so, it foregrounds the United States’ particular national experience and tailors contemporary romantic trends to American needs through forging white Americans’ national, racial subjectivity. American travel writings also reflect the nation’s urge to build an empire of civilization. They touch on the question of realizing America’s utopian vision in the newly acquired land. In other words, the narratives represent the national desire for expansion, coloring it with romantic rhetoric and a moral tone. My study will therefore investigate how the narratives answered the period’s call for building a national and racial consciousness, while justifying the nation’s progress and expansion. It will provide an opportunity to reconsider popular romantic travel writing in terms of a “national” literature responsive to early nineteenth-century Americans’ demand for identity formation and expansion.

The close relationship between travel writings and national identity construction has been argued by many scholars. For instance, in the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, coauthors Judith Hamera and Alfred Bendixen

point out the close relationship between travel writings and identity formation in America.³ In order to further recent scholarly attention on the significance of American travel writings with respect to shaping national selfhood, I will focus on how the travel narratives employed American hunters and fur trappers to create a nationally identifiable image. They are delineated as free and robust, guiding the path for expanding American civilization. As we will see, especially in Irving's Western travel narratives, American pathfinders provide the idealized images with which people can identify symbolically. These representative figures originated with Daniel Boone's and the hunter narrative tradition. However, in his portrayals of hunters, Irving furthers the Boone-figure's heroic implications by stressing elements of American democracy to their free lifestyle in the wilderness. In Irving, the portrayal of hunters as people leading self-dependent lives has nationalistic implications because they are represented as quite different from the European fur trappers. This aspect in Irving's narratives is something of a singular trait. According to Henry Nash Smith in his *Virgin Land*, Timothy Flint and many other writers downgraded trappers as those who pursued limitless freedom without restraint

³ See Judith Hamera and Alfred Bendixen, "Introduction: New Worlds and Old Lands—The Travel Book and the Construction of American Identity," *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing* 1. See also John D. Cox, *Travel Narratives and the Construction of American Identity* 1, 4. While noting the close linkage between travel and the creation of national identity, Cox emphasizes that the significance of intranational travel writings in shaping American nationhood has been largely ignored, compared with the studies on international travel writings by Americans or the writings by Europeans in America: "In recent years, especially, as travel literature has begun to be studied more regularly, travel texts by and about Americans have come under increased scrutiny. The vast majority of these studies, however, have continued to investigate either solely or primarily those texts that describe travel across national boundaries and borders" (5). In this regard, focusing on "travel texts by northern writers about their journeys through the American South" (15), Cox examines the relationship between national identity formation and travel writings.

(81-83). In his *Letters from an American Farmer*, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur (or the narrator James) mentions that backwoodsmen easily discard agricultural life and become hunters because of their uncivilized environment. According to him, hunters are “ferocious, gloomy, and unsocial” (76), indifferent to religious life, and fall back into a “licentious idle life” (78). Representation of the hunters in the wilderness as primitivists or romanticists can also be clearly seen in James Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*. Natty Bumppo can even be considered the arch-hero of romantic escapists in early nineteenth-century fiction. In this regard, Irving’s representation of mountain men has a significance in that the hunters in his narratives cannot be simply reduced to the typical escapists fleeing from the harness of civilization. Irving’s travel accounts elevate hunters and trappers as a class embodying the national values of democracy. Furthermore, their masculine robustness works as a national characteristic compared with allegedly European “effeminacy” or debility. In addition, American romantic travel narratives frequently compare pathfinders to Moses, in that they lead emigrants westward to the Promised Land. In this way, portrayals of American hunters contribute significantly to defining the American “self.”

However, intriguingly, American hunters function like a double-edged sword when it comes to constructing and securing national identity. While they work as representatives of the American character, they at times blur the racial boundary between whites and Indians through their frequent intermarriage with Native American women. Thus, the travel narratives try to consolidate racial identity in alternative ways. By denigrating half-breeds and interracial relationships, the narratives repeatedly display a

negative attitude toward Native Americans. Mixed bloods are often comically or scornfully caricatured; intermarriages between whites and natives are delineated as unwelcome. In doing so, the narratives seek to affirm the racial and familial homogeneity of Americanness.

As a national literature, the travel narrative genre satisfied the need for formulating white Americans' collective identity not only by endorsing the national symbolic order of contemporary political, legal, socio-cultural discourses but by the genre's romantic aesthetics of the sublime. Typically, in travel narratives, distance is created between whites and Indians in terms of space and time, and such a strategy for boundary-making may be usefully examined with reference to Edmund Burke's aesthetics of the "sublime." Following Burkean aesthetics, I will disclose how the distantiation of whites from Indians worked as a precondition for constituting white Americans' subjectivity.

Despite a contemporary trend to present Indians through the stereotype of the "Noble Savage," Americans' actual encounters and experiences with Indians did not easily support the popular idea of the Noble Savage because of frequent clashes, like the series of Indian wars from the colonial period through the mid-nineteenth century. So Americans became aware of the need to compromise two contradictory sentiments toward Indians—admiration/fear. In this respect, for some travel writers the aesthetic representations of the "sublime" provided a clue to reconcile their ambivalent sentiments and perceptions: If only white Americans could be relieved from fear of Indians by establishing a certain "distance," they could not only enjoy the aesthetic feeling of the sublime but also maintain the romantic notion of the Noble Savage intact. According to

Burke, the experience of the sublime involves the subject's instinct for self-preservation; thus some distance between the terrorized subject and the terrifying object is indispensable.⁴ The delightful feeling of the sublime stems from a mitigation of painful experience: When an observer thinks that he/she can be safe from the threat posed by dangerous or overwhelming objects, pure terror is converted into the delightful and elevated feeling of the sublime. In this respect, admiration of noble Indians as sublime figures is possible only if the observers can secure their safety by maintaining a certain distance from Indians.

The strategy of establishing distance between whites and Indians is also present in travel writers' frequent representations of Indians as the vestiges of antiquity or members of a vanishing race. Such representations provide a considerable span of time (as a sort of distance) between whites and Indians. This rhetoric advances the idea of the inevitability of the Indians' disappearance and compares Indians to ancient Greeks and Romans. The widely accepted idea that the Indian is doomed to extinction like the melting snow under the sun can be understood as another version of white's rhetorical

⁴ In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Burke explains the mechanism of the sublime from a physiological perspective. According to Burke, the feeling of the sublime is involved with the passion for self-preservation. It is possible only when the subject is at certain distances from the terrible objects because the distance between the terrorized subject and the terrifying object can mitigate the object's traumatic impact upon the subject and produce a delightful feeling, contributing toward the passion for self-preservation. Therefore, the delightful feeling in the sublime is not simply a "positive pleasure," but a sort of pleasure from pain, which is secured by negating his/her pure horror caused by a direct encounter with otherwise terrible objects. In this respect, it may be called a "negative pleasure" in the Kantian sense. See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* 36, 42, 47, 79.

strategy for creating distance.⁵ Such a strategy may elevate the Indian as a sublime, nostalgic, or ideally romanticized object, but also as a figure impossible to access from the “here and now.” This is a “positive” corollary to the “conventional” wisdom of nineteenth-century America: The only good Indian is a dead Indian.

By utilizing Burke’s aesthetics (one of the major aesthetic paradigms in early nineteenth-century America as well as in Europe), this dissertation will disclose that white Americans’ representation of Indians and nature as sublime objects of the “there and then” crucially allows white Americans to establish their national and racial identity of the “here and now” through a rhetorical device that distances whites from Indians and nature in terms of space and time.

Notably, with regard to the formation of American white identity, a foundational study is Richard Slotkin’s *Regeneration through Violence* (1973), still quite an influential work. Slotkin analyzes war narratives, captivity narratives, and hunter narratives from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century in order to promote his thesis about American whites’ methods of establishing their identity through their relations to Indians. Since Slotkin focuses mainly on the Indians in war narratives, captivity narratives, and hunter narratives, he does not provide sufficient consideration of nineteenth-century romantic travel narratives.

In order to comprehend the relationship between the rhetoric of romanticizing Indians in travel narratives and the formation of American selfhood, we need to reshape to some extent Slotkin’s idea concerning white Americans’ identity formation. His frame

⁵ See Gaile McGregor, *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden* 84-85.

of reference is largely indebted to a Jungian model involving psychological tension. By applying J. L. Henderson's Jungian ideas about the psychological tension between "Moira"/"Themis" to the relationship between Indians/whites, Slotkin develops his thesis that whites—representative of the Themis principle, "the world of laws and reasons ruled by father" (11)—gain their regenerative power heroically "through violence," overcoming the temptation of assimilating the Indians' way of life. The Indians embody the Moira principle, that is, "impulses, dreams, and inchoate desires that characterize the human unconscious" (11). According to Slotkin, Moira is "a prehistoric earth-goddess . . . the undifferentiated matrix of the archetypal world of prehistory" (11). Captives often get the better of heathen Indians in the howling wilderness and finally derive their deliverance, vigor, and the renewed spiritual power of Christianity by maintaining their belief in God. Here, Indians are understood as benighted people who are superstitious without any religiously elevated mind or as libidinous savages enjoying sexual freedom without any sense of morality. By overcoming the temptation of assimilating with this heretical and lewd ethnic group, captives can secure their identity as a chosen people of God. In a similar manner, hunters like Boone are tempted by acculturation with savages in the wilderness, but they overcome such temptation by transforming themselves into Indian fighters who assist white settlers who emigrate to the West. In heroic ways, they exploit their knowledge obtained from Indian ways of life and finally contribute to the expansion of civilization. In this way, Slotkin argues, the white man's heroic identity as an American is constructed.

Slotkin largely focuses on the myth of the American hero who rejuvenates, which is the result of overcoming the temptation of the assimilation with Indians. The heroic subject, the white self, ultimately becomes powerful and self-confident. As Slotkin notes, in captivity narratives or hunter narratives, the unfavorably represented Indian works like a foil character on the stage to highlight the triumph and glory of the white protagonist. However, in nineteenth-century travel narratives, I argue, American writers constructed the national selfhood in a slightly different manner from the active and heroic regeneration “through violence” explained in Slotkin.

I would argue for a “regeneration through distancing,” to twist Slotkin’s idea a bit. In travel narratives, a crucial strategy for building white Americans’ national and racial self-consciousness is the emotional distancing of themselves from romanticized Indians. In these narratives, Indians are often described as not only noble—inherently good, simple, and hospitable—but simultaneously as unruly, untempered, and resistant to any restraints of civilization. The undomesticated aspect of the romanticized Indians evokes white Americans’ ambivalent feelings: on the one hand, some measure of attraction from a romantic perspective; on the other hand, a certain “fear” or “anxiety” that the Indian is a radically different and dangerous Other.

White Americans’ psychological fear of the primitivised Other is a rather neglected aspect of Slotkin’s study because he mainly focuses on American whites’ heroic, active, and virile undauntedness in their encounters with natives. The whites’ fear of the Indian takes various forms in the narratives: fear of heathenism, fear of miscegenation, fear of

Indian rebellion, and fear of attack from Indians concealed in wilderness.⁶ In this regard, my study will pay attention to an aspect overlooked, to some extent, in Slotkin's study: whites' fear or anxiety of Indians and subsequent defense against Indians through the romantic rhetoric of distancing. Psychological fear of and defense against Indians may work as a crucial factor in building American whites' self-consciousness.⁷

Finally, this inquiry will explain the way in which the romanticization of Native Americans, nature, and white pathfinders contributed to promoting the desire for expansion. My study attempts to show that the romantic trope of the Indian as an innocent "Child of Nature" or a person with a "blank mind" (the *tabula rasa*) paves the way for justifying the white's territorial and cultural expansion. The idea of the Noble Savage could be used to justify Indian removal for the following reason: ironically, in order to preserve the noble Indians' innocence and happiness, there was no choice but to remove them to the west of the Mississippi River because only such a removal would protect Indians from degeneration through exposure to the vices of civilization. Furthermore, the romantic tendency to portray Indians as "blank-minded" persons could be used to justify white Americans' cultural and religious domination over Indians in the name of uplifting them.

⁶ In her *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison insightfully identifies the fear and terror that white Americans felt after they arrived at the New World as follows: "Americans' fear of being outcast, of failing, of powerlessness; their fear of boundarylessness [*sic*], of nature unbridled and crouched for attack; their fear of the absence of so-called civilization; their fear of loneliness, of aggression both external and internal" (37).

⁷ Toni Morrison argues that Americanness and American literature would not be possible without an "unsettled and unsettling population" (*Playing in the Dark* 6), namely, Afro-Americans as foils to white Americans. Similarly, the image of noble but untamable and vanishing Indians as a projection of white Americans' perspective is deeply involved with the definition of American selfhood.

Another noteworthy romantic representation, that of pathfinders in travel narratives, will be considered in my study as a way of mediating romanticism with the quest for economic expansion. Mountain men like hunters, trappers, and traders who lead Indian-like ways of life through the Far West mountainous regions take on a sort of mediating position in that they represent a culturally hybridized class. From the travelers' perspective, the mountain men spanned the boundaries of savagism/civilization. They are, so to speak, semi-Indians who appear to enjoy real freedom roaming the wilderness as they please and have adventurous and courageous spirits like noble Indians, yet they are still vanguards and guides who open the road for advancing American civilization. Focusing on the romantic representation of these pathfinders' "adventurous spirit," my study will examine how travel narratives reflect and encourage the desire for capitalist expansion.

In investigating the relationship between romantic rhetoric and affirmation of civilization (progress and expansion), it is necessary to reconsider the longstanding notion of antithesis between romanticism (or sometimes "primitivism") and civilization (antiprimitivism). A pioneering study of this question is Roy Harvey Pearce's *Savagism and Civilization*. According to Pearce, white Americans have a double-mindedness toward Indians: on the one hand, they have pity toward the Noble Savage, and this is explained as primitivism. But white Americans cannot but discard their primitivism when they confront actual Indians in the wilderness. The violent aspects of real Indians run counter to a naïve primitivism (136). Considering that the idea of the Noble Savage began to disappear in the mid-nineteenth century and the idea of the Ignoble Savage

began to dominate in the latter-half of the century, Pearce's observation is obviously relevant. However, I want to argue that making a clear distinction between the attitudes of white Americans toward Indians is more difficult than might be supposed.

Sometimes, at least in the travel genre, it is not simply a chronological matter because a primitivism favorable to Indians exists simultaneously with an anti-primitivism (the affirmation of white civilization). Thomas Loraine McKenney, who was the Head of the Office of Indian Affairs (1824-1830), is a representative example of the odd relationship between admiration of the Noble Savage and the affirmation of white civilization.⁸

Besides McKenney's travel narrative *Memoires, Official and Personal*, there are many travel narratives revealing such a strange coexistence of disparate ideas. When we look into the white attitude toward the Indian in the travel narrative genre, we need another paradigm, one that provides better insight than the previous dichotomous binarism of savagism/civilization or primitivism/anti-primitivism.

The dichotomous understanding of primitivism and anti-primitivism as seen in Pearce also occurs in a slightly different manner in more recent studies, such as Gaile McGregor's *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden* (1988). McGregor demonstrates how the primitivism surrounding the Noble Savage can play a central role in forming American national literature when the United States needs a differentiating

⁸ For the relationship between McKenney's philanthropic concern for Indians and his enthusiastic support of Indian Removal, see Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* 165-90. Drinnon points out McKenney's justification of Indian removal under the pretext of protecting Indians' survival. Although he does not specify the eerie relationship between the romanticization of Indians and the domination of them, Drinnon's study is noteworthy because of his critique of the expansionist ideology behind McKenney's philanthropy.

symbol of innocence in contrast to the image of corruption in European civilization. But McGregor does not examine further the possibility that the assumptions of primitivism might be (mis-)used as a rationale for white Americans' expansion into Native Americans' territory; he simply regards primitivism as an impediment to whites' possession of Indians' land.⁹ But, as I argue, in American travel narratives these are not two distinct but mutually interpenetrating ideas: romantic primitivism in American travel narratives does indeed criticize the vice of European civilization, but it also provides a justification for expansionism. The relationship of primitivism to anti-primitivism or of romanticization to westward expansionism has not yet been properly explored within the context of American nation-building. Accordingly, a reexamination of the issue focusing on travel narratives is necessary.

Thus, this study attempts to find some determinative relationship between romanticism and westward expansionism (which is the affirmation of civilization) in the antebellum travel writings of America. It is a conspicuous characteristic of American travel narratives that favorable attitudes toward the romanticized Indian (the Noble Savage) exist simultaneously with the optimistic vision of triumph of civilization.¹⁰ The double voice and seeming contradiction common to these narratives require explanation.

⁹ According to McGregor, "The American found it necessary to repudiate the whole basic assumption of primitivism because only by doing so would he continue to rationalize his seizure of Indian lands" (56).

¹⁰ For instance, Washington Irving illustrates these double voices in his travel narratives; romantic adoration of noble Indians and the triumphalism of civilization are presented side by side. This aspect is largely different from his earlier romantic tale of Rip Van Winkle, which was called "The Myth of the Runaway Male" (51) by Leslie A. Fiedler. As seen in Fiedler, Irving's Rip is representative of a romantic male figure trying to

With regard to the significance of travel writings as a national literature, the issue of identity construction is examined from Chapters II through IV. Chapter II investigates travel writings' role in building American identity in terms of nation, by focusing on the American "pathfinders," a designation that includes hunters, trappers, traders, and soldiers who mainly conducted their enterprises on the frontiers of the West and sometimes worked as guides for westbound emigrants. I will argue that the pathfinder becomes a nationalistic image because he embodies characteristics such as democracy, masculinity, and progress—values counter to those of the Old World.

Chapter III will examine identity-formation in terms of race and ethnicity. While travel narratives highlight the pathfinders as an image or symbol of the nation, simultaneously the narratives evoke another voice that cautions against the racial mixing that the pathfinders frequently commit because such intermixture was assumed to threaten white Americans' pure identity. The evocation of a miscegenation taboo is suggested by the negative representations of persons of mixed blood and of racial intermarriage. Voluntary racial intimacy in the cases of mountain men and involuntary relations resulting from Indian captivity are alike depicted as inauspicious. Half-breeds are frequently presented as ludicrous, comic, or degenerate characters. These descriptions reflect the contemporary population's anxiety over racial mixing, i.e. the miscegenation taboo which was supposed to prevent white Americans from going backward into the primitive state. In this negative way, the narratives work toward constructing the racial identity of the nation.

escape from "home and civilization" (118). However, Irving's travel narratives call for other frames of understanding because of their complex aspects.

Chapter IV will investigate the travel narratives' underlying rhetorical strategy for securing white Americans' identity via the romantic representations of Native Americans and nature. My analysis will focus on the romantic tropes of the Noble Savage, antiquity, and the aesthetic discourse of the sublime that is useful in identifying white Americans' psychological anxiety or fear with respect to their actual encounter with primitivized Indians and nature—exotic, untempered, indomitable, sometimes even threatening Others. The rhetorical devices creating some distance between whites and Indians (and nature) in terms of space and time turn out to be crucial in forming white Americans' identity as people building a young and wholesome civilization. The authors discussed in this chapter include Bartram, Irving, Catlin, Farnham, and Parkman.

In Chapter V, I will examine how the romanticization of Indians, nature, and white pathfinders is converted into a rhetoric for defending expansionism. In McKenney, we find a seemingly bizarre but possibly logical compatibility between the admiration of the Noble Savage and a rationale for driving these noble Indians into the West to “protect” their virtues. Likewise, the romanticized depiction of the Indian as “a beautiful blank” (*Letters and Notes* 1:184), in Catlin's words, will be investigated as another instance of the odd but mutually sustainable relationship between the romanticization of Indians and cultural expansionism. The romantic notion of Indians as a blank-minded people paves the way for enforcing enlightenment on them in the name of pursuing human progress. However, such a humanistic, philanthropic, and paternalistic attitude toward Indians proves pernicious, disintegrating their ways of life, culture, and religion. In this chapter, the romanticizing of pathfinders in Irving's rhetoric of the “adventurous spirit” will be

also examined in order to elucidate the significance of romanticism in justifying economic expansion. While writing history within the frame of chivalric romance, Irving shows that the romanticization of the heroic pathfinders' venture promotes capitalist expansionism, which is also inseparable with territorial expansionism within the context of the early nineteenth century.

Besides the mutually interpenetrating relationship between expansionism and romantic rhetoric, in this chapter I will investigate another but similarly odd theme—the often conflicting desire for expansion and morality (and the Law)—especially “manifest” in the idea of Manifest Destiny, which is pervasive in the early nineteenth-century travel narratives, not to speak of expansionists' political discourse. Many travel narratives symptomatically disclose this peculiar and “perverse” intimacy between desire and morality in their appeals to moral feelings or the Law—God's providence or Historical Necessity—in justifying pervasive territorial and economic expansionism. In this chapter, we will see the odd, triangular relationship between romanticism, morality, and expansionism, which is suggested explicitly and implicitly in many travel narratives.

My conclusion reemphasizes the significance of the travel narratives in their contribution to the shaping of a national literature: romantic travel narratives in the formative age help construct national and racial identity and reveal how the national interest or desire is manifested. Notably, these writings affirm the necessity of imposing the nation's political, economic, socio-cultural values upon aborigines and new territories; their romantic rhetoric provides a strange but oddly logical rationale for expanding civilization.

CHAPTER II
SHAPING NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE PORTRAYALS OF
AMERICAN PATHFINDERS

In 1862, Nathaniel Hawthorne visited the US Capitol in Washington D.C. to meet President Abraham Lincoln and there saw Emanuel Leutze, who was at work on a fresco. In “Chiefly about War-Matters,” Hawthorne states he is much encouraged by this painting depicting the nation’s optimistic vision. The mural which drew Hawthorne’s attention so strikingly was *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*. Even though the ongoing Civil War jeopardized the Union in the writer’s eyes, the picture still affirmed Manifest Destiny and encouraged nationalistic sentiments and hope. Hawthorne finds in the picture not only the nation’s optimistic vision but its defining characteristics such as “energy, hope, progress, [and an] irrepressible movement onward” (46). In other words, Leutze’s paintings represented Americanness itself in quite a symbolic way. The westward movement toward the Promised Land embodied the nation’s endlessly growing, dynamic power and the impulse to expand into virgin land. The very fact that the picture was to adorn the wall of the Capitol at the request of the US Congress suggests its national significance. It is noteworthy here that, in Leutze’s painting, pathfinders or mountain men are cast as one of the major groups representing Americans.

In the foreground of Leutze’s fresco, the spectator can see pathfinders delineating the routes of emigrants. Among the emigrants, there are young children and babies who

embody America's future. Cattle represent the agricultural and Arcadian dreams to be fulfilled in the West. In the center of the picture, a hunter escorting two women and a baby and pointing at the prairie with his right arm implies his historical significance as an heroic guide opening the way to the West. Hunters are deeply intertwined with the scene of westward movement. They represent a national impulse to move westward to open the road for civilization, as well as a romantic urge for freedom.

The hunters' significance in Leutze's work of art is, as we will see, anticipated in Washington Irving's and Francis Parkman's travel and exploration narratives. However, Hawthorne seems to be oblivious to the travel and exploration narratives' precedent: "The work will be emphatically original and American, embracing characteristics that neither art nor literature have yet dealt with, and producing new forms of artistic beauty from the natural features of the Rocky-Mountain region, which Leutze seems to have studied broadly and minutely" (46). Even though Hawthorne asserts that the picture is the earliest genre work representing such national features, I would argue that the antebellum travel and exploration narratives lively engage in expressing national characteristics with the writers' firsthand and secondhand experiences in the West.

Before discussing the presentation of pathfinders as value-laden characters, I want to introduce here "the National Symbolic," a term useful in examining the pathfinders' role in national identity formation. The term is first mentioned by Lauren Berlant in *The Anatomy of National Fantasy*. While explaining how Hawthorne engages in the formation of national identity, Berlant introduces "the National Symbolic" as follows:

To provide this analysis of national consciousness I will refer to the formation and operation of what I call the “National Symbolic”—the order discursive practices whose reign within a national space produces, and also refers to, the ‘law’ in which the accident of birth within a geographic/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively-held history. Its traditional icons, its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals, and its narratives provide an alphabet for a collective consciousness or national subjectivity; through the National Symbolic the historical nation aspires to achieve the inevitability of the status of natural law, a birthright.

(20)

In Berlant’s account, the National Symbolic means the realm of discourses in which a person can assume his/her position as a citizen or subject within a collective consciousness of “sameness.” The National Symbolic transforms a person who has not yet acquired socio-cultural meaning (or position) into a subject who is entitled to be rightful member of community. A person can be transformed into a subject by making oneself accord with values and ideas supported by national, political, legal, moral, religious, or socio-cultural discourses (the National Symbolic). If we accept Berlant’s definition of ideology as “a set of codified values” (234), we recognize that the National Symbolic is highly involved with ideology because the National Symbolic, “the collectively held semiotic system” (71), provides people with those values and ideas that are putatively meaningful and supportable. As Berlant suggests, intertwined with ideology, the National Symbolic is “an alphabet for a collective consciousness or

national subjectivity” (20), a kind of discourse which imposes on a person certain values as a way of constructing national subjectivity.

Berlant is indebted to Jacques Lacan, so a brief consideration of Lacan’s original concept of “the Symbolic” or “the Symbolic order” may help to clarify Berlant’s reformulated notion. For Lacan, the Symbolic is designated in such diverse ways as language, structure, society, paternal authority, order, or law. In a subjectivity-formation model in a patriarchal society, this realm regulates a child who has been in a narcissistic dyad relation—“the Imaginary” in Lacan’s sense—with his or her mother or maternal object. In Lacan’s psychoanalytic discourse, the self is constructed by a series of identifications. In his terms, “the Imaginary” or “the Mirror Stage”—a pre-linguistic stage—indicates the moment when an infant can identify narcissistically with a maternal object or a mirror image which is supposed to be ideal in his or her eyes. The Imaginary is not based on the principle of difference; the child does not recognize the severe gap or difference between the mirrored, idealized object and himself. However, the Symbolic as a paternal function interrupts and disrupts this narcissistic identification and prevents the child from achieving imaginary identification—an Oedipal relationship or a symbiotic fusion of oneness. Therefore, the Symbolic is also often designated as the “Name-of-the-Father” (*Nom-du-Père*), a paternal prohibition or taboo of narcissistic and incestuous satisfaction. At the price of giving up the imaginary identification or the satisfactory dyad relationship by following the paternal command, the child receives an alternative compensation, an opportunity to obtain subjectivity by being registered within a

signifying system like socio-cultural structure.¹ It is the identification with the Symbolic, that is, another identification after giving up one's imaginary identification. Therefore, Symbolic identification is said to be based on the principle of difference, the prohibition of previous, imaginary identification. The Symbolic on the one hand deprives the child of his or her narcissistic and Oedipal satisfaction. Because of this castration-like experience, the child becomes an alienated being and, hereafter, generates his unconscious desire to compensate for a lack; on the other hand, the Symbolic gives the child an "identity" or subjectivity sanctioned by a signifying system. In Lacan's words, "man speaks, then, but it is because the symbol has made him man" (*Écrits* 65). Here, the "symbol" is not merely a traditionally established notion but language as a signifying structure which precedes an individual and determines one as a subject. Thus the child can assume a socio-cultural, legal status as a speaking subject. In Lacan's model, the Symbolic is an unwelcome but indispensable ideological apparatus for a child to identify with, in order to be reborn as a subject within a socio-cultural signifying system.

Here, I want to point out that Lacan understands the traditionally established meaning of "the symbol" in a new way with his coined term "the Symbolic." The symbol has been largely accepted as a sign or icon that has a fixed and stable meaning, based on an analogical relationship between an image and an idea. By assuming a natural analogy, we get a fixed or innate meaning in the symbol. So, symbol does not

¹ Influenced by Lacan, Louis Althusser develops his notion of "interpellation" to explain not only the birth of the subject but the sameness between the interpellation of individuals as subjects and the operation of ideology. According to him, an individual becomes a subject after he or she responds to the ideological interpellation which precedes him or her: "Thus ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects" ("Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" 175).

seem to be involved with any ideological and external signifying structure. However, in Lacan, the symbol has no innate meaning in itself and is assumed to acquire meaning on the condition that it is connected to a representational or signifying system like language that is ideologically-charged.² In other words, the symbol is highly interwoven with signifying structure—an ideological apparatus imposing values on the symbol. In this way, the symbol is re-conceptualized as “the Symbolic” in Lacan. His term “the Symbolic” aims to underscore the external condition and context—the function of language or signifying structure—that produces a supposedly fixed meaning of the symbol. “The Symbolic,” based on its ideologically signifying structure, can produce meanings not only of symbols but of humans. In other words, as I mentioned before, the Symbolic as an external, ideological signifying structure can create the subjectivity of human beings via the paternal function of banning the Imaginary, narcissistic, and Oedipal relationship and imposing the values of patriarchal society. Considering this ideological and subjectivity-forming role of the Symbolic, Berlant formulates her notion “the National Symbolic.” For Berlant, the National Symbolic bestows an opportunity to assume a nationally sanctioned status that is citizenship, on people. If people accept or identify with the National Symbolic order, they acquire a sense of collective homogeneity and national identity.

² See Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* 170. See also Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* 470: “Symbols are typically distinguished from signs insofar as the latter are arbitrary constructions Some theorists (such as Charles Sanders Peirce), however, have argued that symbols are in fact a type of sign, their meanings just as arbitrary and culturally determined as those of signs.”

For Berlant, what provides people with collective identity includes a discursive system, law, a semiotic system, national symbols, images, icons, metaphors, heroes, spaces (sites), rituals, monuments, and narratives.³ By virtue of the Symbolic, subjects possess a “fantasy of national integration” (Berlant 22), a collective sense of unity. Whether fantasy or not, the feeling of integration furnished by the National Symbolic has an essential role in unifying national subjects.

Assuming the National Symbolic plays an essential role in forging national identity and unity, I want to argue here that the pathfinders represented in the first-half of nineteenth-century travel and exploration narratives were perceived as working toward forming a national consciousness and integration. As I mentioned earlier, Washington Irving and Francis Parkman pay special attention to the pathfinders of the West. Compared with the French fur trade in North America, which began in the early sixteenth century, the fur business of the United States began in the nineteenth century and thrived for only a short time.⁴ Around the 1830s and 1840s, fur-bearing animals largely declined, and European fashion was dramatically changed from the beaver hat to the silk one. Even worse, because of a worldwide depression, the price of beaver pelts

³ See Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* 4, 5, 20, 29, 71.

⁴ The rivalry between French and British fur traders began in the late seventeenth century to control fur trade with Indians in Canada, with the British royal charter to the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1670. France ceded her claims in Canada by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, which ended the French and Indian War (1754-1763), and hereafter the Hudson’s Bay Company achieved the predominant influence over Canada. See Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Indian Heritage of America* 308. According to Hiram Martin Chittenden, the United States fur trade was carried out for thirty-seven years (1807-1843). See Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* 3.

dropped from six dollars to one dollar per pound.⁵ However, American mountain men were not a mere vanishing people. In the age of Jackson and American expansion, the mountain men's potential and sustaining symbolic significance in representing unique national characteristics caught Irving's attention especially. Parkman was also attracted by the mountain men's image, although his depiction had less national implications than Irving's. The "pathfinder" or "mountain man" as a creation of the National Symbolic appears and reappears in their travel and exploration narratives; they focus on his role as the representative of democracy, an embodiment of masculine robustness, and an heroic protector of the new American civilization. Here, the narratives' contribution to building a national literature should be clear.⁶

From a romantic perspective, Irving admires pathfinders because they appear to lead a free life without any constraints in the West.⁷ While admiring them as romantic

⁵ See Harvey Lewis Carter and Marcia Carpenter Spencer, "Stereotypes of the Mountain Man" 19.

⁶ In *The Quest for Nationality*, Benjamin T. Spencer mentions that many antebellum writers including Irving were engaged with a national literature: "through critical essay, correspondence, or formal discourse virtually every major and minor author between 1815 and 1860 felt obliged to expound some version of a national literature. Bryant [*sic*], Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Simms, Cooper, and many another returned to the subject repeatedly; a few, such as Longfellow and Lowell, altered their views; some like Hawthorne and Irving, expressed their conclusions infrequently or obliquely" (77). Although Spencer seems to see Irving as in a lesser degree involved with forming a national literature, compared with other writers such as Bryant and Emerson, I argue Irving's contribution to building a national literature is significant because national characteristics are conspicuously represented in his three western narratives.

⁷ In "Washington Irving, Indians, and the West," although he does not specifically focus on pathfinders, Robert L. Hough points out that Irving's narratives about the West provided a sense of freedom for his contemporary American readers: "Perhaps most importantly they [Irving's three western writings] gave vividly the central significance of the trans-Mississippi West for the American people: the sense of freedom and adventure and peace in a beautiful and virgin land" (38).

figures, at the same time Irving renders them as representatives of Jacksonian democracy. That is conspicuous in Irving's three western travel and exploration narratives—*A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), *Astoria* (1836), and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837).

Irving became quite interested in literary subjects that could be effectively used to represent national characteristics after he returned from Europe, where he had sojourned for seventeen years (1815-1832). The fact that he published three subsequent western travel and exploration narratives after his return to America suggests his strong intention or desire to present the national character by means of the western subject—one of the nation's unique subjects which his countrymen were pervasively interested in.⁸ In the "Editor's Introduction" to Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Edgeley W. Todd points out that it was surprising for Irving's contemporaries that, after arriving in America, he wrote three narratives about the West displaying his strong interests in it:

Today many people who think of Irving chiefly as the author of the humorous Knickerbocker's *History of New York* or of the delightfully quaint stories of Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane are surprised to learn that he was also the author of three highly interesting books on the early West. It was also a surprise to Irving's contemporaries that in 1832, after seventeen years of self-exile in the polite centers of Europe, he should almost at once vanish into the Indian country west of the Mississippi and after a few months

⁸ In the words of Stanley T. Williams, "Irving sensed the 'common man's' interest in the West. He felt the influence of the frontier to be perhaps the greatest single influence in our psychology before 1890" (80).

of rough outdoor life with frontiersmen, trappers, Indians, and border soldiers publish an engrossing narrative of what he had seen and done.

(*Bonneville* xvii)

Obviously, as Todd observes, it is notable that Irving created western narratives with quite different subjects from his previous works. However, Irving exquisitely combines his long sustaining romantic or escapist tendency since “Rip Van Winkle” with his newly emerging realistically-involved demand to express Americanness.

Irving’s impulse to express Americanness was fulfilled through his portrayal of the American West and pathfinders. American pathfinders, as well as the West, had significant potential for the author to represent not only his long-sustaining taste for romanticism but also his interest in drawing the national character. To put it in a slightly different way, pathfinders are go-between figures forged by the author’s compromise formation between his rather disparate impulses: an escapist impulse toward romanticism and a reality-engaging impulse for affirming the contemporary nation’s political values, such as Jacksonian democracy and individualism.

Pathfinders and the West are recreated by Irving’s pen as symbols—more precisely, as “the Symbolic”—of romantic freedom. Irving admires pathfinders’ enjoyment of limitless freedom in the West, escaping from the restraints of civilized worlds. The West as the major setting of pathfinders’ adventures is the land of freedom. In *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), the West symbolizes freedom through Irving’s descriptions of horses and Indians who roam without any constraints. The elk, the buffalo, and the wild horses are “in all their native freedom” (10) in Irving’s words. He

admires a wild horse's freedom after watching it living with "all the pride and freedom of his nature" in "native wilderness" (114). Irving compares this wild horse with a domesticated horse, "the poor, mutilated, harnessed, checked, reined-up victim of luxury, caprice, and avarice, in our cities!" (114). Here the author does not hide his envious feelings toward a creature that lives devoid of any harness of civilization, far from civilized cities. When Irving discovers a horse running at full speed after being startled by Irving's party, he celebrates it as "a free rover of the prairies" (155). Irving's romanticism becomes clearer when he mentions the sad fate of a captured horse:

I could not look without compassion upon this fine young animal, whose course of existence had been so suddenly reversed. From being a denizen of these vast pastures, ranging at will from plain to plain and mead to mead, cropping of every herb and flower, and drinking of every stream, he was suddenly reduced to perpetual and painful servitude, to pass his life under the harness and the curb, amid, perhaps, the din and dust and drudgery of cities. The transition in his lot was such as sometimes takes place in human affairs, and in the fortunes of towering individuals:—one day, a prince of the prairies—the next day, a pack-horse! (122)

Irving's compassion toward this horse suggests not only his staunch romantic sensibility but also his idea that the West and creatures living in it represent a freedom which cannot be enjoyed in domesticity.

In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving likewise sees the American West as an antipode of civilization, as when he delineates the scene of Bonneville's departure in May, 1832, for his expedition toward the Far West:

The tamest inhabitant of cities, the veriest spoiled child of civilization, feels his heart dilate and his pulse beat high on finding himself on horseback in the glorious wilderness; what then must be the excitement of one whose imagination had been stimulated by a residence on the frontier, and to whom the wilderness was a region of romance! (18)

When he pictures the West as the place of romantic freedom, "a region of romance" (18), Irving also touches upon the pathfinders who lead their lives in the West in similar liberty.

In Irving's mind, the figure of a mountain man riding a horse in the wilderness is romantically charged: "With his horse and his rifle, he [the mountain man] is independent of the world, and spurns at all its restraint" (11). In Irving's descriptions, mountain men are supposed to enjoy limitless freedom without any worldly burdensome restrictions.⁹ Irving also designates mountain men as "the wild chivalry of the mountains" (12), which means, in Irving's rhetoric, they are like semi-Indians who live

⁹ Irving's romantic rhetoric, coloring mountain men as an embodiment of freedom, is also found in Dale Van Every's historical descriptions of them: "He [the mountain man] was meanwhile making the greater discovery that in the forest there awaited a freedom he had never before imagined. There he was free of all the restraints, anxieties, and forfeits imposed by society, from rents, debts, and taxes to his neighbors' opinions. During his ever-lengthening sojourns in the wilderness he could sleep when he chose, wake when he chose, eat when he chose, wander where he chose, and enjoy all the incidental excitements and pleasures of hunting, fishing, and trapping while his masculine ego was regularly nourished by his realization that he was subjecting himself to exceptional hardships and dangers" (226).

freely in the wilderness. In *A Tour on the Prairies*, a noble Osage Indian who appears to possess “the great secret of personal freedom” (16) is also portrayed as an incarnation of “the wild chivalry of the prairie” (16). However, this pure romanticism is not the whole story of Irving’s perspective toward pathfinders and the West.

Irving also silently connects romantic aspects of pathfinders and the West with the American political value of democracy. In *A Tour on the Prairies*, Irving asserts that the West symbolizes American characteristics such as independence, masculinity, and Jacksonian democracy. After a day traveling across the prairies, Irving watches young rangers enjoying their spare time:

On returning to the camp, we found it a scene of the greatest hilarity. Some of the rangers were shooting at a mark, others were leaping, wrestling, and playing at prison bars. They were mostly young men, on their first expedition, in high health and vigor, and buoyant with anticipations; and I can conceive nothing more likely to set the youthful blood into a flow, than a wild wood life of the kind, and the range of a magnificent wilderness, abounding with game, and fruitful of adventure. We send our youth abroad to grow luxurious and effeminate in Europe; it appears to me, that a previous tour on the prairies would be more likely to produce that manliness, simplicity, and self-dependence, most in unison with our political institutions. (55)

Irving thinks the West, “abounding with game, and fruitful of adventure” (55), is the proper place for these young rangers “in high health and vigor” (55). He furthers his

nationalistic idea of the West by contrasting it with European worlds.¹⁰ Irving insists if Americans want their young people to grow tainted by aristocratic luxury and effeminacy they should send the young people to Europe; on the other hand, if they want their descendents to grow up to be robust, simple, and self-dependent, Irving claims they should send the young people to the prairies of the West. Here, Irving conspicuously reveals his perspective about the two worlds: America and Europe. For him, America is the new nation for strong and independent youth unaffected by self-indulgent aristocracy, while Europe is the Old World entangled with an aristocratic, over-refined form of civilization. It is worthy of notice here that Irving connects American values like

¹⁰ In “The Winning of the West: Washington Irving’s ‘A Tour on the Prairies,’” Guy Reynolds also points out Irving’s *A Tour on the Prairies* is “a nationalistic text, in the sense that the journey provides an opportunity for Irving to reflect on and define the emergent nation” (93). His thesis is that, after returning to native country from his seventeen years sojourn (1815-1832) in Europe, Irving was trying to meet his contemporaries’ expectations for his nationalism, highly involved with Jacksonism. For a study investigating Irving’s nationalism in a wholly different perspective, see Walter Sondey, “From Nation of Virtue to Virtual Nation: Washington Irving and American Nationalism” 52-73. In this essay, exclusively focusing on Irving’s works in the first and second decades of the nineteenth century, for instance, *Salmagundi* (1807-8) and *The Sketch Book* (1819-1820), Sondey argues that Irving as a former Federalist promoted “genteel nationalism,” nostalgically supporting hierarchical values over individual interests and characterizing the socio-political order of Federalist republicanism. Notably, according to Sondey, Irving had a pro-European and pro-British mind, regarding the culture of the Old World as an ideal to imitate (60-61). In his three western narratives after his homecoming, Irving seemed to undergo some change in his attitude toward the matter of hierarchy vs. democratic freedom, tradition vs. progress, or nostalgia for the past vs. affirmation of progressive future. His new voice largely differs from his previous Pro-British sentiment as seen in his “English Writers on America” in *The Sketch Book*. In “English Writers on America,” Irving thought imitating British models as a permanent idealized model was necessary “to strengthen and to embellish our [American] national character” (49). Irving thought “it is hard to give up the kindred tie!” (47) with England in constructing American national identity. However, in the mid-1830s, Irving discovers the National Symbolic—in Lacan’s and Berlant’s sense—prohibiting Americans’ imaginary, narcissistic, and nostalgic identification with the Mother country (or the Old World), in order to shape new American identity.

“manliness, simplicity, and self-dependence” with the nation’s “political institutions” (55). Irving thinks those nationally-charged values almost perfectly correspond to his contemporary nation’s political organizations, that is, the political systems of Jacksonian democracy. To put it another way, the West signifies the political value of Jacksonian democracy by providing American youth with a place for developing their robustness, simple life, individualism, and self-reliance.

Among the values Irving enumerates as national virtues, I want to focus on “self-dependence,” which is “most in unison with our [nation’s] political institutions” (50). What does the word mean in Irving’s context? Self-dependence is a lifestyle wholly different from the life of European aristocracy. The European aristocracy stresses strong networks among privileged classes and families. In determining an individual’s value, Europe emphasized a hereditary of lineage, pedigree, and nobility transmitted from parents to offspring rather than each person’s capability; this socio-political structure put values on groups rather than individuals. Social upward mobility is not easily promoted by this static system. In Irving’s mind, “self-dependence” in the West signifies properly the new nation’s democratic political system because “self-dependence” puts a high value not on privileged families but on individuals. In the West, one cannot but rely on one’s immediate handiworks, so individual ability is prized.

Irving underscores his idea that American democracy can best be realized in the West, by citing Thomas Jefferson’s statements about John Jacob Astor’s enterprise:

I considered, as a great public acquisition, the commencement of a settlement on that point of the western coast of America, and looked forward

with gratification to the time when its descendants should have spread themselves through the whole length of that coast, covering it with free and independent Americans, unconnected with us but by the ties of blood and interest, and enjoying like us the rights of self-government. (*Astoria* 33)

As noted in his remarks, Jefferson strongly believes Astor's venture into the West can expand the nation's freedom and democracy. In Jefferson's rhetoric, Astor's enterprise is an expansion of American democracy and independence because "free and independent Americans" (33) now have an opportunity to settle the Far Northwest. Another of Jefferson's remarks, cited by Edgeley W. Todd, the editor of Irving's *Astoria*, reinforces the same notion: "I view it [Western expansion] as the germ of a great, free and independent empire on that side of our continent, and that liberty and self-government spreading from that as well as this side, will ensure their complete establishment over the whole" (33n32). Jefferson clearly thought the Far West was a nationally significant *place* for expanding American democracy and independence. In other words, the *site* of the West works as the nationally viable symbol, embodying independence, individualism, and democracy. Irving, perhaps more than any other writer, recognizes the West as a value-laden place.

Irving's emphasis on the West as the site of democracy resembles that of Alexis de Tocqueville, Irving's contemporary and a foreign traveler in America. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville suggests that "democracy reached the extremes of its development" (64) in the West because the site is "free of the influence of great names

and great wealth” (65). As noted by Tocqueville, emigrants in the West did not discriminate among one another according to familial background or inherited wealth.

Irving’s emphasis on the West as the site of democracy and individualism also anticipates Frederick Jackson Turner’s argument about the frontier at the end of the nineteenth century. In “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893), Turner claims that the frontier was the place where the nation’s freedom, individualism, and energy blossomed:

That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier. (*The Frontier in American History* 37)

In his observations, the advance of the frontier signaled independence from the transatlantic influences. Turner asserts that the frontier is conducive to developing individualism and democracy against any oppressive control: “[F]rontier individualism has from the beginning promoted democracy” (30). He points out that a primitive form of family on the frontier had an “anti-social” (30) character and bred an “antipathy to control, and particularly to any direct control” (30), and that this trait, as a seed of democracy, developed further as the frontier advanced west. For Turner, the growth of

the frontier in America insured the nation's ultimate freedom from the control and influence of the Old World, especially from England. Turner's theory that the nation's independence was interwoven with the frontier corresponds with the nationalistic and democratic pronouncements of Jefferson, Monroe, and Jackson (29). However, his conception of the West as the site for the blossoming of democracy and individualism was already present in Irving's mind as seen in his travel narratives. Moreover, Irving's representation of democratic values was not confined to the West as a place; Irving extended the meaning of democracy and individualism further via his portrayals of American pathfinders.

What significance do American pathfinders assume as they venture through the West? Just as the West embodies individualism and democracy, in Irving the pathfinders function as tools of the National Symbolic as well: Irving draws the pathfinders as self-dependent and individualistic, and thus as democratic people. Irving underscores their importance to democracy mainly by representing "European" fur trappers negatively. In Irving's travel and exploration narratives, British fur trappers and French-Canadian voyageurs are typically associated with aristocracy, feudalism, luxury, and castes, which is to say European values.

In *Astoria* (1836), Irving characterizes British trappers of the Northwest Company as virtual aristocrats:

To behold the Northwest Company in all its state and grandeur, however, it was necessary to witness an annual gathering at the great interior place of conference established at Fort William, near what is called the

Grand Portage, on Lake Superior. Here two or three of the leading partners from Montreal proceeded once a year to meet the partners from the various trading posts of the wilderness, to discuss the affairs of the company during the preceding year, and to arrange plans for the future.

On these occasions might be seen the change since the unceremonious times of the old French traders; now the aristocratical character of the Briton shone forth magnificently, or rather the feudal spirit of the Highlander.

Every partner who had charge of an interior post, and a score of retainers at his command, felt like the chieftain of a Highland clan, and was almost as important in the eyes of his dependants as of himself. (*Astoria* 12-13)

In Irving's descriptions, British traders who have many servants under their command while administrating an interior post represent the traits of British aristocracy and feudalism. Irving states they show "the feudal spirit" (12) as if they felt like "the chieftain of a Highland clan" (12). In this way, Irving bestows the characteristics of aristocracy and feudalism on the British traders. Another description clarifies his attitude toward the British trappers: "Such was the Northwest Company in its powerful and prosperous days, when it held a kind of feudal sway over a vast domain of lake and forest" (14). These traders do not share any of the American traders and trappers' simplicity, but rather reflect the sway of power and luxury of European aristocrats.

The British fur traders of the Northwest Fur Company wear rich furs and travel by huge canoes with convenience and luxury. They are not very different from the higher classes of Europe. They are accompanied by a large group—French-Canadian

voyageurs, cooks, and bakers—that serves them. They even carry good wines, which suggests they lead luxurious lives in the woods. In a rather cynical tone, Irving mentions that if they were accompanied by British nobility they would be quite happy:

They were wrapped in rich furs, their huge canoes freighted with every convenience and luxury, and manned by Canadian voyageurs, as obedient as Highland clansmen. They carried up with them cooks and bakers, together with delicacies of every kind, and abundance of choice wines for the banquets which attended this great convocation. Happy were they, too, if they could meet with some distinguished stranger; above all, some titled member of the British nobility, to accompany them on this stately occasion, and grace their high solemnities. (13)

By likening the British traders to aristocrats, Irving suggests they are quite different from American mountain men who largely led simple and self-dependent lives without any help from others.

Like the British traders, Canadian voyageurs are also described as people deeply entangled with hierarchical values. In addition, Irving implies that they do not possess the American hunters' virtue of self-dependence. In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, French trappers, who are mostly "French creole of Canada or Louisiana," tend to be at a loss when they lose their way in the wilderness (19); thus they lack the virtue of self-dependence, which is one of the most conspicuous characteristics of American mountain men. In Irving's narratives, the virtue of self-dependence turns out to be a nationalistically significant value exclusive to American mountain men.

In the words of an experienced foreign trader, one American mountain man is “equal to three Canadians in point of sagacity, aptness at resources, *self-dependence*, and fearlessness of spirit. In fact, no one can cope with him as a stark trapper of the wilderness” (*Bonneville* 19, my italics). The “self-dependence” of American trappers signifies here their individualism emphasizing the “self,” not the privileged group.¹¹ Irving implies that such values, strikingly different from those of the Old World, need to be developed. On the one hand, freedom and individualism might seem like the goals of a romantic escapist; on the other hand, those values work as reality-solving virtues affirming American democracy. Irving maintains a careful balance between romanticism and the urgent need to affirm the nation’s political goals. Or, he might be said to sublimate a romantic impulse towards nationalistic ends. By making mountain men as creations of the National Symbolic of democracy, Irving consolidates Jacksonian national consciousness.

The argument that American pathfinders represent aspects of the Jacksonian era has been noted by William H. Goetzmann, as clearly shown in the title of his essay “The Mountain Man as Jacksonian Man.”¹² What he means by “Jacksonian Man” is that the

¹¹ The self-dependence described by Irving is quite similar to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Transcendentalist value of “self-reliance,” which also has a national significance by emphasizing the nation’s spiritual independence from Europe. In his essay “Self-Reliance,” Emerson strongly encourages his contemporaries to have self-trust in developing their own capability rather than relying on the Old World’s values, such as titles, customs, and traditions. For Emerson, the urgent thing to achieve is self-reliance, a belief that one can develop oneself by trying to develop some “power which resides in him” (95). It can be said that Emerson’s words, “Trust thyself” (95), are a philosophical reflection of his age’s prevalent sentiment for spiritual, politico-social, and cultural independence from the Old World.

¹² See William H. Goetzmann, “The Mountain Man as Jacksonian Man” 402-415.

mountain man incarnates the spirit of “Expectant Capitalism” (403). He considers the Jacksonian age as a period of burgeoning capitalism. I agree with Goetzmann’s argument that the mountain man is a Jacksonian man in the sense that he is a prospector and “an expectant capitalist” (405) dreaming of “rapid upward mobility” (405). Goetzmann observes that, even if the mountain man may appear to seek romantic freedom, actually he pursues his desire for money or profits affirming the contemporary socio-economic system of capitalism. I acknowledge Goetzmann’s perceptive observation of the mountain men as deeply intertwined with the dominant economic system in the first-half of nineteenth-century America. His data regarding mountain men’s diverse careers that were predominantly related to commercial businesses convincingly supports his view of mountain men as capitalists dreaming of commercial success or “upward mobility.” By focusing on the economic aspects of mountain men’s careers, Goetzmann offers an image of them as capitalists that is saliently different from the romantic pathfinder image such as that of Natty Bumppo in James Fenimore Cooper’s tales.¹³

Given Goetzmann’s actual characterization of mountain men, it can be said that Irving added political significance of democracy to these expectant capitalists. In Goetzmann’s view, mountain men are merely a group of entrepreneurs, not heroes who

¹³ In a similar vein, in “The Misadventures of Irving’s Bonneville,” Wayne Franklin claims that Irving was disappointed at trappers’ “invidious rivalries” (126) and competitions for their mindless pursuit of profits with their mutual tricks and deception. See Wayne Franklin, “The Misadventures of Irving’s Bonneville: Trapping and Being Trapped in the Rocky Mountains” 126. See also Bruce Greenfield, “Washington Irving: Historian of American Discovery” 150. However, in *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, this money-driven aspect of mountain men does not eclipse Irving’s commitment to rendering nationally valuable images of them.

pursue “pure romance and a misanthropic desire to evade civilization” (410-411). For Irving, mountain men have significance as a National Symbolic in the Jacksonian age in the sense that they embody democracy and individualism which stem from their “romantic” origins. Even though Irving’s depictions of mountain men take on mythic aspects, they play an undeniable role in defining Americans’ national identity as democratic people.

Here an inquiry into the mountain men’s historical involvement with Jacksonian democracy may help illuminate Irving’s delineations of mountain men. I want to emphasize two points. The first is the mountain men’s relation with Jacksonian Democratic Party. The second is their similarity to Andrew Jackson.

In the first-half of the nineteenth century, fur trappers like William Henry Ashley, William Lewis Sublette, and Robert Campbell had political careers as Jacksonian Democrats. William Henry Ashley, who is introduced in Irving’s *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, opened the road for fur trapping in the Far West with his partner, Andrew Henry. Irving mentions that Ashley “acquired sufficient fortune” (7) through his enterprise.¹⁴ Ashley retired from mountaineering and entered politics; as a member of the Jacksonian party, he was elected to the House of Representative in 1831, 1832 and 1834. In *Mountain Men and Fur Traders of the Far West*, Harvey L. Cater states that

¹⁴ See also William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* 124. According to Goetzmann, Ashley’s fur trapping in the Rocky Mountains is important in the history of Western exploration because the fur trade in the Central Rockies was pioneered by him. Thanks to his fur trapping begun in 1822, Ashley became a rich person.

Ashley was “originally a Jacksonian Democrat” (88), although he was once a candidate of the Whig party for the governorship of Missouri in 1836.

William Sublette and Robert Campbell also worked as Jacksonian Democrats. According to Irving, Sublette and Campbell together built “Fort William,” a trading post at Laramie’s Fork (*Bonneville* 36). Like William Ashley, Sublette and Campbell were also pathfinders. Fort William (or Fort Laramie) would be used later as a military post and also as an important place for emigrants along the Oregon Trail. Sublette and Campbell also achieved success from their trapping business. Sublette and Campbell as well as Ashley clearly fit the common image of self-made man. In a biographical essay about Sublette, John E. Sunder writes:

Sublette now gave more and more attention to . . . politics. He was a strong supporter of Senator Thomas Hart Benton and the Jackson-Van Buren administrations, and in 1837 had been selected by the Legislature of Missouri to serve on the board of directors of the new Bank of the State of Missouri. In 1840, however, he was dropped from the board, possibly because of his hard money views. Campbell was placed on the board when Sublette was removed, was re-elected in December, 1842—Sublette was returned to the board at that time—and became president of the board in 1846, seventeen months after Sublette’s death.

. . . In 1838 he [Sublette] fought hard for a seat in the Missouri State Senate, but was defeated by the Whig candidate, John F. Darby. Although

Sublette worked for the Democratic Party in 1839 and 1840, he refused to run again for any office. (232)

It is also noteworthy that Sublette supported Thomas Hart Benton, a renowned westward expansionist in the Jacksonian era. In Henry Nash Smith's account in *Virgin Land*, Benton was "the most conspicuous and best-informed champion of westward expansion in Congress" (22). Benton acknowledged that he was deeply influenced by Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. The reason he supported Jefferson was that Jefferson tried to open the passage to India, "the North American road to India" (23) by means of the Lewis and Clark's expedition. As a staunch Jacksonian and expansionist, Benton strongly promoted the idea of Manifest Destiny. The fact that Sublette, a retired mountain man, backed Benton indicates that he strongly sympathized with Benton's political views on Jacksonian democracy and expansionism. In 1844, Sublette was chosen as a Democratic elector for the seventh district in Missouri after the Democratic National Convention nominated James Knox Polk and George M. Dallas.

An examination of the affinity between mountain men and Jacksonianism reinforces Irving's idea of mountain men as creations of the National Symbolic of Jacksonian democracy. According to David S. Reynolds in *Waking Giant*, the age of Andrew Jackson spanned the years 1815 through 1848 (1-4). Although Jackson's presidency lasted only eight years, from 1829 to 1837, "the age of Jackson" began much earlier and lasted long even after his death in 1845. Jackson first came to fame after his victory at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. Jackson's triumph provided him with a heroic image, especially in terms of nationalism. A much earlier episode, when he

refused to polish a British officer's shoes, added to Jackson's fame as a nationalistic hero. In *Waking Giant*, David S. Reynolds introduces this story briefly. In his account, "during the Revolution he [Jackson] joined the patriots in the Battle of Hanging Rock and was taken captive. A British officer whose boots he refused to polish slashed him with a sword, leaving his head and his left hand scarred for life" (6).¹⁵ The heyday of Jackson as President of the United States in the 1830s and subsequent presidencies of Van Buren (1837-1841) and James Knox Polk (1845-1849) not only furthered the nation's democratization but also promoted westward expansion. These large scale national projects had nationalistic implications with regard to European nations because they contributed to strengthening the nation's hegemony on the continent against transatlantic nations' interests.

Jackson as a national protagonist played a significant role in forging the character of Americans. According to John William Ward, "his [Jackson's] countrymen saw their image and spirit in Andrew Jackson" (1). They had admired Jackson as a national hero since he defeated British soldiers at the Battle of New Orleans. His victory gave Americans national pride against Great Britain.¹⁶ During his presidency, Jackson tried to boost common people's political and economic power against aristocratic-minded counterparts like the Whigs. His popularity indicates the degree to which Americans identified with him. If we borrow Sigmund Freud's term, Jackson was an "Ego Ideal" in his followers' inner minds because he was regarded as an admired and idealized hero

¹⁵ See also Robert V. Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

worthy to identify with.¹⁷ If many Americans identified with Jackson as the Ego Ideal, a question arises: what were Jackson's characteristics they modeled or identified with? I argue they were simplicity, "common man," and anti-aristocracy. These same characteristics were embodied in pathfinders, especially in Irving's western travel and exploration narratives.

Andrew Jackson was considered a man of simplicity, which means he tried to keep his distance from European sophistication. John William Ward even describes Jackson "as simple as a child" (192-193). In *Jacksonian America* (1978), Edward Pessen also notes that Jackson had a character of "informality," "crudeness," or "candor," traits that were strikingly different from the values respected in Europe, such as sophistication:

Jackson's own personality made a particularly sharp impress on foreign policy. "Shirtsleeve diplomacy" was the affectionate and admiring description of Jackson's informality, honesty, and pugnaciousness in dealing with the sophisticated embassies of the old world. It reflected so well the people and the nation it represented, in its candor, crudeness, vigor, and disrespect for traditional forms. (319)

As noted in Pessen's remarks, with his "shirtsleeve diplomacy," Jackson tried to show that he or his nation did not esteem highly the established form of sophistication of the Old World. Jackson's attitude implies here that his manner of simplicity had a nationally significant role in representing Americanness in contrast to European traditionalism. Simplicity in Jackson offered a national virtue which was worthwhile for citizens to

¹⁷ Like the Ego Ideal, according to Robert V. Remini, Jackson was a "*beau idéal*" to Americans. See Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* 84.

embrace. Pessen states, “romantic artists, whether using pen or brush, extolled his [Jackson’s] simplicity and his innate wisdom” (324). Literary and artistic portraiture of Jackson as a man of simplicity imply that Jackson embodied a national moral virtue. Simplicity here includes innocence, candor, and crudeness. According to Gilbert M. Muller in *William Cullen Bryant*, Bryant, a renowned romantic poet, “admired Jackson’s simplicity of manners, honesty, and sense of justice” (77). As Muller notes, Jackson’s simplicity offered a moral virtue worthy of emulation. Jackson’s contemporary, the historian George Bancroft, also eulogized Jackson’s simplicity, linking it with the American West:

Behold, then, the unlettered man of the West, the nursling of the wilds, the farmer of the Hermitage, little versed in books, unconnected by science with the tradition of the past, raised by the will of the people to the highest pinnacle of honor, to the central post in the civilization of republican freedom, to the station where all the nations of the earth would watch his actions The man of the West came as the inspired prophet of the West: he came as one free from the bonds of hereditary or established custom.

(*Memoirs of General Andrew Jackson* 259)

As seen in Bancroft’s glorifying portrayal of Jackson, Jackson’s simplicity, which originated from the West, was a point of national pride. Jackson’s simplicity was important for Americans in building their own identity because it was conspicuously different from European “sophistication.”

Another example of Jackson’s simplicity is given by John William Ward:

Elliott [Commodore J. D. Elliott] was, it seems, an enthusiastic admirer of Jackson. It was he who in 1845 offered Jackson as a tomb the sarcophagus of a Roman emperor which Elliott had procured in Palestine. Jackson declined in a famous letter which pointed out that it did not befit the republican simplicity of the United States to have a President buried in an emperor's tomb. (116)

In his letter to Commodore Elliott dated March 27th, 1845, Jackson mentioned that “my republican feelings and principles forbid it; the simplicity of our system of government forbids it.”¹⁸ By refusing to accept Elliot's luxurious gift, “the sarcophagus of a Roman emperor,” Jackson stressed simplicity *as* the national virtue of the common people.

Jackson and mountain men were “common men.” Here “common men” denotes individuals who dreamt of upward mobility in a democratic society and achieved success as self-made men. In *Jacksonian America*, Pessen mentions that Andrew Jackson was among the most “vivid examples of the rise from rags to riches or from the humblest circumstances to great success” (80). In David S. Reynolds's *Waking Giant*, we learn that Emerson associated Jacksonism with “common people, average life, wildness, and expansiveness” (250). In *Andrew Jackson*, John William Ward cites Andrew Stevenson's remarks about Jackson in 1845:

Born a simple citizen, of poor but respectable parents, he [Jackson] became great by no other means than the energy of his own character, and

¹⁸ See Andrew Jackson, “General Jackson's Letter to Commodore Elliott, Declining a Sarcophagus,” 27 March 1845, in George Bancroft, *Memoirs of General Andrew Jackson* 241-242.

being, as he seems to have been, the favourite of nature and Heaven! Had he been born to wealth and influence, he might probably have lived and died, an obscure and ordinary man!

Severe discipline and poverty, inured him, in early life, to great hardship and industry, and it has been justly said of him that he seems to have been an orphan from the plough to the presidency. He must, therefore, be regarded as the architect of his own fortunes! (166)

Andrew Stevenson's eulogy of Jackson clearly shows the image Jackson bestowed on his contemporaries. As Stevenson notes, Jackson was born the son of poor and humble Irish immigrants. In 1767, his father died two weeks before his son was born; in 1781 his mother Elizabeth Hutchinson Jackson also died, when Jackson was at fourteen. Jackson lost his entire family—his mother and two brothers, Hugh and Robert—in the Revolutionary War, so he as an orphan had to survive on his own efforts. Such hardship made Jackson “the architect of his own fortunes!” in Anderson's words.

Jackson's humble origin and hardships led him to support common men after he became the seventh President of the United States. His policy was to boost common people's political opportunity and economic interests, inaugurating an age of relative egalitarianism. In the Jackson era, male suffrage was broadened by converting indirect methods for voting or nominating into direct methods (Pessen 153). Therefore, additional hundreds of thousands of white males enjoyed the franchise.¹⁹ As to political reform, the spoils system or the rotation of office aimed to exclude the permanent tenure

¹⁹ See Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Democracy, 1833-1845* 139.

of federal officeholders so as to advance democratic principles.²⁰ In economic aspects, Jackson promoted the policy of *laissez-faire* to reduce governmental restriction or monopoly over the nation's economy. Therefore, he destroyed the Bank of the United States that was regarded as a government-granted monopoly in which an aristocratic body pursued privileged interests. During his presidency, the Preemption Act of 1830 aimed to enable common people to settle as farmers after purchasing their lands at a cheap price. Jackson's Indian removal policy was also intended to uphold the white "common" people's economic power by providing the ordinary citizen with the lands that were originally owned by Native Americans.²¹ Mary E. Stuckey notes the close relationship between Jacksonian democracy and Jackson's policy of enlarging citizens' land ownership: "For Jackson, land equaled independence. It was the independence offered by land ownership that imbued citizens with what Jackson considered a truly democratic character" (53). As Stuckey points out, land ownership was the crucial way of enlarging the power of common people by making them more than ever independent from the influence of the wealthy.

²⁰ See Robert V. Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson 184-186*; H. W. Brands, *Andrew Jackson: His Life and Times* 418.

²¹ In *Fathers and Children*, Michael Rogin criticizes Jackson's seemingly democratic rhetoric of treating Indians as "freely contracting men" (207) within the system of "market capitalism" (167). According to Rogin, with anti-monopoly logic Jackson maintained that Indian tribes' governmental systems were despotic and corrupt (292), in order to achieve his "ulterior" purpose of disrupting them which were an impediment to expedite the acquisition of Indians' lands. Jackson's rhetoric aimed indeed not for the promotion of Indians' democratic right of autonomy but for the destruction of it by providing individual Indians with the "free" right to sell their lands. In addition, given Rogin's critical portrayals of Jackson as an authoritative father-figure relentlessly enforcing Indian removal, ironically Jackson's "democratic" policy to extend (white) common men's right necessitated his "authoritative" exercise of his political and military power and paternalistic domination over Indians.

As Jackson symbolized the common man with his background and political policy, so did American mountain men. In *Jacksonian Democracy and the Working Class*, Walter Hugins points out that backwoodsmen were included in the category of common men during the age of Jacksonian democracy (3). According to Edward Pessen, “common men” or “Jacksonian men” signified people with diverse occupations like farmers, mechanics, laborers, fisherman, and Indian fighters (*Jacksonian America* 242). Here it is notable that “Indian fighters” denotes hunters and trappers on the frontier. On the whole, they had low educational and familial status like Jackson. They had to survive by depending upon their own efforts in the wilderness. Mountain men also showed that common people could achieve material success through their own efforts, like Jackson, the exemplary figure of the self-made man. As I mentioned earlier, mountain men like William Ashley, William Sublette, and Robert Campbell earned much money from their fur business in the Far West and later gained political power as Jacksonian Democrats. They could be looked upon as self-made men. Apart from them, mountain men like Thomas Fitzpatrick, Milton G. Sublette, and James Bridger, who founded the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, also gained substantial profits from their fur trapping. Even though John Jacob Astor was not a mountain man, as a founder of American Fur Company he also served as a model for the self-made man who achieved great success despite his humble origin. Edward Pessen mentions Astor, as well as Jackson, as a representative of the self-made man: “Giving sustenance to such beliefs were the well-known careers of men like John Jacob Astor, William E. Dodge, and Andrew Jackson himself, vivid examples of the rise from rags to riches or from the humblest

circumstances to great success” (*Jacksonian America* 80). According to William H. Goetzmann, as we have seen, mountain men had the spirit of “Expectant Capitalism” (403), dreaming of being self-made men, and thereby they could be regarded as “Jacksonian Men” in Goetzman’s sense.

Before addressing the similarity between Jackson and mountain men with regard to their anti-aristocratic tendencies, it is valuable here to cite Edward Pessen’s statements about politicians’ identification with the common people in Jacksonian era:

Always aware that the ordinary man had the vote, the politician “tried to identify himself with the common people, to wear old clothes, to claim a log-cabin origin, and conceal his superior education.” After plying their audience with free whiskey, politicians would “speak grandiloquently of ‘the sovereign people.’” Such well-to-do men as Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and William Henry Harrison proclaimed their humble origins and poor present circumstances. (*Jacksonian America* 160)

Some politicians tried to downplay their level of education because that did not coincide with Jackson’s or the common people’s modest educational backgrounds. Clearly, political discourses in the Jacksonian age foregrounded the “common men” as representative Americans. “Common men” played a central role in forming national identity in the Jacksonian age, and the image of the mountain man was deeply involved with national identity formation.

Until now, I have examined Jackson’s character focusing on his image as common man. Here I want to emphasize Jackson’s anti-aristocratic views. Jackson hated

“aristocratic” people, as seen in his aggressive policy against Nicholas Biddle’s national bank and the Whigs, who supported a stable order and hierarchy for the privileged classes. They strongly distrusted the common people (Pessen 215). Against these conservative Whigs, Jackson posed his belief in egalitarianism. Jackson or “Old Hickory” valued toughness and simplicity, which were conducive to building counter values against aristocracy. The Astor Place Riot²² that occurred in May 1849 was, says Reynolds, “a watershed moment when the explosive forces of Jacksonian society collided with the restraining ones of conservative culture” (David S. Reynolds 307). As seen in the Astor Place Riot, anti-aristocracy and egalitarianism were prevailing spirits in the 1830s and the 1840s. Alexis de Tocqueville strongly asserted that America was predominantly a “land of democracy” (204) and noted that in the first-half of the nineteenth century the Democratic Party prevailed over the “aristocratic” party. Anti-aristocracy must be regarded as a conspicuous national characteristic, especially in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century.

²² The Astor Place Riot was a not only cultural, but a nationally and politically charged conflict between American democracy and British aristocracy. It started with the rivalry and antagonism between two players: Edwin Forrest, a Jacksonian orator, and William Charles Macready, a British tragedian. According to Richard Moody in *The Astor Place Riot*, Forrest had “democratic sentiments” (43), admiring Jackson who fought against the Whig party “whose chief desire seem[ed] to be to benefit the few at the expense of the many” (43). He became popular especially among American working class people. Anglophile upper class and Whigs supported the actor Macready. Forrest, who thought Macready maneuvered British public opinion against him, hissed at Macready during his *Hamlet* performance at the Theatre Royal in Edinburgh in 1846. On May 10th, 1849, Macready, who visited America, could not perform in the Astor Place Opera House because angry Americans who were against him blocked the theatre to prevent Macready’s performance of *Macbeth*. On this day, over twenty people died and about a hundred were injured because of violent conflicts between the crowd and the troops. In this clash, the rioters yelled, “Down with the codfish aristocracy!” (Moody 111).

Indeed, anti-aristocratic feelings predominated in American culture. Irving's negative tone against aristocracy also bears out those prevailing moods. As I mentioned earlier, in *Astoria* Irving describes British fur trappers and French-Canadian voyageurs in terms of aristocracy, castes, and orders. Especially, British fur trappers are described like feudal lords. In contrast, Irving admires American mountain men's individualism and spirit of self-dependence. This spirit was closely related to Jackson's democratic mind. The intimacy between Irving's "mountain men" and Jackson implies that Irving's literary portraiture of "mountain men" contributed to forging national consciousness in the egalitarian era. Therefore, Irving's literary representation of mountain men can be understood in terms of the National Symbolic, an influential discourse in constructing national identity.

Here considering Irving's biographical background may shed light on why he affirmed democratic values through the portrayals of mountain men because, in the 1830s when his three western narratives were published, he was considerably involved with Jacksonianism. Originally, Irving had a pro-Federalist attitude. In *The Original Knickerbocker*, Andrew Burstein, Irving's biographer, mentions that "of the Irving brothers, Washington alone described himself as a Federalist" (18). In the 1790s, Irving was "far from desiring a leveling democracy" (Burstein 26). In 1815, when Irving went to Liverpool in England, many Americans extolled Andrew Jackson at his triumph over the British at New Orleans. However, Irving "had no desire to participate in games of verbal swordplay with the host country" (Burstein 109). Irving was lukewarm in taking sides with American nationalism against Great Britain. However, according to Burstein,

even though Irving supported Federalism, he did contribute to Peter's Burrite newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle*, which means Irving also had favorable attitude toward Aaron Burr, an influential Democratic-Republican and the third Vice President of Jefferson's administration. On the one hand, Irving was a moderate Federalist; on the other hand, he was also "comfortable with moderate Republicans" (Burstein 101). However, his well-balanced or ambiguous political stance more and more disappeared from the time he became, to some extent, associated with Jacksonian politics as a secretary of legation at the embassy in London in 1829. While he held an official position in London, Irving met Martin Van Buren. In 1831 Van Buren wrote to Jackson a letter praising Irving (Burstein 227). According to this letter, Irving respected Jackson (Burstein 228). This suggests Irving leaned toward Jacksonian democracy and became a Jacksonian Democrat covertly, even though he did not want to participate directly in party politics.²³ Irving admired not only Jackson, but Van Buren (Burstein 230; Schlesinger, Jr. 55). Irving's shift from a Federalist to a Jacksonian Democrat is comparable to James Alexander Hamilton's similar change in political stance. Although he was the son of arch-Federalist Alexander Hamilton, James Hamilton later became Jackson's intimate, "a close aide to Jackson, and a staunch supporter of the president's bank policy, though the very idea of a national bank had been his father's, forty years earlier" (Burstein 252). Irving's change of political stance was clearer when he met Jackson at the White House after he returned home in 1832. According to Burstein, Irving became an "unabashed admirer of Jackson"

²³ Irving was not interested in being a politician. For instance, in 1834 when he had in mind to write *Astoria* at the request of Astor, the Jackson party wished Irving to run for Congress, but he declined the proposal. According to his nephew Pierre, Irving disliked "mingling in any way in the feuds of party" (Pierre M. Irving 43).

(252). In 1833, Irving expressed his sentiments toward Jackson in a letter to his friend James K. Paulding: “The more I see of this old cock of the woods [Jackson], the more I relish his game qualities” (qtd. in Burstein 273-274). This implies Irving had a favorable feeling toward Jackson because of his brave and bold character, as well as his political beliefs. Donna Hagensick argues that Irving supported Jackson because Irving had a tendency toward “nationalism-patriotism” (59). According to Hagensick, Irving took sides with Jackson, who fought against the doctrine of nullification of South Carolina regarding the issue of high protective tariffs adopted in 1828 and 1832.²⁴ Because of South Carolina’s threat of secession, “Irving supported Jackson without reservation” (Hagensick 57). Besides, Irving seemed to admire Jackson as a symbol of national pride. One episode in particular shows Irving’s loyalty to Jackson. On May 6th, 1833, Jackson was slapped in his face by an ill-intentioned Navy lieutenant, Robert B. Randolph, because he was dismissed from his position for larceny. As seen in a letter to his brother Peter, Irving was enraged at this incident: “It is a brutal transaction, which I cannot think of without indignation, mingled with a feeling of almost despair, that our national character should receive such crippling wounds from the hands of our own citizens” (Pierre M. Irving 32). In Burstein’s remarks, “Irving was feeling an intense loyalty to Andrew Jackson, and a sense of being personally bound to the fate of Jackson’s America” (274). Irving’s attitude implies that Jackson embodied the nation’s pride in

²⁴ See also Stanley T. Williams, *The Life of Washington Irving* 63. According to Williams, even though Irving did not publicly reveal his support of Jackson against John Calhoun’s nullification in South Carolina, Irving’s position on nullification “made him still more, if privately, a ‘Jackson man’” (63).

Irving's mind. There is also William Dunlap's observations of Irving, as described by Burstein:

It is hard to know precisely what Irving meant by "true" when, in 1833, he told the New Jersey-born playwright and oft-called "Father of American Drama," William Dunlap, that "democracy is the only true system." Irving was comparing life in America to the caste-based society he had witnessed in Europe; but he was probably also reflecting the notion shared by 60 percent of New York voters in 1832 that the United States had been energized by the coming of Jackson. Dunlap, who had known a teenaged Irving, was now nearing seventy. He pressed the author for his political perspective by acknowledging that he himself had always been a Democrat (in the partisan sense), dating back to Jefferson's time. He was proud, he said, that the U.S. governing system was designed not to bring down the few but to exalt the many. What did Irving think? "He was convinced of it," Dunlap penned in his diary. "His feelings & political creed was changed."
(253)²⁵

In view of representative mountain men's political involvement with Democrats, their symbolic affinity with Jackson, and Irving's democratic tendencies, we can see why Irving offers a nationally representative and/or identifiable figure when he draws mountain men in his western narratives. However, Irving does not merely render

²⁵ For an account of Irving's involvement with the Jacksonian party, see also Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* 369-70, 374.

mountain men as representatives of democracy. One of the conspicuous characteristics attributed to American hunters is masculine robustness.

In Irving's travel and exploration narratives, American frontiersmen are typically described as strong, youthful, vigorous, and masculine characters. Captain Bean (Jesse Bean) in Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies* shows not only the simplicity of Americans in the West but also his masculinity. According to Irving, a frontier soldier Captain Bean is a "vigorous and active" (48) woodsman and, thereby, "a first-rate hunter" (48). Another American hunter, "Old Ryan," in *A Tour on the Prairies*, is no exception in that he has a tough and strong manliness. According to Irving, although he grows old, Old Ryan retains a "tough and weather-proved" (48) virility, "beaming with a hunter's youthful spirit" (48-49) in his daring adventures. In this way, Irving even endows Old Ryan's tough masculinity with a trait of youthfulness. The association of masculinity with youthfulness is noteworthy. In view of Emerson's lecture "The Young American" given in 1844, Irving's emphasis on the youthful energy of frontiersmen and pathfinders seems to foreshadow the rhetoric of the "Young American" in the 1840s as a leading and essential factor in achieving the national mission of building a new America free from the Old World's influence.

Irving's motif of youthful and masculine robustness becomes more conspicuous in his ensuing narratives, *Astoria* and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*. In *Astoria*, Robert M'Lellan is depicted as a strongly masculine figure. He is an American trader who joins Wilson Price Hunt's overland expedition sponsored by John Jacob Astor:

M'Lellan was a remarkable man. He had been a partisan under General Wayne, in his Indian wars, where he had distinguished himself by his fiery spirit and reckless daring, and marvelous stories were told of his exploits. His appearance answered to his character. His frame was meager, but muscular; showing strength, activity, and iron firmness. His eyes were dark, deep-set, and piercing. He was restless, fearless, but of impetuous and sometimes ungovernable temper. He had been invited by Mr. Hunt to enroll himself as a partner, and gladly consented; being pleased with the thoughts of passing with a powerful force through the country of the Sioux, and perhaps having an opportunity of revenging himself upon that lawless tribes for their past offenses. (138)

M'Lellan had been a renowned Indian fighter before he joined Hunt's party. At Hunt's request to participate in the expedition, he willingly accepts despite the danger of encountering "lawless tribes" (138). Another recruit in Hunt's expedition is John Day. According to Irving, "he was strong of hand, bold of heart, a prime woodman [*sic*], and an almost unerring shot. He had the frank spirit of a Virginian, and the rough heroism of a pioneer of the west" (139). Like M'Lellan, John Day has a game-spirit and bold heart as an American hero. In *Astoria*, Irving introduces other game-spirited American pathfinders who have undying enthusiasm for adventure in the West. They are Daniel Boone and John Colter. On March 17th, 1811, on the overland expedition, Wilson Price Hunt met Daniel Boone in Charette. After their meeting, as Hunt's party departs for their travel, Boone is seen standing "on the river bank, watching the departure" (146) with "a

throb of his old pioneer spirit, impelling him to shoulder his rifle and join the adventurous band” (146). In 1811, the renowned arch-hero of pathfinders was at his eighties. Nevertheless, in Irving’s description, he still has a strong physical power and steadfast mind. He does not lose his young and hot-blooded passion and vigor despite his age. Like Captain Bean and Old Ryan in *A Tour on the Prairies*, old Boone also seems to suggest a “young American,” in the sense that he shows unbending vigor and undying adventurous spirit, that is, “a forward-looking desire to embrace the new.”²⁶

Likewise, the legendary mountain man John Colter shows his valor and vigorous energy. In *Astoria*, Irving represents Colter’s hardihood impressively. When Colter meets Hunt’s party, he relates his saga in the wilderness, captivity experience, a narrow escape, and Indian fighting. Even though he came near death during his captivity by the Blackfeet, Colter rekindles his enthusiasm to depart again into the Far West along with Hunt’s party: “[W]ith all these perils and terrors fresh in his recollection, he could not see the present band on their way to those regions of danger and adventure, without feeling a vehement impulse to join them” (150). Colter, like Boone, suggests that American pathfinders possess unbending vigor and robustness, in contrast to Europeans’ alleged effeminacy.

²⁶ Yonatan Eyal points out that “[d]aring and audacious conduct [and] a forward-looking desire to embrace the new” are the traits of “Young America” ideology. See Yonatan Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861* 2. In addition, it is noteworthy that Benjamin T. Spencer points out Irving was involved with the formation of a national literature because Irving emphasized the necessity of securing “Young America” against the Old World by invoking a youthful spirit. See Benjamin T. Spencer, *The Quest for Nationality: An American Literary Campaign* 129.

In *Astoria*, Irving introduces three Kentucky hunters who likewise have undaunted spirits. Edward Robinson, John Hoback, and Jacob Rezner joined Hunt's overland expedition team in May 26th, 1811. Unfortunately, they were lost on the way to Astoria. One year later, on August 20th, they were found alive by Robert Stuart's party, who was returning to New York. Despite their hardship as lost hunters, they wanted to keep hunting in the wilderness rather than join the party. Irving admires them for their "indomitable spirit" (374).

In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving says, "We find them [the mountaineers] . . . hardy, lithe, vigorous, and active; extravagant in word, and thought, and deed; heedless of hardship; daring of danger; prodigal of the present, and thoughtless of the future" (10). Irving depicts mountain men like Wilson Price Hunt, Ramsay Crooks, Robert Stuart, and other Astorians as "intrepid" (5) adventurers going through uncharted regions infested with hostile Indians who might ambush unwelcome intruders. In 1832, Henry Vanderburgh, one of the leaders of the American Fur Company, was killed by a Blackfoot Indian in the heart of the Blackfeet country. Irving mentions he had "manly bearing and dauntless courage" (93). Irving also states that renowned mountain men such as William Sublette, Thomas Fitzpatrick, and Joseph R. Walker were commonly "intrepid" (52) and "brave in spirit" (17).

Emphasis on the manly character of pathfinders can be also observed in Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* (1849). In this travel narrative, Parkman describes Henry Chatillon as an American mountain man with "manly simplicity" (xv). In the fourth preface to *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman mentions that in 1869 or 1870 he met again

Henry Chatillon who was once his guide at his travel to the Far West. According to Parkman, despite his old age, Chatillon still maintained his manly character. Parkman admires him as a “brave and true-hearted” (xv) person.²⁷ When Parkman saw him first in 1846, he depicted him as “a fine athletic figure, mounted on a hardy gray Wyandot pony” (10): “His age was about thirty; he was six feet high, and very powerfully and gracefully moulded . . . His manly face was a mirror of uprightness, simplicity, and kindness of heart” (14). Parkman extols his bravery as a “celebrated” (15) virtue in the mountains. Chatillon is described as a remarkable hunter who “had killed more than thirty grizzly bears” (16), which implies the “intrepidity of his temper” (16). Chatillon is indeed the epitome of masculine robustness. Parkman also mentions that there are no people who lead “more wild and perilous” (148) lives than trappers in the Rocky Mountains. Parkman later says, “I once met a trapper whose breast was marked with the scars of six bullets and arrows, one of his arms broken by a shot, and one of his knees shattered; yet still, with the mettle of New England, whence he had come, he continued to follow his perilous calling” (262). In Parkman’s view, the trapper has hardihood and a game-spirit because he does not avoid any risk associated with trapping in the Indian country. On the whole, in Parkman’s mind, the trapper epitomizes the spirit of Americans with his young robustness and valor.

²⁷ In “The Search for Manliness: Irving and Parkman in the West,” Beth Lynne Lueck notes Parkman admires Henry Chatillon’s bravery and masculine robustness as an exemplary virtue of a common man: “Henry Chatillon, renowned for his prowess as a hunter, provides an excellent example of a common man who, in spite of a lack of education, develops the manly traits of courage and independence that Parkman admires” (112).

In rendering mountain men as a *beau idéal*, Parkman may have wanted to identify himself with their manhood. In the last part of *The Oregon Trail*, he describes his own buffalo hunting and displays his tough and violent actions in detail, as if he were a Chatillon-like hunter. Focusing on Parkman's ruthless killing of buffaloes, Jeffrey Gross points out that "Parkman journeys into the wilderness as a youth seeking to prove his own masculinity."²⁸ As Gross says, Parkman's overt display of his violent, tough, and combative image in killing buffaloes seems to reveal his desire to arm himself with masculinity.

In *The Frontier in American History*, Frederick Jackson Turner stresses that frontiersmen needed "stalwart and rugged qualities" (15) to face hostile Indians. Thus, many frontiersmen are described as valorous and bellicose. For instance, both Daniel Boone and Andrew Jackson have often been described as having aggressive characters, aside from the fact that both were remarkable Indian fighters.²⁹ According to Robert Morgan in *Boone: A Biography*, Daniel Boone was "a fighting Quaker" (11) and "no

²⁸ See Jeffrey Gross, "Boyish Play and Manifest Destiny: The Transition from Civilizer to Killer in America and Abroad," 61. In this essay, Gross analyzes Parkman's pursuit of American masculinity as an example of "regeneration through violence" in Richard Slotkin's sense. According to Gross, throughout the history, politics, and culture of the United States, Parkman's enactment or adoration of violent masculinity has been repeated among American imperialists justifying violent military actions in the name of "Manifest Destiny—a euphemism for an aggressive, masculine, violent, and racist program of territorial expansionism" (61).

²⁹ For the conspicuous image of Boone as an Indian fighter, see John Filson's "The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boon; Containing a Narrative of the Wars of Kentucke," *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke* 60-81; See also Timothy Flint's *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone*, chapters 6 through 12. Andrew Jackson earned his fame as an Indian fighter in the Creek War (1813-1814) and the First Seminole War (1817-1818). For Jackson's participation in the two Indian wars, see chapters 6 and 9 in Robert V. Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson*.

pacifist” (11). Andrew Jackson, a Tennessean frontiersman, is also described as one of “those fighting characters” (Pessen 321). During his lifetime, Jackson fought three duels.³⁰ The first, with Waightstill Avery, occurred in 1788; on May 30th, 1806, Jackson killed the Nashville lawyer Charles Dickinson, though he was severely wounded in the chest;³¹ on September 4th, 1813, he had a gunfight with the Bentons. In David S. Reynolds’s accounts, Jackson’s three duels bear out undeniably his tough fighting character (*Waking Giant* 6). Overall, western frontiersmen were regarded as tough, belligerent, masculine characters in many American minds.

The depiction of frontiersmen or pathfinders as people with conspicuous masculine robustness is not simple realism. Irving wishes to show that American masculine robustness contrasts with European effeminacy. According to Irving in *Astoria*, it is not French-Canadian voyageurs but American hunters who have “the true game spirit of the west” (139), enough to resist Indians. In Irving’s view, French-Canadian voyageurs are “too weak to contend with so superior a force” (167) of Indians. They are shown trembling with fear over being attacked by the Sioux (179). Additionally, they are regarded as an “inefficient crew” (126) because they are “incapable of toil” (126). Irving suggests they are less hardy, less robust, and less masculine than American mountain men. In a similar way, in *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, French creoles are also considered less hardy, less self-dependent, and less game-spirited than American

³⁰ For the detailed biographical accounts of Jackson’s three duels, see Robert V. Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* 42-54, 69-71.

³¹ Because of this injury, Jackson lived for nearly forty years with this scar close to his heart. Remini remarks it testifies to Jackson’s “strength, will” (*The Life of Andrew Jackson* 54).

mountain men. They tend to pursue “comforts” (11), “the confinement of the log-house” (11), and are thereby inferior to American mountain men. French creoles seem unfit for tough and adventurous lives in the wilderness. Irving compares French creoles to “the common roosters of the poultry-yard” (11); on the contrary, American mountain men are compared to “a game cock” (11). Such descriptions likely filled contemporary Americans with great nationalistic pride. This nationalistic impulse in the presentation of mountain men shows again their role as National Symbolic in forging national consciousness. In Irving’s mind, an identification with masculine robustness is conducive to forging a national identity as strong citizens of powerful empire.

The hunters and scouts who open trails to the West embody westward progress, as well as masculine robustness. They help Americans build their identity as “the (chosen) people of progress.” Perhaps no book links the pathfinders to heroic trailblazing better than Irving’s *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*.³² The main hero of this work is depicted as a game-spirited pathfinder pioneering the road to across the continent: “Captain Bonneville now considered himself as having fairly passed the crest of the Rocky Mountains; and felt some degree of exultation in being the first individual that

³² It is noteworthy here that, compared with *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* and *Astoria, A Tour on the Prairies* stresses the difficulty in winning the West. In “How the West Won: Irving’s Comic Inversion of the Westering Myth in *A Tour on the Prairies*,” William Bedford Clark provides a reading of *A Tour on the Prairies* as a sort of comic, “mock-heroic quest that quietly subverts the perennial American myth of westering, a myth that presupposes that civilization must inevitably conquer the wilderness” (336). As Clark observes, in *A Tour on the Prairies* Irving is reticent about the victory of progress over the wilderness. Irving’s reticence seems to reside in his “awareness of the hard realities of frontier life” (Clark 336), as he experiences nature’s intractable aspects through his firsthand experience of western travel. As we will see, in his two subsequent historical exploration narratives, Irving more overtly reveals his vision of progress though the representations of American mountain men as heroic pathfinders.

had crossed, north of the settled province of Mexico, from the waters of the Atlantic to those of the Pacific, with wagon” (46). It is especially remarkable that by the means of wagons Bonneville and his party moved the goods that they needed. Bonneville’s party used wagons along the South Pass to Green River (16). Sometimes they had to make bridges to get the wagons across deep ravines. According to Edgeley W. Todd, Bonneville “proved the feasibility of a wagon route across the Continental Divide which thousands of emigrants would use in the next decade and years to follow. Besides wagons, he had oxen, a cow, and a calf” (*Bonneville* 16n2).

Not only did Bonneville open the road for wagons that would be used to facilitate future emigration, he also opened paths into the Southwest and Northwest. Bonneville dispatched Joseph Walker, a renowned mountain man, into the unknown tracts of the Great Salt Lake that was claimed by Mexico at that time (*Bonneville* 159-160). In 1833, Bonneville advanced into the Northwest, especially the disputed area of the Columbia River. This expedition was mounted to recover Astoria, the place Astor had abandoned because of British occupation of the region in the War of 1812. The region of the Columbia River was under the sway of British control, like that of the Hudson Bay Company that gained hegemony in the Oregon territory after it absorbed another British fur company, the Northwest Company, in 1821. According to Irving, Bonneville sought to reconnoiter the region “to establish a trading post somewhere on the lower part of the river, so as to participate in the trade lost to the United States by the capture of Astoria” (219). However, his endeavor to lay a cornerstone for the nation’s commercial and political influence over the region was not easily achieved because of the hostile attitude

of the Hudson's Bay Company toward Bonneville's party. In 1834, Bonneville's party visited Fort Walla Walla on the Columbia, a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company. Pierre C. Pambrun, the superintendent of the Company, at first welcomed Bonneville's party as guests. But after learning that Bonneville's party planned to start fur trading with the Indians like the Nez Percés, he changed his attitude, frustrating the party's plan. Pambrun would not provide any supplies to them, and when Bonneville's party arrived at the Ottolais River (the Umatilla River, south of Fort Walla Walla), the Hudson's Bay Company refused to sell them corn. Moreover, the Company forbade the natives to trade with Bonneville's party, so they could not acquire fish and provisions. As a last resort, they had to kill two horses in order to survive (348). It is notable here that, despite such hardship, Bonneville did not give up his vision of advancing into the region. According to Irving, when Bonneville left Fort Walla Walla, he was convinced American fur trade would succeed because the Nez Percés were still friendly to them (261).

Given Bonneville's unbending will to progress into the Far West despite immense hardship, his attempt "to penetrate to the Hudson's Bay establishments on the banks of the Columbia" (219) had symbolic significance. At a time when the nation was vying with British power, an expedition into the Oregon territory with the purpose of reconnoitering British fur business and founding an American trading post represented the inevitability of American progress. Considering that the Columbia region was seen as the commercial base for an advance into Asia, Irving's Bonneville is a fitting image of the nation's desire for progress and commitment to civilization.

Along with Bonneville, other American pathfinders are generally depicted as game-spirited trailblazers who open the way to progress: “No toil, no danger, no privation can turn the trapper from his pursuit. His passionate excitement at times resembles a mania. In vain may the most vigilant and cruel savages beset his path; in vain may rocks and precipices and wintry torrents oppose his progress” (11). As Irving remarks, no hardships, such as famine, cold, and danger from perilous nature and hostile Indians, could dampen or vanquish the mountain men’s undaunted spirit for moving forward. According to Edgeley W. Todd, Joseph Walker’s party, who departed into the region of the Great Salt Lake, were “the first organized body of Americans to have blazed the route across the Great Basin of Utah and Nevada that would be followed in the next decade and years to come by countless gold seekers and emigrants to California” (*Bonneville* 285n8). Bonneville requested Walker to make “maps or charts of his route, and of the surrounding country” (162), which would provide important information about the region, whether economically or politically. In *Mapping the American West, 1540-1857*, Carl I. Wheat called the map published in Irving’s *Astoria* “another of the milestones of western cartography,” while adding “doubtless Irving picked up his information from Captain Bonneville” (qtd. in Walker 300). In “Joseph R. Walker,” a biographical essay, Ardis M. Walker points out that Carl I. Wheat could have mentioned further that Bonneville got such information from Joseph Walker (300). Obviously, Walker’s mapping of the Southwest provided geographically useful information for those seeking possible routes into the region.³³

³³ For more biographical information about Joseph Walker’s role as a promoter of

In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Nathaniel Wyeth is likewise strikingly depicted as a venturing trailblazer who helped open up the Far West. He was in the ice trade in New England in the late 1820s. However, by 1831 he planned to journey into Oregon to begin a fur business. For about five years from 1832 to 1837, he tried to gain a footing to advance his fur trade in the Oregon country, but unfortunately failed. Irving spends a considerable portion of *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* in recording his enterprise. LeRoy R. Hafen also includes Wyeth as a significant pioneer in *Mountain Men and Fur Traders of the Far West*.³⁴ Irving admires Wyeth as an adventurous harbinger of civilization, although he failed in his project to establish a fur trade and salmon fishery in the Columbia region. According to Irving, Wyeth “lost everything invested in it [the fur trade], but his hope” (176). Wyeth is also described as “the indefatigable leader of the salmon-fishing enterprise” (301). Thus, in Irving’s view, Wyeth embodies Americans’ courageous or tenacious spirit to open the trails for the nation’s economic advance over the disputed area. The reason Irving depicts him with admiration is that Wyeth endeavored to revive the American fur business, which was frustrated after Astor clashed with the Northwest Fur Company. From a nationalistic

westward advance, see Ardis M. Walker’s “Joseph R. Walker” 293, 303-305, 307, 309. In this essay, the author notes Walker’s roles as the first sheriff in the new country of Jackson in Fort Osage (in Missouri) and as guide for emigrations and expeditions like J. C. Frémont’s. Furthermore, the author introduces Walker as an instigator of mining in the West. Walker’s discovery of gold at Lynx Creek (present-day Prescott, Arizona) activated the construction of a capital for gold mining in that region. Last but not least, at the request of the senate committee of the California Legislature, Walker provided his advice about the issue of railroading to the Pacific Coast. These experiences clearly show he, as a mountain man, played a significant role in Americans’ advance into the West.

³⁴ See William R. Sampson, “Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth,” *Mountain Men and Fur Traders of the Far West* 311-331.

perspective, Irving presents Wyeth as a forerunner in recovering the nation's rights over Astoria: "He [Wyeth] had once more reared the American flag in the lost domains of Astoria; and had he been enabled to maintain the footing he had so gallantly effected, he might have regained for his country the opulent trade of the Columbia, of which our statesmen have negligently suffered us to be dispossessed" (*Bonneville* 375). In these passages, on the one hand, Irving regrets the failure of Wyeth's project in the Far West; on the other hand, he implicitly reproaches his contemporary politicians' lukewarm attitude toward securing the nation's rights over the Oregon territory. In view of Irving's assertion that "for the first time, the American flag was unfurled to the breeze" (374) in Fort Hall by Wyeth's struggle, clearly Irving sees him as a nationalistic hero in his attempt to open the road for the nation's advance. In Irving's view, Wyeth is an estimable pathfinder, along the lines of Bonneville and Walker.

Like Irving, William R. Sampson notes Wyeth's role in pioneering the West. In "Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth," Sampson mentions that Wyeth contributed to stirring up American politicians' interest in Oregon just before the 1840s expansionist policies actively unfolded. At the request of Caleb Cushing, in 1839 Wyeth provided a memoir about Oregon to the politicians of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs: "[Wyeth's] writings helped to familiarize the East with the physical and political facts of Oregon and, before the expansionist policies of the 1840s, it was men such as Wyeth who made it easier for Congress to support American interest in Oregon" (330).

In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, apart from the pathfinders such as Bonneville, Walker, and Wyeth I have mentioned above, there are other mountain men

like Robert Campbell, William Sublette, and Milton Sublette that Irving pictures as admirable trailblazers. After Fort William was constructed, subsequent wagon travelers on the Oregon Trail owed much to Campbell and Sublette. Irving calls Campbell “one of the pioneers of the trade beyond the mountains” (52). Besides Campbell and Sublette, Milton Sublette, a brother of William, is also portrayed by Irving as a guide who played an important role in Wyeth’s expedition. In August 1833, he was a virtual compass for Wyeth, guiding the way through the Crow country on the Bighorn River: “Milton Sublette was the Pelorus of this adventurous bark; being somewhat experienced in this wild kind of navigation” (304). This metaphor of Milton Sublette as “Pelorus” implies that Irving sees the mountain man as an invaluable guide for westward progress.

Frederick Jackson Turner also asserts that fur traders played a conspicuous role in the nation’s advance into the West:

The Ohio, the Great Lakes, the Mississippi, the Missouri, and the Platte, the lines of western advance, were ascended by traders. They found the passes in the Rocky Mountains and guided Lewis and Clark, Frémont, and Bidwell. The explanation of the rapidity of this advance is connected with the effects of the trader on the Indian. (13)

As indicated in Turner’s remarks, nearly all the trails over the frontiers that mountain men opened would be used as emigrants’ routes across the continent. The nationally promoted expeditions led by Lewis and Clark and later Frémont would have been impossible without the mountain men’s guiding and scouting. If pathfinders represented the westbound force of progress as revealed in their heroic roles of trailblazers and

guides, many other Americans, like the emigrants themselves, thought they too were agents of progress no less than their guides. With regard to this notion of Americans as the people of progress, we have good reason to pay attention to Frederick Jackson Turner's remarks: "The King attempted to arrest the advance by his proclamation of 1763, forbidding settlements beyond the sources of the rivers flowing into the Atlantic; but in vain. In the period of the Revolution the frontier crossed the Alleghenies into Kentucky and Tennessee, and the upper waters of the Ohio were settled" (5). Moving westward in the later colonial period meant acting against the Crown's authority. At this time, the British King did not want the people of the American colonies to further their settlements beyond the Alleghenies. Americans' desire for moving forward into the West was an unwelcome thing in British minds because, from the British perspective, Americans' progress into the West meant their growing power and independence from British influence (Turner 4, 23). Daniel Boone's westward progress into Kentucky was evidence that Americans were a people of seemingly unstoppable progress, even against the will of the British King. Likewise, nineteenth-century American mountain men's role as pathfinders and the advance of the American citizens guided by them suggest that they were constructing a national identity as pioneers of progress and creators of a civilization, all the while breaking away from the influences of the Old World.

Like *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, *Astoria* presents a striking image of pathfinders as pilgrims. In so doing, *Astoria* functions as a significant discourse—a National Symbolic—forging Americans' mythic identity as "chosen people": "[T]hey [Hunt and his men] caught a sight of what appeared to be a plain, stretching out in the

west. They hailed it as the poor Israelites hailed the first glimpse of the promised land, for they flattered themselves that this might be the great plain of the Columbia, and that their painful pilgrimage might be drawing to a close” (309). Here Hunt’s party traveling to the mouth of the Columbia River suggests the images of pilgrims bound for Canaan. In *Astoria*, even if Irving does not characterize any pathfinder explicitly as a Moses, readers may infer that Wilson Price Hunt, the leader of the overland expedition, played that role just as Daniel Boone was often depicted like Moses in Americans’ imagination. In *Boone: A Biography*, Robert Morgan mentions that Boone was considered a Moses-like figure. In 1775, he led his family and others into the uncharted area of Kentucky. Felix Walker, who was one of the emigrants led by Boone, described him thus: “One of the crew was Felix Walker, who would later describe Boone as ‘our pilot and conductor through the wilderness to the promised land.’ In his long career, Boone was often compared to Moses . . .” (164). Morgan himself elevates Boone as “the questing knight, the Moses leading his people to the Promised Land” (455). Morgan introduces two paintings from the nineteenth century which strikingly delineate Boone as Moses figure. Boone as a Moses-like leader guiding the trails toward the blessed country is depicted in William T. Ranney’s *Daniel Boone’s First View of Kentucky*, painted in 1849. George Caleb Bingham also utilized the same theme in *Escorting Settlers through the Cumberland Gap*, produced in 1850-51. As suggested by Morgan’s descriptions, these paintings commonly imply the hero’s vision or belief that he can lead his people into a beatific arcadia. In a similar way, Leutze’s fresco in the US Capitol, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its way*, shows well the American hunters’ Moses-like mission

to lead emigrants into the so-called Promised Land. The pathfinders in Leutze's painting are reminiscent of the Daniel Boone in Ranney's and Bingham's paintings. Thus, visual culture, as well as Irving's exploration narratives, offers a symbolic system—the National Symbolic, forging a national self-consciousness that Americans were a chosen people to be led into the Promised Land by God's will. These representations reflect the idea of Manifest Destiny prevalent in the first-half of the nineteenth century. The collective fantasy that American progress is an inescapable destiny ordained by Providence permeates the literary and visual representations of American pathfinders. In these ideologically-involved literary/visual narratives (or National Symbolic), the national identity of a "chosen people of progress" is manifest.

Before concluding this chapter, I want to emphasize again that Irving had a strong nationalistic attitude, and that such an attitude worked as a significant impetus for producing a national literature. In *Astoria*, Irving expresses his resentful feelings over how Astoria was sold to the Northwest Fur Company in July 1st, 1813 (436). According to Irving, in December 12th, 1813, Captain Black of the British sloop of war *Racoon* occupied Astoria and then changed the name "Astoria" into "Fort George" (491). Irving criticizes "the unfortunate supineness of the American government in neglecting the application of Mr. Astor for the protection of the American flag" (*Bonneville* 3). In other words, Irving rebukes American politicians' negligent attitude toward the Oregon territory as a major cause of Astor's defeat. At the end of *Astoria*, while describing the failure of Astor's enterprise, Irving repeatedly uses the past perfect subjunctive mood, as in "would have . . ." or "might have . . ." (503-504), to show his regret over Astor's

failure. In a representative passage, Irving writes, “in a word, Astoria *might have realized* the anticipations of Mr. Astor, so well understood and appreciated by Mr. Jefferson, in gradually becoming a commercial empire beyond the mountains, peopled by ‘free and independent Americans, and linked with us by ties of blood and interest’” (504, my italics). The noticeably iterative grammatical construction in *Astoria* suggests Irving’s conspicuous nationalism.

Irving’s nationalism, especially in opposition to Britain, is interwoven with his representations of pathfinders, nationalistically-charged heroes. Irving, and at times Parkman, presented them as the representatives of American values such as democracy, masculine robustness, progress, and new civilization and, accordingly, induced the reading public to identify themselves with these heroic figures. In doing so, Americans built up their national consciousness and bound themselves together with a sense of national integration. Therefore, Irving’s and Parkman’s western narratives should be regarded as nationally important discourses in fortifying American citizens’ identity and pride in relation to Europeans. Their narratives are like the Symbolic in Lacan’s sense because they seem to discourage Americans from identifying themselves with Europeans or European values. As Americans surrendered their previous identification with Europeans, they secured their identity as a robust people of progress who defended freedom and democracy.

CHAPTER III

SHAPING WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY THROUGH MISCEGENATION TABOO

In Chapter II, I examined how American pathfinders in travel and exploration narratives served as representative figures for certain national characteristics. We can see their considerable role in forging national identity. However, in terms of race, some mountain men—called “squaw men”—blurred the boundary between whites and Indians as they had frequent sexual relations with Native Americans¹ and adopted native ways of life. Intermarriage with Native American women could guarantee mountain men a degree of safety, trading privileges,² and domestic comfort in the dangerous and otherwise solitary wilderness. However, their voluntary racial intimacy with Indian women posed an “inauspicious” result—the instability of white Americans’ racial and ethnic integrity.

In nineteenth-century America, the notion of race was a solid criterion dividing other ethnic groups from whites. Based on the concept of race, some Americans wanted to build familial structures composed of unalloyed Anglo-Americans. Because familial structure worked as a keystone for the nation, the issue of racial identity was quite significant in fortifying national identity and unity. In this respect, mountain men’s crossing the color line was not a trivial matter. While evaluating the mountain men’s

¹ For a statistical study of mountain men’s intermarriage with other ethnic groups, see William R. Swagerty, “Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders” 164-170. According to Swagerty, of the known 312 first marriage cases, 106, or 38.9 percent involved intermarriage with Native American women (164).

² Swagerty mentions “[a]mong Indian cultures marriage yielded special trading and status privileges for a trader” (164).

contribution to national identity formation in the narratives of travel and expedition, we must never lose sight of the writers' responses or attitudes toward the "unwelcome" results mountain men brought about in terms of racial unity. In this chapter, I will examine how travel and exploration narratives in the first-half of the nineteenth century tried to solve the problem of unstable racial identity incurred by intermarriage on the frontier-borderlands. While emphasizing the mountain men's role as exemplary symbols of the nation, at the same time the narratives include another voice which cautions against racial mixing. In this chapter I will mainly focus on how the narratives attempt to stabilize Americans' unity in terms of race, examining the narratives' explicit and implicit concerns about racial mixing on the frontier-borderlands.

It is ironic that frontiersmen who provided representative national images to bond the nation's citizenry endangered that identity in terms of race. I do not mean, of course, that frontiersmen always incurred the "unwelcome" consequences of muddying racial division. In western narratives, they are rendered often as Indian fighters. In *Astoria*, Irving details John Colter's heroic exploits concerning his captivity, his hairbreadth escape, and his Indian fighting (148-150). In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving likewise stresses the pathfinders' role as Indian fighters: "The life of a trapper . . . is a perpetual state militant, and he must sleep with his weapons in his hands" (10). According to Irving, experienced mountain men always carry their guns while passing through hostile Indians' country and even keep them close while sleeping in their camps

(360). The Battle of Pierre's Hole³ narrated by Irving straightforwardly shows their prowess as Indian fighters. Renowned mountain men such as William Sublette, Robert Campbell, Thomas Fitzpatrick, and Milton Sublette all engaged with the Blackfeet in this bloody combat which occurred in July 18th, 1832. The struggle resulted in the deaths of approximately thirty-nine people (62-63). Among the casualties, twenty-six Blackfeet (more precisely, Gros Ventres) lost their lives at the hands of their enemies (the Nez Percés, the Flatheads, and trappers). While mountain men frequently engaged in Indian fighting, thereby seeming to reinforce the boundary between whites and Indians, they often crossed the boundary through intermarriage with Indian women and joining Indian allies, as indicated above.

We can see mountain men's intermarriage with Indians in visual representations as well as in western narratives from the first-half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps no artist paid as much attention to mountain men in the West as Alfred Jacob Miller. In 1837, he traveled to the West to paint the trailblazers while accompanying Captain William Drummond Stewart, the renowned Scot adventurer. At the rendezvous of mountain men that year, Miller met Joseph Walker, who had opened the road to the Southwest, as seen in Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*. After they became acquainted, Miller painted two artworks for Walker. The first is a portrait of Walker; the other depicts Walker and his Indian wife mounted on their horses. The latter work, *Bourgeois W—r, and Squaw*, painted in 1837, shows clearly that he had married an

³ For accounts of the Battle of Pierre's Hole, see chapter 6 in Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*. Also, see Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* 298-301. According to Chittenden, this fight was "the most noted battle between the Indians and the traders that ever took place in the mountains" (300).

The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
 The lands to be welded together. (*Leaves of Grass* 316)

Here, Whitman implies that Providence ultimately works toward connectedness through wedlock. However, further consideration complicates such a reading.⁴ From the beginning of nation-building, maintaining a racial difference between whites and “colored” people as a way of securing Caucasians’ racial identity was part of a national agenda to be achieved in various fields such as law, science, and “culture.” For white Americans, fortifying their racial purity and unity was a great concern, and diverse signifying systems of the nation were intertwined with one another to accomplish these purposes.

One of the representative instances was antimiscegenation laws. In *Northern Attitudes towards Interracial Marriage*, David H. Fowler points out that “one way in which the American differed from other multi-racial societies . . . has been in the extent of its reliance upon statutory laws, rather than customary sanctions, to separate its racial groups” (7). As he states, legal statutes banning interracial intimacy were significant in segregating people of color from whites. In a thorough manner, Fowler surveys the nation’s history of antimiscegenation law beginning with the colonial period. Many

⁴ Whitman portrayed a racially mixed character unfavorably in his short novel “The Half-Breed: A Tale of the Western Frontier” published in 1846, nearly a decade before the publication of *Leaves of Grass* (1855). In the story, half-breed Boddo, born of a white man and an Indian woman, is delineated as a degenerate creature in terms of physical appearance and moral tendency. He is “crooked” in the sense that he is physically a hunchback and morally a dishonest person. Whitman’s depictions of the mixed blood as “an object of pity and disgust” (47) and “the half-idiot, half-devil” (47) suggests that, at least in the mid-1840s, the author shared commonly negative sentiments against racial mixing and mixed bloods.

states banned intermarriage between whites and African Americans, mulattoes, and Native Americans. Intriguingly, “the slave states adopted relatively little legislation on intermarriage . . . partly, no doubt, because the caste line was generally so sacrosanct that intermarriage did not become an issue” (217). Thus the lack of antimiscegenation law does not automatically mean that white Americans were open-minded. The reason for the lesser degree of regulating intermarriage in some states stems from the fact that, even if the law did not exist, intermarriage was generally discouraged. There was little necessity to pass strict antimiscegenation laws since most white Americans already considered interracial marriage with “savages” an abominable mixture: “[I]nterracial marriages have always been comparatively rare in America. They were infrequent before prohibitory laws existed; they have been infrequent in states where prohibitory laws have been repealed; they have been infrequent in states which have never forbidden them” (8). Here the miscegenation taboo is clearly at work.

Scientific discourses were also closely involved with the miscegenation taboo. In the first half of the nineteenth century, most American ethnologists argued that miscegenation between races was unnatural and detrimental to the superior race (Anglo-Saxons) because such racial mixing would incur the debasement of the superior race. In *Manifest Destiny*, Anders Stephanson summarizes the idea well: “The new ‘science’ featured such aspects as phrenological measurement of skulls and the conviction that blood determined race, making miscegenation and any mixing of white and black seem a deadly danger of contamination for the superior party” (55). Even though Stephanson only mentions the negative perceptions of racial mixing between whites and blacks,

Native Americans, as “colored” people, were likewise considered an inferior race contaminating the blood of whites. Even though science is generally regarded as pursuing truth with an unbiased perspective, actually scientific research in the first half of the nineteenth century was inextricably interwoven with the contemporary racism against people of color. The ethnological, craniological, and phrenological studies performed in this age are regarded now as “pseudo-science.”

Racial difference was reinforced by the scientific theory of polygenesis—the multiple origins of the human race. The theory of polygenesis was espoused especially by American ethnologists such as Samuel George Morton, Josiah C. Nott, and George R. Gliddon. Morton initially suggested this controversial theory in *Crania Americana*, published in 1839. Morton collected thousands of skulls and measured their cranial capacity. After his research, he proclaimed the innate difference and hierarchy among races. Morton believed in a permanent innate difference between races, especially with respect to mental capability. Moreover, he ranked the human races hierarchically as follows: Europeans, Asians, Native Americans, and, lastly, Africans. His basic assumption was that cranial capacity, the volume of the skull, offers a precise criterion of intelligence.

As for the issue of racial difference between whites and Native Americans, William Stanton states, “Morton’s tabulation of cranial characters convinced him that the Indian and the white man were separate species . . .” (43). In Morton’s eye, “Indians were a distinct race and . . . they were an ancient race” (Stanton 81). In a monograph, “Physical Type of the American Indians,” Morton concludes that “if . . . we consider the

collective races of America, civilized and savage, we shall find . . . that the average volume of the brain, as measured in the whole series of 338 crania, is only 79 cubic inches” (Schoolcraft 331). Since American Indians generally had less cranial capacity than Caucasians, this strongly suggested that they were a distinct race, less intelligent and thus inferior to the latter race.

Even though the idea of polygenesis was frequently discounted by religious belief, based on the Book of Genesis, the argument for physical and even mental differences between races attracted the public’s attention and became popular in the 1840s and the 1850s.⁵ This widespread acceptance of polygenesis was largely ascribed to Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon. In 1854, the Southern ethnologist Nott and his English collaborator, the renowned Egyptologist Gliddon, had published their influential work *Types of Mankind*. This study reaffirmed Morton’s belief in polygenesis. According to Stanton, Nott was the first American ethnologist who publicly declared his belief in “the separate creation of different races” (Stanton 69). Gliddon had also claimed racial

⁵ In the late eighteenth century, the idea of polygenesis was already anticipated by Thomas Jefferson in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785). Quite contrary to his pronouncement that “all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence, in this treatise Jefferson argued not only the inherent racial difference between whites and blacks based upon physical characteristics but the physical and mental inferiority of blacks: “Besides those of colour, figure, and hair, there are other physical distinctions proving a difference of race” (146); “[T]he blacks . . . are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind. It is not against experience to suppose, that different species of the same genus, or varieties of the same species, may possess different qualifications” (150-151). For more explanation of Jefferson’s thoughts on polygenesis, see Alexander O. Boulton, “The American Paradox: Jeffersonian Equality and Racial Science” 480. According to Boulton, “in the North, such gentlemen as Dr. Samuel George Morton and George R. Gliddon in Philadelphia and Louis Agassiz at Harvard were among the earliest advocates of Jeffersonian ideas of racial differences” (485).

distinctions in his lectures since 1843 (Stanton 50). The principal thesis of *Types of Mankind* was that the human races were utterly separate species, endowed with enormously disparate intellectual, physical, and temperamental features and classified hierarchically on a biological scale ranging from the lowest type of African to the highest type of Caucasian, the Anglo-Saxon. In *Types of Mankind*, Nott depicts the racial hierarchy in the following manner:

Lofty civilization, in all cases, has been achieved solely by the “Caucasian” group. Mongolian races, save in the Chinese family, in no instance have reached beyond the degree of semi-civilization; while the Black races of Africa and Oceanica, no less than the *Barbarous* tribes of America, have remained in utter darkness for thousands of years. Negro races, when *domesticated*, are susceptible of a limited degree of improvement; but when released from restraint, as in Hayti, they sooner or later relapse into barbarism. (500)

It is notable here that, in Nott’s view, Native Americans, “the Barbarous tribes of America” (500), and African Americans were considered the lowest races, “in utter darkness” (500).

Based upon the ideas of racial difference and hierarchy, Nott furthered his argument for the degradation of mixed bloods. Nott argued that amalgamation between the lowest race (Africans) and the loftiest race (Caucasians) was unnatural and would bring about unpropitious consequences to both races—especially to the superior white race. Stanton writes “he had found that mulattoes were less intelligent than whites . . .

less hardy and shorter lived than either of the parent races” (67). Additionally, in Nott’s view, mulatto women were less likely to conceive progeny. Based on the supposed relative infertility of mulattoes, Nott predicted their eventual extinction (Stanton 4). Louis Agassiz, a natural scientist, agreed with Nott. According to George M. Fredrickson in *The Black Image in the White Mind*, like Nott, Agassiz maintained that mulattoes were “a degenerate, sterile, and short-lived breed” (161). Furthermore, he argued “not only would amalgamation create social discord, it would lower the level of the white race and have a pernicious effect on civilization” (Stanson 191). Given these scientists’ arguments, the idea that mixed bloods were a deteriorated type of human was widely accepted as self-evident truth.

To discuss further the question of miscegenation in a variety of discourses, the term “the Racial Symbolic” is useful because it involves a comprehensive signifying system for determining racial difference. As I indicated in the previous chapter, the National Symbolic is a signifying system which aims to provide national identity by enabling people to identify with nationally valuable and authorized traits. As we have seen, this process of symbolic identity formation for Americans is based upon the prohibition of imaginary identification with the mother country (Great Britain or the Old World). In other words, American national identity is constructed through foregrounding the alleged differences between Americans and British (or European) people. Such discourses are crucial in building national identity. Likewise, the “Racial Symbolic” is crucial to forging racial identity. In *Taboo Subjects: Race, Sex, and Psychoanalysis*, Gwen Bergner introduces “the Racial Symbolic” while discussing topics like the mulatto

and miscegenation. According to Bergner, “the racial symbolic requires the subject to identify and desire along same-race (homoracial) lines” (62). So the Racial Symbolic can be understood as discourses defining racial identity (or racial purity and unity) by banning racial mixing,⁶ as a way of foregrounding the supposed racial difference. As the National Symbolic involves an identification with nationally recognized or valued ideas based on the principle of difference (the prohibition of the Imaginary identification with other nations’ values), so the Racial Symbolic of Caucasians is an identification with symbolically authorized values on the basis of “difference,” a banning of racial identification with people of color. In Bergner’s account, “the miscegenation taboo functions as a hinge for the ideological symbolic order of race” (54). In other words, forbidding racial intimacy as seen in the miscegenation taboo of Caucasians works as a Racial Symbolic. By internalizing and identifying with the voice of the Racial Symbolic, one can assume one’s racial identity. The idea of Lacan’s symbolic order as a paternal function prohibiting a child from identifying with a maternal object may help us understand the meaning and function of the Racial Symbolic in racial identity formation. By banning identification with other racial or ethnic groups, the Racial Symbolic works as a decisive ideological device in shaping racial identity. In Bergner’s words, “racial ideology and the symbolic order work together to produce raced citizen-subjects” (48).

⁶ *In Desiring Whiteness*, Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks also notes that the Racial Symbolic is “founded upon a prohibition or exclusion” (25) of racial mixing. According to Seshadri-Crooks, the prohibition against miscegenation “is thus a purely cultural and therefore wholly symbolic law” (41). Similarly, in “Bathroom Doors and Drinking Fountains: Jim Crow’s Racial Symbolic,” Elizabeth Abel explains the Racial Symbolic as a signifying system stabilizing racial difference as seen in the case of Jim Crow signs (444). In her account, the Racial Symbolic aims to secure racial discrimination by banning racial crossing or racial mixing.

As Bergner notes, the Racial Symbolic is crucial to constructing racial identity, with authoritative power invisible but influential enough to dominate people's minds with respect to the issue of race.

Now I want to investigate how Washington Irving makes use of the Racial Symbolic in his depictions of racial mixing and thereby contributes to fortifying white Americans' identity in terms of race. I would argue that Irving was one of the writers who mirrored faithfully their contemporaries' sentiments toward racial mixing, negatively portraying intermarriage between white Americans and other persons of color like Native Americans. Although Irving admired mountain men as worthy of emulating from a nationalistic perspective, he does not hesitate to express his concern that their racial mixing might lead to unwelcome consequences. In *Astoria*, Irving does not conceal his concern about the growing numbers of mixed bloods resulting from intercourse between mountain men and Native Americans:

Here [in the wilderness of the far West] may spring up new and mongrel races, like new formations in geology, the amalgamation of the "debris" and "abrasions" of former races, civilized and savage; the remains of broken and almost extinguished tribes; the descendants of wandering hunters and trappers; of fugitives from the Spanish and American frontiers; of adventurers and desperadoes of every class and country, yearly ejected from the bosom of society into the wilderness. (211)

There "abrasion" is used synonymously with "debris," which means "the remains of anything broken down or destroyed" (*OED*). "Debris" also has the meaning of

“something discarded: rubbish” (*The Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*). In Irving’s view, mixed bloods are like rubbish. The “new and mongrel races” (211) are degenerated descendants created by unwelcome intimacy between “broken and almost extinguished tribes” (211) and white hunters or desperadoes. In other words, Irving sees mixed bloods as rubbish-like consequences of amalgamation between the vanishing races of the wilderness and desperadoes from civilized worlds. Mixed bloods are considered worthless humans.

Irving’s concern or anxiety over amalgamation is also present in *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, where he suggests mixed bloods are worrisome objects because they are hybrids:

The amalgamation of various tribes, and of white men of every nation, will in time produce hybrid races like the mountain Tartars of the Caucasus. Possessed as they are of immense droves of horses, should they continue their present predatory and warlike habits, they may, in time, become a scourge to the civilized frontiers on either side of the mountains; as they are at present a terror to the traveler and trader. (372-373)

The offspring of racial mixing possesses the savageness as his Indian forebears. According to Irving, the savage character of Indians overrides the trait of civilization in whites. In his view, half-breeds cannot contribute to furthering the nation’s civilization; on the contrary, they are negative and even terrible objects.

As we have seen, in *Astoria* and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving reveals his anxiety about the proliferation of mixed-bloods, especially in the region of

the frontier (an in-between space). However, Irving's antimiscegenation sentiments were even stronger in the earlier *A Tour on the Prairies*. There, in describing his firsthand observation and experience traveling through what is now Oklahoma, Irving depicts the mixed-bloods with whom he travels quite unfavorably. Before dealing with Irving's portrayal of half-breeds, I wish to point out the attitudes of two of his co-travelers. They are Count Albert-Alexander de Pourtalès and Henry L. Ellsworth. These two travelers differ in their views of miscegenation, though Ellsworth and Irving clearly share the typical Americans' viewpoint about racial intimacy.

In *A Tour on the Prairies*, Count Albert-Alexander de Pourtalès, an aristocrat from Switzerland, reveals no taboo or fear about interracial relationships with Native women. He is extremely excited at experiencing wild life in the West because he expects to encounter "Indian beauties" (15) there. Tonish, a French creole, stirs Pourtalès's desire by telling him how to "win the smiles of Indian princesses" (15). In *On the Western Tour with Washington Irving*, Pourtalès himself suggests that interracial intimacy with Indian women is anything but repulsive. In a strongly romantic tone, he asks "why don't we eat grass, run naked on all fours, and grab all the female women [*sic*] we meet in our pasture? Oh, nature! Oh, philosophy! Oh Jean Jacques!" (56). To the reading public of nineteenth-century America, this libertine bent for Indian women would have appeared scandalizing and astonishing in that Pourtalès exposes his intention of interracial intimacy with Native Americans without hesitation. In a letter to his mother dated November 30th, 1832, Pourtalès discloses that he might have fallen in love with mixed-blood maidens: "In spite of the fashionable beauties of the fort, I preferred several half-

blood families. Among them was the one from whom I ordered my magnificent costume. In this family there were two charming girls with whom I almost fell in love” (80). He observes no miscegenation taboo against these people of color. With regard to Pourtalès’s striking penchant for Native women, Andrew Burstein suggests that he proposed to acquire an Indian wife in his travels: “The animated Pourtalès, constantly amazed at the cordiality of the Osages, had goals somewhat at variance from his fellow travelers. He was in search of a ‘temporary’ Indian wife, having heard that one could be easily bargained for” (*The Original Knickerbocker* 267). Whether his search for an Indian wife stemmed from mere sexual curiosity or not, Pourtalès was quite excited about crossing the racial boundary. His attitude radically differs from the perspective of Henry L. Ellsworth, the Indian commissioner.

With respect to Pourtalès, Commissioner Ellsworth reveals his displeasure in *Washington Irving on the Prairie*:

I have spoken very freely of Mr Pourteles—he has a curious compound of character, brilliancy & fun mixed with frivolity and base sensuality—his age (19 nearing 20) is some apology, and his transatlantic indulgencies [*sic*], may be added in charity—still his conduct cannot be justified, & he will later in life, look back upon his western follies (to say the least) with shame—I have ventured through a friend, to mention the deep mortification which may be inflicted upon his future domestic felicity . . . by the appearance of red progeny, who will rise up to call him father! (67)

Here, Ellsworth clearly shows his unfavorable attitude toward interracial intimacy and the half-breeds who result from it. I would focus here on Ellsworth's phrase "his [Pourtalès's] transatlantic indulgencies" (67), which seems to suggest a major difference between Europeans and Americans when it comes to illicit sex. Ellsworth implies that Europeans' attitude toward sexuality is too casual. Anglo-Americans, predominantly Protestant, wanted to maintain both their virtue and their assumed racial purity, whereas Europeans and French and Spanish Americans were relatively flexible.⁷ In *White Captives*, June Namias points out that "whether in Puritan New England or Anglican Virginia, apparently few Englishmen married Indian women Neither the French nor the Spanish church was averse to converting Indians, many of whom married Latin Catholics. Only the English refused to welcome these unions" (87). Robert Morgan also mentions that French people in Canada practiced racial mixing while advancing into the Dakota Sioux country to develop their fur trade with the Indians (41). Here French adventurers frequently intermarried with Indians. In contrast, Anglo-Americans were generally unwilling to indulge in interracial marriage. This may be partly because American colonists had a relatively well-balanced ratio between two sexes⁸ in comparison with French and Spanish settlers. More important perhaps was the Puritan idea that Indians were heathens and religious others.⁹ David D. Smits states, "to the

⁷ See David D. Smits, "'Abominable Mixture': Toward the Repudiation of Anglo-Indian Intermarriage in Seventeenth-Century Virginia" 157.

⁸ See James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* 304.

⁹ According to Karen Woods Weierman, even converted Indians were not accepted as marriageable partners by the Puritans. The New Testament discouraged intermarriage between believers and unbelievers, though there was no prohibition of marriage based on

Puritans, who viewed themselves as God's chosen people and the Indians as barbarous heathens, interracial marriage implied an inconceivable equality of status" (3).

Puritanical aversion to intermarriage with Indians was retained by many American colonists and transferred through generations during nation-building.¹⁰ After the nation's independence, even though the influence of Puritanism declined, unfavorable sentiments toward racial mixing were still alive in the American mind. In some states, strict antimiscegenation laws were passed and abided by. Even in the states that had no legal ban against miscegenation, as noted above, most people did not practice racial mixing because they still felt an inner taboo against it. This was a form of Racial Symbolic, an inner voice regulating interpersonal intimacy in terms of race.

As we have seen, like Ellsworth, Irving shows he is in accord with the Racial Symbolic regarding miscegenation and mixed bloods. In *A Tour on the Prairies*, there are three characters who illustrate the point: Tonish, Antoine, and Beatte. Irving describes Tonish (Antoine Deschetres) as follows:

blood. However, the Puritans "rejected the New Testament separation of faith and blood. While they half-heartedly worked to convert the Indians, in their eyes the only true Christians were English Puritan ones" (Weierman 43-44). In Weierman's account, the Puritans' reluctant attitude toward intermarriage with Indians suggests the Puritans tried to secure a boundary between whites and Indians, based on blood. See Karen Woods Weierman, "A 'Wicked and Mischievous Connection': The Origin and Development of Indian-White Miscegenation Law" 34-61. See also David D. Smits, "'We Are Not to Grow Wild': Seventeenth-Century New England's Repudiation of Anglo-Indian Intermarriage" 19.

¹⁰ For instance, in 1826, Elias Boudinot, a Cherokee man who converted to Christianity, married Harriett Gold, a daughter of a white family in Cornwall, Connecticut. From the beginning of their courtship, public sentiment toward them was very hostile and harsh. Even Harriett's brother Stephen and other young people in the town "burned images of Harriett and Elias in effigy" (Gaul 14). The white community regarded her intermarriage with a Cherokee as a great humiliation to them. See Theresa Strouth Gaul, ed., *To Marry an Indian: The Marriage of Harriett Gold and Elias Boudinot in Letters, 1823-1839*.

This was a little swarthy, meager, French creole, named Antoine, but familiarly dubbed Tonish; a kind of Gil Blas of the frontier, who had passed a scrambling life, sometimes among white men, sometimes among Indians; sometimes in the employ of traders, missionaries, and Indian agents; sometimes mingling with the Osage hunters. We picked him up at St. Louis, near which he had a small farm, an Indian wife, and a brood of half-blood children. According to his own account, however, he had a wife in every tribe; in fact, if all this little vagabond said of himself were to be believed, he was without morals, without caste, without creed, without country, and even without language; for he spoke a jargon of mingled French, English, and Osage. (13-14)

Tonish is a French creole. It is not clear whether he is of mixed racial heritage; however, according to Irving's description, he is a "little mongrel Frenchman" (184) whose skin is "a little swarthy" (13). In addition, Tonish commits miscegenation with Indian women (14). He talks boastfully about Indian women he has married. He even brags that he has his woman in every tribe. Even though it is big talk, his miscegenation with Indian women is quite probable. In Irving's depictions, Tonish is a character closely associated with biological and/or cultural hybridity.

Sometimes Tonish is as debased as an animal. On October 10th, 1832, when Irving's party leaves Fort Gibson, Tonish on horseback is likened to a monkey: "He sat perched like a monkey behind the pack on one of the horses" (20). When Tonish catches a colt, Irving again says he resembles "a monkey" (150). Irving also compares him to

“an ill-broken hound” (83). Or he is often described as a clown: “He was, withal, a notorious braggart, and a liar of the first water” (14). Tonish on a horse is drawn humorously as a “beggar”: “I [Irving] . . . transferred the silver-gray to Tonish, who was in such ecstasies at finding himself so completely *en Cavalier*, that I feared he might realize the ancient and well-known proverb of ‘a beggar on horseback’” (25-26). Additionally, Irving ridicules Tonish when he describes Tonish’s awkward hunting skill: “Not one [game animal] had come within the lure of his rifle without being hit in a mortal part, yet, strange to say, every one had kept on his way without flinching” (109). Irving describes Tonish as a useless figure in capturing wild horses, noting that Tonish “had marred the whole scene by his precipitancy” (150). When Irving describes Tonish’s riding skill, he clearly reveals his ethnic prejudice: “[L]ike all the French creoles, he was a merciless hard rider” (111). According to Irving, French creoles are unskilled riders without exception, an instance of Irving’s negative attitude toward that group.

John Francis McDermott, the editor of *A Tour on the Prairies*, points out there is no evidence of Tonish’s uselessness in hunting in Ellsworth’s and Latrobe’s accounts (150n3).¹¹ McDermott discounts Irving’s prejudiced descriptions of Tonish, noting Latrobe’s mention of Tonish as an indispensable man on the trip (14n5). According to McDermott, Irving’s descriptions of Tonish are “inaccurate and unfair” (14n5) and questionable in their credibility.¹² As McDermott points out, if Irving did not describe

¹¹ As one of the co-travelers in Irving’s traveling in 1832, Charles Joseph Latrobe wrote *The Rambler in North America*.

¹² In *The Western Journals of Washington Irving*, editor McDermott reproduces Evert A. Duyckinck’s letter to William A. Jones dated July 12th, 1837, which reports Tonish’s annoyance at Irving’s unfavorable representations of him. According to the letter, Tonish

Tonish as he actually was, it might be assumed that Irving's unfavorable attitude stems from the supposed fact of Tonish's hybridity. This supposition is based on the fact that, in *A Tour on the Prairies*, Irving always presented half-breeds negatively.

Antoine and Beatte are unquestionable half-breeds in *A Tour on the Prairies*, and they do not escape unfavorable treatment. Antoine (Antoine Lombard) is "a half-breed of French and Osage origin" (23) who has "a vehement propensity to do nothing" (23). He appears to be morally degenerate because he is characterized as indolent. He is deprecated by Irving as "one of the worthless brood engendered and brought up among the missions" (23). There is an accident in which Antoine loses Irving's two horses as the traveling party crosses the Arkansas River. Upset by Antoine's error, Irving deplors his "characteristic carelessness" (74). In Irving's view, Antoine is a virtual stereotype of careless people.

Another character treated by Irving inhospitably is Beatte. Like Antoine, Beatte is the mixed offspring of an Osage and a Frenchman. Irving admits he dislikes Beatte's appearance: "I confess I did not like his looks" (24). Humorously, Irving describes his appearance as a combination of Napoleonic Europeanness and incongruous Indianness: "His features were not bad, being shaped not unlike those of Napoleon, but sharpened up, with high Indian cheek-bones" (25). Here, Beatte's high cheekbones suggest physiognomic distortion because of his Indian lineage. Irving's description suggests that the superiority of white traits is degraded by Indian blood. Beatte has "a sullen saturnine

was quite displeased at Irving's account of his "Buffalo hunt & the more grievous scandal of the Indian wife among the Osages" (*The Western Journals of Washington Irving* 61). See John Francis McDermott, Editor's Introduction: "Washington Irving as Western Traveler," *The Western Journals of Washington Irving* 49-62.

expression” (25), which likewise mars his appearance. Beatte’s manner is also “unprepossessing” (25).

Irving discloses his dislike of Beatte as part of a general distrust: “He [Beatte] had altogether more of the red than the white man in his composition; and, as I had been taught to look upon all half-breeds with distrust, as an uncertain and faithless race, I would gladly have dispensed with the service of Pierre Beatte” (25). If time had allowed, Irving would have found a more “reliable” guide. Irving’s distrust of mixed bloods obviously results from cultural indoctrination.

As I pointed out earlier, Tonish is putatively a cultural and/or biological hybrid who commits miscegenation himself and also has mixed-race offspring. Nonetheless, he promotes racial bias against half-breeds himself by advising Irving’s party not to trust mixed bloods like Beatte:

He [Tonish] whispered to us that these half-breeds were a touchy, capricious people, little to be depended upon. That Beatte had evidently come prepared to take care of himself, and that, at any moment in the course of our tour, he would be liable to take some sudden disgust or affront, and abandon us at a moment’s warning: having the means of shifting for himself, and being perfectly at home on the prairie. (29)

Because he has “the means of shifting for himself” (29), Beatte appears to have an easily displaceable identity. We are to assume that Beatte as a half-breed exists in a fluid state which may quickly alternate in either racial direction. Tonish’s remarks could only have confirmed Irving’s negative views.

Irving repeatedly introduces both Beatte and Antoine with the modifier “the half-breed.”¹³ This suggests that Irving looks at them habitually through the lens of race. To put it another way, reiteration of the phrase “the half-breed” reveals Irving’s unflinching bias against racial hybridity. Just as Tonish was angry at Irving because of the author’s unfavorable portrayal of him, Beatte too seemed displeased at Irving’s handling of him, as seen in George Catlin’s *Letters and Notes on the North American Indians*: “Mr. Irving has drawn a very just and glowing account, excepting one error which I think he [Irving] has inadvertently fallen into, that of calling him [Beatte] a ‘half breed.’ Beatte had complained of this to me often while out on the prairies” (2: 93). Catlin himself expresses his sympathy with Beatte and generously characterizes Irving’s “error” as inadvertent (2: 93). However, even if Irving’s identification of Beatte and Antoine as “half-breeds” was mistaken, Irving’s racialism remains obvious.¹⁴ The very modifier “half-breed” is a signifier of racial difference, a manifestation of the Racial Symbolic.

Irving’s uneasiness at discovering his own inner primitive drive may provide a clue to the reason he is not favorable to mixed bloods. Irving participates in the traveling party’s hunting and watches a bleeding elk escape from Captain Bean who is about to overtake it. As he observes this scene, Irving mentions humans’ aggressive instinct: “Man is naturally an animal of prey; and, however changed by civilization, will readily

¹³ See Washington Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies*, *passim*.

¹⁴ In “The Winning of the West: Washington Irving’s ‘A Tour on the Prairies,’” Guy Reynolds argues that “Irving’s amusement and delight in the company of the ‘half savage’ seems rather progressive and liberal” (96). He also mentions that “the overall tenor of Irving’s portrayal of the heterogeneous western community is marked by amused fascination” (93). However, I cannot share his optimistic claim about Irving’s “progressive and liberal” attitude toward hybridity.

relapse into his instinct for destruction. I found my ravenous and sanguinary propensities daily growing stronger upon the prairies” (90).¹⁵ As seen in his remarks, Irving assumes the dichotomy “civilization/savageness.” According to this hierarchical opposition, human beings can be divided into two categories: civilized people vs. savages. Civilized people are usually assumed to be exempt from their primitive savageness. However, Irving notices that, even though a civilized person domesticates his or her original instinct for destruction and animality, when one is put in the wild, he or she tends to fall back into regressive states of primitiveness. As Irving suggests, even civilized people like himself are likely to relapse into this savage state when environment permits. It is an uneasy and disturbing discovery. The “ravenous and sanguinary propensities” (90) that seem to grow in Irving’s mind are the last things that should happen to a civilized being.

Psychologically speaking, Irving has a negative attitude toward mixed bloods because they seem to incarnate outwardly the primitiveness he fears. Such an attitude was widespread in Irving’s age. According to Harry J. Brown, in America’s nineteenth-century nationalist literature, the intermixture of whites and Indians was generally represented by the “images of degeneracy, atavism, madness, violence, or criminality: the antithesis to the biological and historical teleology of Manifest Destiny” (20). Within such a historical and psychological context, racial mixture seemed to arouse Irving’s anxiety that it might bring about relapse and regression rather than progress. Irving clearly identifies the “half-breed” Beatte with Indians: “He [Beatte] had altogether more

¹⁵ Here Irving seems to anticipate Sigmund Freud’s psychological speculation about human beings’ aggressiveness and the civilization that aims to tame it. In *Civilization and Its Discontent*, Freud remarks that humans’ instinct for destruction cannot be safely neutralized by civilization or progress (112).

of the red than the white man in his composition” (25). Irving describes Beatte as “a half savage, whooping and yelling like a devil incarnate” (72). Even though he is portrayed as a mixed blood, Beatte does not seem to benefit from his “civilized” blood. He is dominated by Indian benightedness or savageness. Beatte has grown up as a Catholic (161-162). However, according to Irving’s descriptions, Beatte is still superstitious like the Indians. He thinks a slight jerk of his eye is “an omen” (163) and is afraid that one of his family might be sick or dead: “Beatte gave way to those superstitious forebodings to which Indians are prone” (163). Beatte’s imperviousness to civilization confirms Irving’s idea that mixed bloods represent a deterioration due to Indian blood. In *A Tour on the Prairies*, the rangers too “regarded Beatte with no very complacent eye, as one of an evil breed, and always spoke of him as ‘the Indian’” (66). He is ridiculed by people mainly because of his biracial origin. In view of Irving’s descriptions, we are made aware that many whites took half-breeds to be devil-like semi-Indians rather than people defined by their white blood.

In Irving’s mind, mixed bloods thus appear to embody an unwelcome and horrible animality that white people dislike acknowledging as their own. Irving wants to escape from his uncomfortable self-discovery that certain monstrous, aggressive, and destructive impulses abide within him. In *Astoria*, Irving describes mixed bloods as “remains” (211). In his view, they seem to embody rubbish-like traces of savagery and untamed primitiveness that destabilize acquired civilized traits.

Like Irving, Francis Parkman also shows a negative attitude toward miscegenation and half-breeds in his *The Oregon Trail*. In doing so, Parkman attempts to construct a

racial boundary between whites and people of color in accordance with the Racial Symbolic. From Parkman's perspective the trapper Rouleau is one of the "bold adventurers" (258). Parkman admires Rouleau's valor as a mountain man; however, he casts an unfavorable glance at his intermarriage with Indian women: "He [Rouleau] went all day rolling about the camp on his stumps of feet, talking, singing, and frolicking with the Indian women. Rouleau had an unlucky partiality for squaws. He always had one, whom he must needs [*sic*] bedizen with beads, ribbons, and all the finery of an Indian wardrobe" (261). Parkman considers Indian women less than ideal spouses because they seem full of vanity. Through intermarriage with these women, Rouleau at the very least wastes too much time, energy, and money in trying to satisfy their unquenchable desire for ornaments.

Parkman, who suggests the idea that intermarriage with Indian women is untoward and baneful, resembles William Bartram. In his *Travels* (1791), Bartram introduces a story about a white trader's marriage with a Seminole woman. According to Bartram, she looks suitable but is actually evil, squeezing his husband out of all his properties:

Innocence, modesty, and love, appear to a stranger in every action and movement; and these powerful graces she has so artfully played upon her beguiled and vanquished lover, and unhappy slave, as to have already drained him of all his possessions, which she dishonestly distributes amongst her savage relations. He is now poor, emaciated, and half distracted, often threatening to shoot her, and afterwards put an end to his own life; yet he has

not resolution even to leave her; but now endeavours to drown and forget his sorrows in deep draughts of brandy. (110-111)

The Indian woman is described as a *femme fatale* to whom the trader is an “unhappy slave” (110). Bartram states, “My reasons for mentioning this affair, so foreign to my business, was to exhibit an instance of the power of beauty in a savage, and her art and finesse in improving it to her private ends” (111). Here Bartram cautions white men not to be victimized by Indian women’s cunning. Racial intimacy with Indian women brings misfortune to white males because such women are vain and guileful. Such descriptions in Bartram, as in Parkman, contribute to reinforcing an idea that interracial intimacy between whites and Indians is detrimental.

The theme of white men’s misfortune from their intermarriage with Indian women is also found in captivity narratives, such as John Tanner’s *The Falcon: A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner*, published in 1830. This narrative describes Tanner’s double betrayal at the hands of Indian women and his victimization stemming from his first wife’s guile and treachery.¹⁶ In Tanner’s account, Indian women

¹⁶ In 1789 Tanner became a captive by the Shawnees. When he (Shaw-shaw-wa ne-ba-se, the Falcon) was twenty years old in 1800, Tanner married Mis-kwa-bun-o-kwa (the red sky of the morning). This Indian woman is depicted as a seducer. According to Tanner, “a good looking young woman” (Tanner 103) suggested they smoke her pipe together. After she found that he was still reluctant to do as she wanted, the Indian woman gave up her “affected coyness” (103) and sexually approached him. Afterward they married. However, Tanner’s married life was not happy. After he had several children, his wife deserted their family. Although she soon came back, she and her mother instigated an Indian (Waw-bebe-nais-sa), who had hated Tanner, to do him an injury. After learning of their malicious plot, Tanner let her leave again. Tanner then remarried another Indian woman and had three children. However, the second wife also deserted her family. In 1817, he returned to his home in Kentucky and met his brother and sister. In 1823, in order to bring his children back to Kentucky, Tanner returned to the country where he

are portrayed as seductive, dangerous, and treacherous figures who resemble the negative images depicted in Bartram's and Parkman's travel narratives. These narratives serve to reinforce the miscegenation taboo.

In *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman's depiction of Jim Beckworth likewise reveals his negative attitude toward intermarriage:

Six years ago, a fellow named Jim Beckworth, a mongrel of French, American, and negro blood, was trading for the Fur Company, in a large village of the Crows. Jim Beckworth was last summer at St. Louis. He is a ruffian of the worst stamp; bloody and treacherous, without honor or honesty; such at least is the character he bears upon the prairie. (133)

Although Beckworth was a renowned mountain man, he is treated unfavorably by Parkman, like the "half breed" Beatte in Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies*. Parkman portrays Beckworth as a person without any characteristics of civilized human beings. Beckworth's "bloody" aspect suggests his primitiveness; his "treacherous" tendency is a mark of his moral degeneration. In Parkman, such negative traits seem largely attributed to Beckworth's black blood. Given Parkman's contemporary "scientific" racialism, Beckworth is a degenerate result of intermixture between the superior race (Caucasians) and the most inferior race (Africans), who occupy the lowest rung of the human hierarchy ladder. Parkman clearly suggests here that whites regress to more primitive

had lived and there met by chance his first wife who at this time wanted to accompany him on the way to Kentucky. But, she hatched another pernicious plot against Tanner. On their way to Kentucky, she incited an Indian (Ome-zhuh-gwut-oons) to take Tanner's life. So Tanner was severely wounded from the gunshot by Ome-zhuh-gwut-oons. Although Tanner caught her with the help of others, he let her go again without any punishment (276).

states through interbreeding with inferior races. The monster-like Beckworth feeds Parkman's anxiety that whites might lose their identity as "the people of progress" through miscegenation.

Irving and Parkman's negative depictions of miscegenation and half-breeds demonstrate that they faithfully mirrored their contemporaries' prevalent sentiments, more particularly the miscegenation taboo. They basically assume a racial difference between whites and people of color, and, thereby, mixed bloods are regarded as unnatural and, to make matters worse, a deteriorated type of humanity.

Until now, I have examined the miscegenation taboo in frontier narratives mainly by focusing on representations of "voluntary" interracial relationships. However, racial boundary crossing did not always occur voluntarily. I would point to an instance of a Spanish female captive who married a Comanche, which is described in both Thomas Jefferson Farnham's and Josiah Gregg's travel narratives. Although the captive was not an Anglo-American, with this captivity story Farnham and Gregg seem to appeal indirectly to their Anglo-American contemporaries' fear of miscegenation with Indians. Intriguingly, the story of this Spanish maiden shares a similar pattern with Puritan captivity narratives like Eunice Williams's story: the female captive's involuntary intermarriage with Indians and the victim's refusal to come back to her "civilized" society.

In their travel narratives, Farnham and Gregg both include a historical anecdote regarding a daughter of Governor-General in Chihuahua, who was captured by the Comanche around the 1780s—the period of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. In *Travels in*

the Great Western Prairies (1841), Farnham introduces this story after mentioning Black Hawk's resistance and surrender in the War of 1832. In mentioning the Black Hawk War, Farnham affirms the triumph of civilization: "[I]n the order of nature, the plough must bury the hunter [the Indian]" (29). Farnham is here affirming Manifest Destiny for whites: Indian resistance, like Black Hawk's, cannot but fail because it is predestined that white civilization will conquer Indian savagism. He moves on to consider the Comanche, a migratory tribe which is "warlike" (30) and "exceedingly fond of stealing the objects of their enemies' affection. Female children are sought with the greatest avidity, and adopted or married" (30). In other words, this Indian tribe is assumed to be bloodthirsty, aggressive, and lecherous. In Farnham's description, they are delineated as troublesome beings living in a state of savagism that must be subjugated by white civilization. In this context, Farnham introduces the story about the daughter of the Governor-General at Chihuahua:

"About sixty years ago," as the tale runs, "the daughter of the Governor-General at Chihuahua, was stolen by them [the Comanches]. The father immediately pursued, and by an agent after some weeks had elapsed, purchased her ransom. But she refused to return to her parents, and sent them these words: 'That the Indians had tattooed her face according to their style of beauty—had given her to be the wife of a young man by whom she believed herself enceinte—that her husband treated her well, and reconciled her to his mode of life—that she would be made more unhappy by returning to her father under these circumstances, than by remaining where she was.'

She continued to live with her husband in the nation, and raised a family of children.” (30)

Despite her father’s attempt to recover her from captivity, “to the astonishment of all concerned” (Gregg 249), she refused to return to her home and, instead, decided to live with her Indian husband and bring up their mixed-blood offspring. This story must have been unpleasant to Farnham’s and Gregg’s contemporary readership because the girl’s decision to raise a “hybrid” family and “surprising” refusal to return home challenged the implicit assumptions of Manifest Destiny.

On June 5th, 1846, the editor James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald* linked the idea of Anglo-Americans’ superiority to the prevalent sentiments of Manifest Destiny: “The idea of amalgamation has been always abhorrent to the Anglo-Saxon race on this continent. Wherever they have spread themselves, they have kept aloof from the inferior races, and the result is . . . that barbarism has receded before the face of civilization. It is the manifest destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race to people this vast continent” (qtd. in Hietala 53). However, Bennett’s remarks unknowingly implied that white Americans’ “destiny” was not altogether “manifest” or guaranteed because it depended upon their avoidance of amalgamation with nonwhites. This attests that, even if white Americans in this period entertained a firm belief in their prosperity and progress, at the same time and to some degree they could not dispel their anxiety and fear over the disintegration of racial purity which might arise from miscegenation.

Considering the necessity to prohibit racial boundary-crossing as a precondition for white Americans’ manifest triumph over savagery, we can recognize that the captivity

story in Farnham's narrative must have triggered the readers' anxiety over the disruption of white familial integrity, forcing them to imagine the possible case of an Anglo-American female's enforced intermarriage or sexual encounter with Indians under the circumstance of captivity.¹⁷ Although Farnham does not straightforwardly express a negative judgment against the captured maiden's decision, considering the context of his story we can infer he must have intended to provoke the reading public's anxiety over racial mixing, cautioning against its pernicious results.

Like Farnham, Gregg also arouses the American reading public's fear of miscegenation. In his *Commerce of the Prairies* (1844), he introduces the same captivity story just after his remarks on the Comanche's "pilfering propensities" (249), emphasizing the tribe's ignoble savageness. He implies that the woman's "marriage" drove her to abandon her European heritage and sink into a debased state of savageness.

The captivity narrative related by Farnham and Gregg parallels Eunice Williams's captivity story, dating from the American colonial period. After their abduction and victimization, both maidens abandoned their ethnic and cultural heritage and refused to

¹⁷ Not only narratives but paintings about white female captivity played to nineteenth-century American spectators' fear of sexual encounter with Indians. For instance, Irving Couse's *The Captive* (1892) represents a woman lying on the floor of a tepee helplessly with her bleeding arms and feet tied up and an Indian staring at her, leaving the spectator to imagine her sexually vulnerable situation. For an analysis of this painting, see Alex Nemerov, "Doing the 'Old America': The Image of the American West, 1880-1920" 309. According to Nemerov, this painting "unconsciously expresses his [Couse's] culture's fears of miscegenation" (309), drawing upon a historical event, Lorinda Bewley's captivity. In 1847 the seventeen-year-old Lorinda, a teacher at the Whitman Mission in the Oregon territory, became a captive of Cayuse Indians. She was ransomed after she refused to be a wife of Cayuse chief Five Crows (Hezekiah). For Bewley's own testimony about her captivity, see William Henry Gray, *A History of Oregon, 1792-1849, Drawn from Personal Observation and Authentic Information* 497-502.

be reunited with the white world. Eunice Williams's story is related by her father John Williams, a renowned clergyman in Deerfield, Massachusetts.¹⁸ In 1704 Eunice became a captive of Indians associated with the French and, at sixteen, married a Caughnawaga Indian (Francois Xavier Arosen) in St. Louis, Canada, thus renouncing Protestantism in favor of Catholicism. Similar to the Governor-General's daughter at Chihuahua, Eunice chose to stay in an unredeemed state despite her father and others' frequent requests for her to return home. Alexander Medlicott, Jr. assumes that Eunice might have derived "comfort and kindness" (216) from the Indians in Caughnawaga and found emotional security in Catholicism. Given Medlicott's conjecture, it is possible that Eunice did not feel like returning to her Puritan community because it could not accept her religious conversion and racial mixing. Puritan society could hardly welcome her religious and ethno-cultural transference.¹⁹ Eunice's situation clearly resembled that of the Governor-General's daughter, who was likewise afraid of "the horrible ordeal of *ill-natured remarks* to which she would inevitably be exposed on being restored to civilized life" (Gregg 249, my italics). The two captive women must have known only too well how their community would treat them.

¹⁸ See John Williams, "The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion" 167-227.

¹⁹ For their unfavorable attitudes, see Alexander Medlicott, Jr., "Return to This Land of Light: A Plea to an Unredeemed Captive" 212-214. According to Medlicott, when Eunice visited New England in 1741, her cousin Solomon gave a sermon suggesting that her assimilation with Indians was a miserable thing (212). He regarded Indians as heathen savages and representatives of the devil corrupting innocent souls. Similarly, in the correspondence with Andrew Oliver a month after Eunice's return to Canada in 1761, Eunice's brother Stephen revealed his Puritan biases, considering Caughnawaga, Canada, where Eunice had lived, to be the corrupt place while New England was the land of salvation (213-214).

Eunice's case strongly represents how miscegenation and the crossing of cultural and religious boundaries were an anxiety-provoking scandal for her contemporaries, who conceived of Indians as racially despicable objects and religious heathens. Eunice's refusal to return to white society must have destabilized the assumptions of Puritan whites and called into question the Protestant dream of building "the City upon a Hill," a forerunner of Manifest Destiny in America. As a sort of archetype for unredeemed captivity narratives, the story of Eunice Williams strongly evoked the fear of racial, cultural, and religious hybridity. As we have seen, the miscegenation taboo, informing alike Eunice's captivity story from the Puritan period and Farnham and Gregg's travel narratives, promotes the Racial Symbolic in an effort to make Manifest Destiny "manifest."

Jeffrey Hotz notes that, in recounting their travels, many writers from the early Republic through the antebellum period were engaged in formulating a national literature in part by drawing borders based on the idea of race:

In late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century U.S. literature, there is often a heightened self-consciousness about place and identity as authors contemplate their own sense of belonging within a changing national landscape. In their efforts to create and respond to an unfolding national literature, white and non-white writers from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries defined, questioned, and argued about, both explicitly and implicitly, the geographic, ethnic, racial, and gendered boundaries of the evolving nation. (30)

As Hotz points out, the concept of “race,” as well as gender, was essential to securing American identity in its formative stages. Over a century later, the idea of race began to lose its centrality. For instance, as Matthew Frye Jacobson notes, UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) challenged the connection between race and intelligence and the very concept of a “pure” race. Jacobson summarizes a UNESCO statement from 1952: “[T]here is no evidence for the belief that groups differ in capacities for intellectual and emotional development; differences *within* a given race may outstrip differences *between* races; and there is no evidence that racial mixture is disadvantageous from a biological point of view” (102).²⁰ David Theo Goldberg claims that “race cannot be [regarded as] a static, fixed entity” (81) these days. In other words, nineteenth-century conceptions of “race” as a reality, criterion, and substantial “thing” (rather than an empty concept) were mythical in nature. Nonetheless, they played a very real role in the formation of a national literature.

As we have seen in this chapter, Irving, Parkman, Bartram, Farnham, and Gregg were consciously concerned with securing white Americans’ racial and familial identity. Clearly, the travel writing in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century was a part of a grand project, the shaping of American selfhood through negative and anxiety-provoking portrayals of racial mongrelization.

²⁰ Celia Brickman also provides a similar argument: “As biological scientists and anthropologists have been telling us for some time, ‘race’ is not a scientifically meaningful category: the number of genetic differences between groups commonly understood to be racially different is smaller than that found between members of a single group considered racially homogenous” (209).

CHAPTER IV

INVENTING NATIONAL CHARACTER: THE ROMANTIC RHETORIC OF THE
NOBLE SAVAGE AND THE AESTHETICS OF THE SUBLIME

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many American travelers depicted their encounters with Indians and nature in the West romantically. With an admiring tone, sometimes they described Indians according to the trope of the Noble Savage, and sometimes they portrayed Indians and nature employing the aesthetics of the sublime. In the formative age of the United States, this romantic rhetoric was dominant in the travel narratives about the West. This tendency suggests a possible relationship between these romantic tropes and the formation of the nation's selfhood. In other words, the observers drew and shaped themselves while utilizing the Other (Indians and nature) as a mirror.

As Brian W. Dippie writes, "American authors in the early 1800s who favored the Indian as a national subject were inclined to write within the imported conventions of Romanticism" (*Vanishing American* 19). One of the representative ways of portraying Indians within the European conventions of Romanticism was employing the trope of the Noble Savage. After Columbus's discovery of the West Indies in 1492, Europeans projected their own perspectives toward human nature and society onto the natives of a new and exotic world. More specifically, Europeans reinvented their traditional vision of a utopia in the Golden Age when innocent and simple mankind was assumed to live without notions of private property and luxury, though to be sure many Europeans

voiced fear of Amerindians because of their alleged cannibalism. In his “On Cannibals” (1580), Michel de Montaigne described the natives of South America as those who live in the Golden Age and criticized the barbarity of the “civilized” Europeans when compared with the natives.¹ Likewise, after his eastern Canada expedition from 1606 to 1607, Marc Lescarbot used the idea of the Noble Savage to criticize the corruption of French society (Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* 13). His *Nova Francia* (1609) described the natives as generous and “truly noble” (Ellingson 21). In the early seventeenth century, the Jesuits in New France (Canada) also portrayed Indians as noble through their writings (Symcox 227). This tradition in French literature was pursued by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, François Fénelon, and François-René de Chateaubriand (Symcox 227). In his imaginary travelogue *Télémaque* (1699), Fénelon criticized the government of Louis XIV, while describing the natives of the New World as a people of innate goodness. In *Travels in America* (1791), Chateaubriand provided a deep contrast between the Indians’ virtue of hospitality and the vice of Europeans (28).² Moreover, Europeans became the target of his critique for their malicious influences upon the Indians who were initially noble but later corrupted by Europeans (181-182). In England, John Dryden, influenced by Lescarbot, used the phrase “the noble savage” for the first time in his play *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards* (1672), and portrayed the natives as “free” (Ellingson 35-36). Although Troy O. Bickham has argued for the prevalence of the idea of *ignoble* savagism rather than of *noble* savagism in

¹ See Peter J. Weston, “The Noble Primitive as Bourgeois Subject” 64.

² Similarly, in his *René* (1802), Chateaubriand pitted the corruption of the French society against Indians’ nobleness and happiness in America. See Chateaubriand, *Atala: René* 93-94.

England because of the nation's imperial expansionism, he still acknowledges that in the eighteenth century the idea of the Noble Savage was frequently employed as a method of social criticism (*Savages within the Empire* 27-28, 95).

Even though the notion of noble savagism did not originate with Rousseau, he has been frequently associated with this idea in most people's minds in a kind of "Pavlovian" reflex (Symcox 229). Quite contrary to Thomas Hobbes's pessimistic hypothesis that humans in the state of nature would bring about wars among themselves because of their congenital passions of self-esteem and glory, in *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality among Mankind* (1755) Rousseau suggested that natural men before the advance of competitive society were peaceful and good. While expounding on the historical evolution of human organization, Rousseau assumed the innate goodness of mankind and its subsequent corruption by civilization. According to Rousseau, as time went by the social structure of mankind evolved from purely primitive stages into more complex and larger organizations like nations. Meanwhile, the development of agriculture and metallurgy led people to forsake their innate instinct for sympathy and instigate competition for property. Here Rousseau suggests the pursuit of property gave rise to vice in civilized society: "For according to the axiom of the wise Locke, *Where there is no property, there can be no injury*" (219). Desire for property resulted in widespread conflict and inequality among mankind, and, thereby, in an effort to secure personal property and order, political institutions were organized. So it can be said that people had lost not only their original virtue of innocence—because of their

growing greed and acquisition—but their freedom, as the power of political institutions became more and more strengthened.

According to Geoffrey Symcox in *The Wild Man Within*, the real intention of Rousseau’s critique of civilized society was “not to destroy it [the civilized society]—but to improve it by resurrecting certain human qualities which had been submerged in the onward march of intellectual and martial progress” (243). Rousseau acknowledged that the primitive form of human organization, despite its desirability, was no longer sustainable because of the irrevocably ongoing progress of human civilization. As Arthur O. Lovejoy argues, it might be fair to say that Rousseau wanted a “middle” state between primitive nature and civilization.³ However, Rousseau has often been referred to as a primitivist, a strenuous advocate promoting our moral choice to escape from the world of civilization and return to a presocial state of nature. This is partly due to Rousseau’s celebration of Caribbeans who were supposed not to know any jealousy, a token of the vice of civilized society (Rousseau 206). Such ideas instigated European readers’ nostalgic longings to return to a primitive and unspoiled state in an earthly paradise, following the idealized model of the Noble Savage, while escaping from the unhappy “discontents of civilization.”

To sum up, European literature reflecting the cult of the Noble Savage praised the Amerindians for their natural goodness and assumed that “man could live justly and well even without the benefit of European culture . . . if only he practiced what was natural

³ See Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau’s *Discourse on Inequality*” 31: “For Rousseau, in short, man’s good lay in departing from his ‘natural’ state—but not too much; ‘perfectibility’ up to a certain point was desirable, though beyond that point an evil.”

for him” (Symcox 229). Predicated on this assumption, the idea of the Noble Savage was used either as a moral exemplar, a touchstone for measuring the degree of moral decline in European civilization, or as a countervalue to European civilization, politics, and mores.⁴

The cult of the Noble Savage became pervasive in the United States as a tool for critiquing American mores and society. In William Bartram’s *Travels*, the Seminoles win the author’s approval with their “natural or innate” (45-46) moral virtues, such as “noble simplicity, amity and complaisance” (218). They are even elevated to the level of an idealized people living in Elysium. The Cherokees are also considered to be noble savages (284). By admiring those natives as blessed and happy people of the South, Bartram indirectly asks his readers how civilized people can be truly happy in their society where human freedom is largely curbed by the strict laws and governmental systems:

The constitution or system of their police is simply natural, and . . . little complicated . . . and produces a society of peace and love, which in effect better maintains human happiness, than the most complicated system of modern politics, or sumptuary laws, enforced by coercive means: for here the people are all on an equality, as to the possession and enjoyments of the common necessities and conveniences of life, for luxuries and superfluities they have none. (388)

⁴ For the discussion of European writers’ use of the trope of the Noble Savage as a means of criticizing the vices of Europe, see also Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* 104.

The trope of the Noble Savage in Bartram's *Travels*, as in European literatures, offers a critical voice against oppression, inequality, and the luxury of life in civilized worlds.

In Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies*, a frontiersman's unjust and cruel exercise of arbitrary law over a noble Osage exemplifies the vice of civilization. In Irving's view, the Osages live in freedom, innocent of the ostentatiousness of civilized people. One young Osage is mentioned as having an "open, noble countenance and frank demeanor" (33), which suggests that Irving associates him with the trope of the Noble Savage. According to Irving, a frontier farmer or squatter becomes angry when he finds his horse gone and hastily judges that it is Indians who committed the plunder. While Irving's party tries to dissuade him from taking revenge on Indians, an Osage approaches them bringing the horse the frontiersman just lost. Far from showing his gratitude to the Osage, this settler tries to punish him. In Irving's account, the settler is about to exercise arbitrary "Lynch's law" (33), throwing all the blame for the horse thievery on the Indian and mistaking his goodwill for deception. The settler believes the Indian intends to demand some reward for bringing the horse back, but Irving denounces him as an "old Lycurgus, or rather Draco, of the frontier" (33): "When I compared the open, noble countenance and frank demeanor of the young Osage, with the sinister visage and high-handed conduct of the frontiersman, I felt little doubt on whose back a lash would be most meritoriously bestowed" (33).

Bartram and Irving clearly utilize the cult of the Noble Savage as a way of criticizing American society and morals. But we should not discount the fact that there was a significant difference between Europe and America with respect to the

employment of the trope of the Noble Savage. In Europe, the romantic trope was mainly used for the purpose of criticizing the evil aspects of “Europe’s own” corrupted civilization; however, in the United States it contributed to strengthening nationalism and national identity formation, quite apart from furnishing a critique of political or moral decline.⁵

As noted in Chapter II, Irving regards America as a land of freedom. Wild horses running on the Western prairies symbolize the nation’s freedom (*A Tour* 10, 114). Considering his view of the European society as aristocratic and hierarchical, Irving’s description of the West is implicitly nationalistic. Likewise, Irving’s portrayal of Indians as free, natural men is involved with national identity formation.⁶ With his romantic gaze, Irving portrays the Osage who returns a horse back to the frontier settler as the symbol of freedom:

Such is the glorious independence of man in a savage state. This youth, with his rifle, his blanket, and his horse, was ready at a moment’s warning to rove the world; he carried all his worldly effects with him, and in the absence of artificial wants, possessed the great secret of personal freedom.

(34)

⁵ Gaile McGregor and Helen Carr pay attention to the fact that the trope of the noble savage played a central role nationalistically in differentiating “innocent” America from “corrupted” Europe. See Gaile McGregor, *The Noble Savage in the New World Garden* 96; Helen Carr, *Inventing the American Primitive: Politics, Gender and the Representation of Native American Literary Traditions, 1789-1936* 8, 23-24.

⁶ John M. Coward notes that “eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Americans used the Noble Savage to link themselves to the imagined attributes of this ‘New World,’ a place of natural men and earthly abundance, free from the class conflicts of European history” (*The Newspaper Indian* 7).

On Oct 26th, 1832, Irving's traveling party encountered seven Osages returning home after hunting. Among them, an Osage who speaks with Beatte is depicted as having "a free and noble mien" (152). It is the Osages' freedom that Irving envies (153).

The fact that freedom as a virtue of the Indians has a nationalistic implication is reaffirmed by Irving's portrayals of American pathfinders in terms of the romantic traits of the Noble Savage. As seen in Chapter II, in Irving's *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* there is no remarkable difference between noble Indians and white pathfinders in that they are all commonly free from the confinement of civilized worlds: "With his horse and his rifle, he [the mountain man] is independent of the world, and spurns at all its restraint" (*Bonneville* 11). Irving paints the white heroes with his characteristic romantic touch, portraying them as semi-Indians enjoying the "wild chivalry in the mountains" (*Bonneville* 12), which is quite similar to a later phrase associated with Indians—"the wild chivalry of the prairie" (*Bonneville* 16). Such similarity attests to Irving's identification of the nationalistic heroes with noble Indians.⁷ To put it differently, Irving grafts a defining virtue of noble Indians, freedom, onto white pathfinders, and in this way he contributes to shaping American identity.

American nature and Indians are nationalistically portrayed by Irving not only in their personification of American freedom—as an antithesis against the hierarchical and

⁷ Native Americans also served as icons of American freedom and independence in the American Revolutionary War. It is noteworthy that American colonists identified themselves with Indians, as seen in their Indian-like costumes. Revolutionary Americans disguised themselves like Mohawk Indians at the Boston Tea Party. See John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* 53 and Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* 5.

repressive structure of the European political systems—but also in their incarnation of the nation’s simplicity as opposed to Europeans’ spoiled and decadent way of life typified by the luxury of civilization. In *A Tour on the Prairies*, Irving mentions that simplicity resides in American nature:⁸

After a toilsome march of some distance through a country cut up by ravine and brooks, and entangled by thickets, we emerged upon a grand prairie. Here one of the characteristic scenes of the Far West broke upon us. An immense extent of grassy, undulating, or, as it is termed, rolling country, with here and there a clump of trees, dimly seen in the distance like a ship at sea; *the landscape deriving sublimity from its vastness and simplicity*. To the southwest, on the summit of a hill, was a singular crest of broken rocks, resembling a ruined fortress. (106, my italics)

Irving here clarifies simplicity as one of the conspicuous characteristics of American West. A few pages later, he develops further this notion of simplicity in his description of “a vast and magnificent landscape” (108) around the Red Fork. In his eyes, the prairie offers a proud venue which can vie with “the most ornamented scenery of Europe” (108):

The prairies bordering on the rivers are always varied in this way with woodland, so beautifully interspersed as to appear to have been laid out by the hand of taste; and they only want here and there a village spire, the

⁸ The notion that American nature is simple is also found in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America* 27.

battlements of a castle, or the turrets of an old family mansion rising from among the trees, to rival the most ornamented scenery of Europe. (108)

Irving pits the simplicity of American nature against Europe's artificial environment and, moreover, regards the West as a proper place where the nation's youth can grow up in innocence (*A Tour* 55). In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving again emphasizes the simplicity of Indians in his portrayal of a Kansas chief, White Plume, as one of the "unsophisticated children of nature" (22). Given the British fur trappers' European luxury (*Astoria* 12-14) mentioned in Chapter II, such simplicity of the Indians sharply contrasts with the Europeans' luxurious and spoiled way of life. Irving clearly highlights the nationalistic virtues of simplicity and innocence through his delineation of the West and Indians as American symbols.

Like Irving, in his travel accounts George Catlin also pays attention to the virtues of freedom and simplicity as national characteristics. According to Catlin in *Letters and Notes*, Daniel Boone is the authentic model of a national character that absorbs the virtue of simple nature while escaping from the negative aspects of the Eastern life. In Catlin's eyes Boone embodies simplicity and innocence uncorrupted by the civilized people's guilefulness, freeing him from the pernicious influence of European civilization:

[H]e is the true model of an American—the nucleus around which the character must form, and from which it is to emanate to the world. This is the man who first relinquished the foibles and fashions of Eastern life, trailing his rifle into the forest of the Mississippi, taking simple Nature for his guide. From necessity (as well as by nature), bold and intrepid, with the

fixed and unfaltering brow of integrity, and a hand whose very grip (without words) tells you welcome. (2:159)

As a semi-Indian, Boone incarnates national characteristics such as “bold and intrepid” virtues, that is, the virtues of the Noble Savage. Thus, in Catlin the virtues of noble Indians are incorporated into the ideal character of the nation as a whole.

Prior to Irving and Catlin, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur and Thomas Jefferson had already suggested an idea that the virtues of nature and Indians might shape American national characteristics. In Crèvecoeur, the freedom and simplicity of Native Americans are identified as essential characters of national identity. In *Letters from an American Farmer*, he describes Indians as free (214) and simple (211, 222) and transforms these virtues into national characteristics, emphasizing that Americans are those who display freedom and simplicity (67). According to him, the American farmer’s “felicity” stems from his “freedom” (52). The colonists in Nantucket lead their lives with “the most innocent freedom” (162). Americans live simply, with “no great refinements of luxury” (67), like those islanders. Henry Nash Smith further points out that Crèvecoeur emphasizes that American agrarian communities displayed “an ideal simplicity” (*Virgin Land* 127).

Like Crèvecoeur, Jefferson preferred American agrarianism to a “European” pursuit of urbanization. According to Bernard W. Sheehan, this agrarianism as a nationalistically charged ideal is closely intertwined with primitivism:

Slightly less pristine, the theme of the pastoral garden added some of the characteristics of a complex reality absent from the paradisaic formula. Yet a

basic element of primitivism remained: man was intimately bound to his environment. His virtues, as with the noble savage, were those of nature.

(“Paradise and the Noble Savage in Jeffersonian Thought” 337).

In Jefferson as well as in Crèvecoeur, primitivism is an important factor in forging the national character of simplicity. More specifically, Jefferson promoted primitive simplicity as a virtue of American national identity. In warning against sending American youth to Europe, Jefferson reveals his idea of American nature as a beneficial source for maintaining the virtue of simplicity.⁹ Jefferson’s concerns that American youth in a transatlantic world might abandon their home country’s simplicity in favor of European luxury reminds one of Irving’s opinion that American nature provided an unspoiled place for securing simplicity (*A Tour* 55). According to Leo Marx, the virtue of simplicity which Jefferson emphasized stems from his “belief in the unspoiled American landscape as peculiarly conducive to the nurture of the ‘moral sense’” (*The Machine in the Garden* 131). Jefferson develops the notion of simplicity which stems from American primitive nature into an essential basis for his pastoralism and national identity formation.

But it is important to recognize that white Americans did not wholly embrace primitivism when it came to inventing national character. The persona James in Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer* mentions that Indians living in the village where he seeks his refuge after the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War are quite free and simple and live happily with their innate goodness (211-215).

⁹ See Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* 131.

However, the narrator does not anticipate that he as a civilized person can live happily as those natives do. He thinks that his civilized way of life cannot be replaced by Indians' primitive one (215) and is on the alert against "the most perfect freedom" (214) of Indians, that is, the excessive and unrestrained enjoyment of unlimited freedom in nature. Some anxiety or fear of embracing primitivism is also found in Irving, especially concerning the issue of racial mixing. In *A Tour on the Prairies*, Irving describes full-blood Osage Indians as noble, but negatively portrays mixed bloods such as Beatte and Antoine, the representative figures of racial amalgamation between the Osages and Europeans, as we have seen. This attitude largely attests to white Americans' ambivalence toward Indians: Although they admire "primitive" Indians as noble, such a favorable and romantic acceptance of Indian nobility is tolerable only if they can secure their "distance" safely from the primitive Indians. If Indianness threatens racial boundaries in the form of amalgamation, it becomes something abhorrent and detestable.

Even if white Americans identified or fused themselves to some extent with the noble virtues of Indians and nature for nationalistic purposes, in the end they declined to embrace their primitiveness altogether. With respect to the matter of association and dissociation with Indians, it is worth noting that Helen Carr, in *Inventing the American Primitive*, points out that while Americans employed the trope of the Noble Savage to differentiate American innocence from European corruption they in turn distanced themselves from Indians by foregrounding their *ignoble* savagism:

[I]f the Americans intended to establish an empire, and to legitimize 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 colonization. . . . [T]he 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. (24)

From a slightly different point of view, I want to emphasize that, throughout the course of building American empire, many white Americans in the formative period made Indians and nature their “Others” even when they viewed them and the environment through the lens of romanticism. This othering, or dissociation following association, stems from a residual fear of Indians and nature. Nature in a wholly savage state was intimidating because of its unfamiliarity. Unlike Eastern nature influenced and largely tamed by Americans, the West was still uncharted and remained recalcitrant. The West, full of danger, was frequently an object of fear. For instance, in *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, when Captain Bonneville’s party passes through the region of the Beer (or the Soda) Spring, Irving describes this unfamiliar area produced by volcanic activities in ancient times as terrifying, evoking feelings of “awe and uneasiness” (211):

Around this plain are clustered numerous springs of various sizes and temperatures. One of them, of scalding heat, boils furiously and incessantly, rising to the height of two or three feet. In another place, there is an aperture in the earth, from which rushes a column of steam that forms a perpetual cloud. The ground for some distance around sounds hollow, and startles the

solitary trapper, as he hears the tramp of his horse giving the sound of a muffled drum. He pictures to himself a mysterious gulf below, a place of hidden fires, and gazes round him with awe and uneasiness. (*Bonneville* 211)

Indians too were looked upon as terrifying, although they were also romantically portrayed as free, simple, or noble. The idea that Indians were terrifying reflected white Americans' actual confrontation with Indians in the wilderness of the American continent. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. points out that "Europeans could easily ennoble the Indian because of their remoteness from savage warfare" (*The White Man's Indian* 88). Unlike the Europeans, however, white Americans had undergone many bloody conflicts with Indians. Accordingly, after the series of Indian conflicts such as the War of 1812, the Winnebago War (1827), Black Hawk's War (1832), the First Seminole War (1817-1818) and the Second Seminole War (1835-1842)—aside from the Pequot War (1637), King Philip's War (1675-1676), the French and Indian War (1754-1763), and Pontiac's uprising (1763-1766) during the colonial period—white Americans could hardly have escaped fear of Indians. In Catlin's *Letters and Notes*, Black Hawk, the war chief of the Sauk and Foxes, "carried a sort of terror through the country" (2: 211). Like Catlin, Irving discloses his fear of Indians in his essay "Traits of Indian Character" (1819-1820), included in *The Sketch Book*. Although he praises Indians' simple character, he undercuts his own romantic view about Noble Savages by pointing out their bloodthirsty atrocity in warfare: "His [the Indian's] nature is stern, simple and enduring. . . . In peace he has too often been the dupe of artful traffic; in war he has been regarded as a ferocious animal, whose life or death was a question of mere precaution and

convenience” (242-243). Such an ambivalent attitude toward Indians is repeated in Irving’s *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, where he depicts the Kansas chief “White Plume” as follows:

In the middle of the camp, before the principal lodge, sat the two chieftains, Captain Bonneville and White Plume, in soldier-like communion, the captain delighted with the opportunity of meeting on social terms with one of the red warriors of the wilderness, *the unsophisticated children of nature*. The latter was squatted on his buffalo robe, his strong features and red skin glaring in the broad light of a blazing fire, while he recounted astounding tales of *the bloody exploits* of his tribe and himself in their wars with the Pawnees; for there are no old soldiers more given to long campaigning stories than Indian “braves.” (22, my italics)

On the one hand, the Kansas chief White Plume is favorably looked upon as one of “the unsophisticated children of nature” (22) who do not have any notion of sophistication or taint of civilization. On the other hand, he is portrayed as a formidable warrior with “bloody exploits” (22) behind him.

In *A Tour on the Prairies*, although the Osages are described as the noble savages, the Pawnees are portrayed in a wholly different manner. On entering the hunting grounds of the Pawnees, Irving’s party fears assaults by Indians who might ambush them along the trail (94). The terror over the Pawnees reaches its peak in Chapter XXII, “The Alarm Camp,” where Irving describes the pandemonium following an erroneous report that Pawnees are approaching:

“Pawnees! Pawnees!” was now the cry among our wild-headed youngsters. “Drive the horses into the camp!” cried one. “Saddle the horses!” cried another. “Form the line!” cried a third. There was now a scene of clamor and confusion that baffles all description. The rangers were scampering about the adjacent field in pursuit of their horses. One might be seen tugging his steed along by a halter; another without a hat, riding bare-backed; another driving a hobbled horse before him, that made awkward leaps like a kangaroo. . . . “Where is my saddle?” cried one. “Has any one seen my rifle?” cried another. “Who will lend me a ball?” cried a third, who was loading his piece. “I have lost my bullet-pouch.” “For God’s sake help me to girth this horse!” cried another. (129-30)

The narrative of Commissioner Henry Leavitt Ellsworth, a companion of Irving in his 1832 travels in Oklahoma territory, informs us that Irving himself was also significantly terror-stricken at this point: “M^r Irving could find only one *Leggin*, and he was calling through the camp loud and louder still, for his odd leggin, of mighty little consequence in a battle—He was as *pale* as he could be, and much terrified” (*Narrative* 93). Fear of the Indians was tied to one’s vulnerable proximity to them. In the Pawnees’ hunting grounds, Irving’s party could not secure a safe distance from hostile Indians, and such closeness bred disturbance, anxiety, and fear.

According to Irving’s *Astoria*, other Plains Indians, such as the Crow, the Blackfeet, and the Sioux, were also objects of terror for white Americans. Wilson Price Hunt’s party on an overland expedition bound for the mouth of the Columbia River is

overwhelmed by terror of the Sioux: “[T]he very name of a Sioux,” writes Irving, “became a watchword of terror” (*Astoria* 179). Also, in *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, fear of the Crows and Blackfeet is recorded by Irving when he relates Captain Bonneville’s progress toward Union Pass following Green River (in the present state of Wyoming). The Gros Ventres, a tribe of the Blackfeet, were mentioned earlier as “the most lawless and predatory” (51) of Indians.

Likewise, in their travel narratives, Thomas Jefferson Farnham and Francis Parkman represent Indians and the West itself as fearful objects. In *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, Farnham becomes nervous as he goes through the “dreadful wilderness” (6) after departing the familiar and safe society of civilization. Violent storms in the West double his fear (9-10). As he moves further into the Western wilderness, Farnham, like Irving, fears attacks and scalping by the Pawnees and Comanches.¹⁰ Parkman also notes that emigrants bound for Oregon and California were particularly afraid of the Pawnees (*The Oregon Trail* 57).

Clearly, Indians and the Western environment had both positive and negative aspects in many white Americans’ eyes. On the one hand, white Americans tended to preserve the romantic tropes of Indians and nature, employing them for nationalistic purposes, but, at the same time, they felt negatively toward Indians and nature since they remained wild and often *terribly* ferocious.¹¹ Whites likely felt some necessity to

¹⁰ For the author’s descriptions of his fear of Indians, see *Travels in the Great Western Prairies* 8, 11, 16, 18, 37.

¹¹ Thomas F. Gossett also points out that for white Americans who wanted to subdue the Western wilderness, Indians were always the objects of “terrible danger” (*Race: The History of an Idea in America* 244).

reconcile these contradictory sentiments toward the West and its inhabitants. At least for some influential travel writers, the aesthetics of the “sublime” offered a solution to reconcile their ambivalent perceptions and sentiments by providing a “safe distance,” a consequence of the aesthetic experience of the sublime. By securing distance from the primitiveness of the West, in an inverse way they could secure their selfhood as civilized people.

Before discussing the issue of “distantiation” underlying the aesthetic portrayals of the sublime as a means of inventing white selfhood, it might not be amiss at this point to take a glance at Barbara Novak’s argument about the visual representations of the sublime in the field of American landscape painting. In *Nature and Culture*, Novak argues that nineteenth-century American landscape paintings were conspicuously involved with nationalism by representing the sublimity and grandeur which resided in American nature (7-8). In other words, the nationalistically charged sublimity in nature suggested the nation’s masculine and virile power. As seen in William Cullen Bryant’s phrase “wild grandeur peculiar to our country” (qtd. in Novak 5), American grandeur provided a source of nationalistic pride. As a representative case, aesthetic representations of Niagara such as Frederic Edwin Church’s *Niagara* (1857) made the cataract a national icon. Church’s *Niagara* embodied “the robustly masculine spirit of the nation” (Tim Barringer, *American Sublime* 55). In a vein similar to Novak, Andrew Wilton also mentions that “[n]ational pride identified itself with the glories of the western landscape” full of magnificent scenery (“The Sublime in the Old World and the New” 32). As Novak, Barringer, and Wilton commonly argue, it is undeniable that

nineteenth-century paintings contributed to strengthening nationalism with their emphasis on the nation's grandeur by representing the sublimity of American landscape.

Novak pursues her argument, claiming that American paintings disclosed a divinity in American nature by representing a *religious* sublime which slightly altered eighteenth-century aesthetics of the sublime. Although Thomas Cole, the representative American landscapist of the first-half of the nineteenth century, was familiar with Edmund Burke's aesthetics of the sublime, he emphasized more the significance of representing divinity in nature: "[T]he wilderness is YET a fitting place to speak of God" ("Essay on American Scenery" 100). This supports Novak's assertion of Cole's strong interest in expressing a religious sublime in nature.¹² In Novak's view, many traveler-painters conveyed "the idea of Creation—of a primal and untouched nature" (189) and the "overtly religious" (150) sublime by showing their audience the primitiveness of American nature. In doing so, art could be related to religious morality which aimed "to assist man toward his divinity" (10). Hence, she maintains that the paintings in nineteenth-century America lacked an Old World sense of nature's darkness or destructiveness: "Nature's wonder, nature's majesty, nature's sublime power, nature's embodiment of Deity were contemplated by the small mediating figures in these landscapes without much *recognition* . . . of nature's negative aspects . . ." (199). She even claims that an American recognition of dangerous nature—as seen in Herman

¹² See Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting 1825-1875* 40. Also see Elizabeth R. McKinsey, *Niagara Falls: Icon of the American Sublime* 72, 88, 90, 102, 110.

Melville—was rather anachronistic because such a perspective differed from the widespread tendency to depict nature positively (198).

Concerning the matter of whether nature was regarded as dangerous or divine, Elizabeth R. McKinsey observes that “during these first decades of the nineteenth century, thoughtful Americans did [manage to] hold the two parts of the ‘divided landscape’ in balance” (*Niagara Falls* 124). According to her, as time went by the balance collapsed: More and more the perception of a terrifying nature was on the decline, and the representation of nature’s divine promise and moral elevation became prevalent. Like Novak, while discussing Cole’s paintings McKinsey argues for the dominance of the moral sublime in nineteenth-century paintings.¹³ In a similar vein, Andrew Wilton interprets “a natural cross of snow” (35) drawn in Thomas Moran’s *Mountain of the Holy Cross* (1875) as “a Christian symbolism in the new lands of Western America” (35). In Wilton’s view, Moran’s painting *The Chasm of the Colorado* (1873-4) likewise conveys the idea that American nature is sanctified place: “God resides in the rocks and the desert, and these cliffs and pinnacles are the walls and spires of His temples, a New World equivalent of the holy places of Palestine and the monuments of Egypt” (*American Sublime* 35).

I want to point out that a recognition of the dark side of nature and subsequent fear of it were frequently presented in travel narratives of the first-half of the nineteenth century. If we accept Novak’s argument that traveling painters mainly focused on nature

¹³ In McKinsey’s accounts, Cole’s *Views of Niagara Falls* (c. 1829) denotes “God’s presence at the gateway to Eden in the Expulsion” (230). See also John K. Howat, *The Hudson River and Its Painters* 40.

as divine object so as to evoke “overtly religious” (150) feeling, the same cannot be said of most authors of travel narratives. Observers in travel narratives expressed another kind of sublimity through their “distantiation” from threatening natural landscapes or Indians. As we will see, this distantiation had double effect. On the one hand, the traveling subjects could maintain their romantic sentiments toward their Western Others by distantiation, mitigating terrible feelings and converting them into delightful feelings. On the other hand, the traveling subjects could invent or shape their national character as civilized Americans by a distantiation from the primitive (and/or excessive, traumatic) objects, namely American nature and Indians. Such an aesthetic distantiation in portraying primitive Others signifies white Americans’ final refusal to identify with them. In order to investigate the double effects produced in distancing, it is necessary to turn to the issue of distantiation discussed in the aesthetics of the sublime.

In eighteenth-century Europe, breaking away not only from Longinian tradition of the rhetorical sublime but also from neoclassical influences, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant played a significant role in constructing the aesthetic theories of the sublime with respect to nature and also contributed to opening the new age of romanticism. For Longinus, sublimity is achieved by artists who are able to form grand conceptions and are possessed by powerful and inspired emotion.¹⁴ However, Burke focuses on the sublime in connection with an encounter with nature, assuming that all our knowledge comes by way of sense experience. It can be said that Burke establishes his own empirical theory of the natural sublime, focusing on sublime sensations and the

¹⁴ Longinus, *On the Sublime* 13.

astonishment provoked by the awesomeness or awfulness of the natural landscape.¹⁵ Burke identifies the possible conditions of the aesthetic experience: pain, terror, obscurity, power, privation, vastness, infinity, magnitude, difficulty, and magnificence. Given other aesthetic theorists' arguments of the eighteenth century, the sublime can be reorganized into several categories, such as size or length (height/depth), weight, light/darkness, color, sound, and force, and might also regard the following examples as "sublime": widely extended plains, boundless ocean, the magnificent pyramids of Egypt, seemingly topless mountains like the Alps, lofty towers or steeples, overhanging precipices; great masses of rocks; a flash of lightening, utter darkness; dark, gloomy, and obscure objects; earthshaking thunder, the noise of grand cataracts like Niagara Falls; earthquakes, eruption of volcanoes, stormy oceans, tempests, tornadoes, terrifying and dangerous creatures, and so on.

According to Burke and Kant, in order to derive a sublime feeling from natural objects, the subject must secure a certain distance from them. Even prior to Burke and Kant, Joseph Addison and David Hume also focused on "distance" as an indispensable condition of the sublime feeling. In *Spectator* 418 (June 30th, 1712), Addison provided his view of the aesthetic experience, focusing on "distance" as a prerequisite condition of the sublime:

When we look on . . . hideous objects, *we are not a little pleased to think we are in no danger of them.* We consider them at the same time, as dreadful

¹⁵ For more explanations of the distinction between the rhetorical sublime and the natural sublime, see Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* 11.

and harmless; so that the more frightful appearance they make, the greater is the pleasure we receive *from the sense of our own safety*. In short, we look upon the terrors of a description, with the same curiosity and satisfaction that we survey a dead monster. . . . It is for the same reason that we are delighted with the reflecting upon dangers that are past, or in looking on a precipice *at a distance*, which would fill us with a different kind of horror, if we saw it hanging over our heads. (*The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* 68.)

Clearly, Addison already recognized the value of distance in the sublime feeling. The significance of distance as a prerequisite of the sublime experience also did not escape David Hume's attention. In his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Hume considers why distance generates the sublime feeling toward an object:¹⁶

[A] great distance increases our esteem and admiration for an object. . . . Now when any very distant object is presented to the imagination, we naturally reflect on the interposed distance, and by that means, conceiving something great and magnificent, receive the usual satisfaction. (*The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* 199)

Although the significance of distance was suggested by Addison and Hume, it was Burke who discussed the importance of it in a clear manner while focusing on the psychological relationship between terror and one's distance from it. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Burke

¹⁶ For more explanation of Hume's emphasis on distance as a factor in sublime feeling, see Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime* 64-65.

particularly emphasized that terror is “the ruling principle” (54) and the source of the sublime:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the idea of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. . . . When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but *at certain distances*, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience. (36-37, my italics)

According to Samuel H. Monk, thanks to Burke “the cult of romantic terror” became pervasive even before the advent of nineteenth-century Romanticism (*The Sublime* 100). Similarly, Thomas Weiskel also emphasizes that “[i]t was Burke who first insisted upon the centrality of terror in the sublime moment” (*The Romantic Sublime* 85). Undeniably, the significance of the Burkean sublime resides in its emphasis upon the psychological effect of terror. According to Burke, one can experience sublime feelings only if he or she can secure some distance from terrifying objects. The distance works as a safety net or screen which mitigates the terrible objects’ traumatic impact on the subject, in conformity with the passion for “self-preservation.”¹⁷ In so doing, the pain or terror is converted into delight, which is not a positive pleasure but a negative one because the

¹⁷ For the explanations of self-preservation as a core passion which lies at the heart of the sublime, see Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* 36, 123.

delightful feeling is generated by negating pure terror or pain. In this regard, the sublime feeling of delight caused by the distantiation from terrible objects can be considered a “negative pleasure” in the Kantian sense.¹⁸

In his metaphysical consideration of aesthetic phenomena in *Critique of Judgment* (1790), deeply influenced by Burke, Kant argues that distance is crucial in experiencing sublimity. In discussing the “dynamical sublime,” Kant says:

Bold, overhanging, and as it were threatening rocks; clouds piled up in the sky, moving with lightening flashes and thunder peals; volcanoes in all their violence of destruction . . . these exhibit our faculty of resistance as insignificantly small in comparison with their might. But the sight of them is the more attractive, the more fearful it is, *provided only that we are in security. . . .*” (100, my italics)

In Kant’s scheme, the dynamical sublime starts from our encounter with threatening natural objects. When faced with these objects, our resistance seems to be trifling and useless, so we may be simply overwhelmed with fear. However, explains Paul Crowther, we can “transcend fear and face destruction courageously—thus acting on principles of moral conduct which testify to our true vocation as rational supersensible beings” (*The Kantian Sublime* 111). In other words, there occurs “a metaphorical substitution of a ‘power within’ for the external power” (Weiskel 95). Notably, such a moment of substitution or metaphysical transcendence is possible, “provided only that we are in security” (Kant 100). According to Crowther, “Where Kant does agree with Burke,

¹⁸ According to Philip Shaw, Kant would “agree with Burke in concluding that the sublime is a source of pleasure, albeit of a strictly negative kind” (*The Sublime* 79).

though, is . . . that to experience the dynamically sublime we must be in a position of safety” (110). Through “distantiation” from the traumatic force which resides in nature, the subject can assume power within himself to rise above nature and prevent the power of nature from getting the better of him.

All things considered, “distantiation” in the sublime discussed by eighteenth-century European thinkers produces double effects: On the one hand, it helps the subject maintain romantic sentiment toward natural objects, by letting him recoil from their more terrible and forbidding aspects. This distantiation allows him or her to feel loftiness, admiration, and awe toward the terrible and “forbidding” object by putting the subject out of danger and in security. On the other hand, the distantiation in sublime experience is conducive to securing selfhood by providing a mechanism for overcoming the excessive and overwhelming power of natural objects. Thus, Philip Shaw says, “the sublime is a divisive force, encouraging feelings of difference and deference . . . (*The Sublime* 9). If I might add a few words to Shaw’s observation, “deference,” the romantic sentiment admiring sublime objects, is sustainable only when “difference” is secured with the distance between the sublime objects and the observers.

The fact that distantiation is central to evoking the feeling of the sublime is well attested to in Jefferson’s delineation of landscape. In his *Notes on the States of Virginia*, Jefferson celebrates the sublimity of the Natural Bridge in Rockbridge County. Although he admits to painful and intolerable feelings when he is on the bridge, the disturbing emotion turns into delightful feeling as he looks at it with safe distance (26). Bartram, Irving, and Catlin demonstrate the close relationship between the aesthetic feeling of the

sublime and distancing. In the second-half of the nineteenth century, Mark Twain was also conspicuous in revealing that relationship in his travel narratives. According to McKinsey, Bartram is “the first American writer to depict nature extensively in sublime terms” (*Niagara Falls* 35). The sublime Bartram depicts assumes that the Creator’s divinity resides over nature (*Travels* 67, 70, 103). However, it also suggests that nature remains quite dangerous and destructive.¹⁹ In particular, Bartram depicts wild animals like alligators as intimidating:

Behold him [the alligator] rushing forth from the flags and reeds. His enormous body swells. His plaited tail brandished high, floats upon the lake. The waters like a cataract descend from his opening jaws. Clouds of smoke issue from his dilated nostrils. The earth trembles with his thunder. (*Travels* 115)²⁰

According to Burke, wild animals are suitable objects of sublimity. “[I]n the gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness, in the form of the lion, the tiger, the panther, or rhinoceros” (Burke 60-61), one can recognize sublime sentiments. It goes without saying here that sublime feeling is possible only on the condition that one can withdraw or otherwise defend oneself, as seen in Bartram’s case: “I [Bartram] therefore furnished

¹⁹ As for Bartram’s ambivalent awareness of nature as a locus of divinity and terror, see John Gatta, *Making Nature Sacred* 51.

²⁰ See also Bartram’s later description of a terrifying alligator: “As I passed by Battle lagoon, I began to tremble and keep a good look-out; when suddenly a huge alligator rushed out of the reeds, and with a tremendous roar came up, and darted as swift as an arrow under my boat, emerging upright on my lee quarter, with open jaws, and belching water and smoke that fell upon me like rain in a hurricane” (*Travels* 120).

myself with a club for my defense” (115).²¹ Bartram’s sense of self-preservation converts his fear into sublimity, that is, a delightful feeling tinged with terror.

In Irving, recognition that distancing is essential in arousing sublime sentiments is already revealed in the short story “Rip Van Winkle” (1819-1820), published long prior to his Western travel accounts. The Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River that Rip observes while rambling in the forests are described in terms of the sublime:

In a long ramble . . . on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains . . . Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees, he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw *at a distance* the lordly Hudson, *far, far below him*, moving on its silent but majestic course, the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom; and at last losing itself in the blue highlands. (“Rip Van Winkle” 30, my italics)

A Tour on the Prairies reiteratively illustrates the author’s recognition of distancing as essential to the sublime experience: “An immense extent of grassy, undulating, or, as it is termed, rolling country, with here and there a clump of trees, dimly seen in the distance like a ship at sea; *the landscape deriving sublimity from its vastness and*

²¹ See also Bartram, *Travels* 116: “I found this last expedient alone could fully answer my expectations, for as soon as I gained the shore, they drew off and kept aloof. This was a happy relief.”

simplicity” (106, my italics). In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving admires the “collective grandeur and magnificence” (190) of American nature. Meanwhile, he suggests the necessity of distancing because nearness to nature’s objects may incur danger (188). In April 1833, Captain Bonneville’s expedition arrived at the Great River Plain in present Idaho State and found innumerable chasms in the earth too deep to be measured by any human means. Irving describes the landscape not only as “the striking phenomena of this wild and sublime region” (135) but simultaneously as so utterly dangerous that even horses withdraw from it instinctively:

Here, however, occur some of the striking phenomena of *this wild and sublime region*. The great lower plain which extends to the feet of these mountains is broken up near their bases into crests and ridges, resembling the surges of the ocean breaking on a rocky shore.

In a line with the mountains, the plain is gashed *with numerous and dangerous chasms*, from four to ten feet wide, and of great depth. Captain Bonneville attempted to sound some of these openings, but without any satisfactory result. A stone dropped into one of them reverberated against the sides for *apparently a very great depth*, and, by its sound, indicated the same kind of substance with the surface, as long as the strokes could be heard. *The horse, instinctively sagacious in avoiding danger*, shrinks back in alarm from the least of these chasms; pricking up his ears, snorting and pawing, until permitted to turn away. (135, my italics)

In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving shows how a romantic effect can be produced as he describes the “flocks of the ahsahta or bighorn” (31), a kind of mountain sheep, discovered at Scott’s Bluffs near the fork of the Nebraska River. In Irving’s description, these creatures arouse romantic feelings because they reside in unsafe and perilous places inaccessible for humans.

Catlin’s *Letters and Notes* provides a dynamic sketch describing a fallen bison. In 1832, when Catlin was at the mouth of the Yellowstone River, the region of the Upper Missouri, he had a chance to hunt bison with some frontiersmen of American Fur Company. He shot a bison, but it did not die on the spot, hissing and struggling to live. Here is Catlin’s description:

As I rode up within a few paces of him, he would bristle up with fury enough in his *looks* alone, almost to annihilate me; and making one lunge at me, would fall upon his neck and nose, so that I found the sagacity of my horse alone enough to keep me out of reach of danger: and I drew from my pocket my sketch-book, laid my gun across my lap, and commenced taking his likeness. He stood stiffened up, and swelling with awful vengeance, which was sublime for a picture, but which he could not vent upon me. . . . I defy the world to produce another animal than can look so frightful as a huge buffalo bull, when wounded as he was, turned around for battle, and swelling with rage; his eyes bloodshot, and his long shaggy mane hanging to the ground,—his mouth open, and his horrid rage hissing in streams of

smoke and blood from his mouth and through his nostrils, as he is bending forward to spring upon his assailant. (1:26-27)

As Catlin clearly shows, the reason he can make the beast an object of aesthetic representation and evoke sublime feelings stems from the fact that a safe distance “keep[s] me [Catlin] out of reach of danger” (26). If Catlin had not achieved distance as a way of removing the imminent danger, he would have been overwhelmed by pure terror.

The most sensational passages in Catlin’s *Letters and Notes* is the scene of the Mandans’ self-torturing ceremony. Catlin becomes horrified at this terrifying religious ritual, which he describes as “unaccountable” (1:105). It is noteworthy here that Kant too had expressed a terrified response toward Indians’ religious culture because of its “excessiveness.” In his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1763), Kant points out that the terrifying sublime includes “grotesque” and “quite unnatural” characteristics (55) and, in this respect, the Indians’ often violent and “unnatural” religion partakes of the sublime (110). While noting that alleged human sacrifices committed by Indians represent “a hideous excess” (110), Kant argues that the practice is nonetheless sublime because of its primitive, excessive, and traumatic otherness. However, in his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant stresses distantiation as a crucial element of the sublime feeling. For him, if there were no distancing, Indians would remain wholly terrifying others.

From Catlin's perspective, Indians reveal a kind of sublimity showing "unflinching fortitude" (1:171) in the face of pain and suffering.²² Catlin writes they defy the imagination in their power of enduring ordeal:

When these things [the accoutrements of the Sun Dance] were all adjusted, each one [Indian] was raised higher by the cords, until these weights all swung clear from the ground, leaving his feet, in most cases, some six or eight feet above the ground. In this plight they at once became appalling and frightful to look at—the flesh, to support the weight of their bodies, with the additional weights which were attached to them, was raised six or eight inches by the skewers; and their heads sunk forward on the breasts, or thrown backwards, in a much more frightful condition, according to the way in which they were hung up.

The unflinching fortitude, with which every one of them bore this part of the torture surpassed credulity; each one as the knife was passed through his flesh sustained as unchangeable countenance; and several of them, seeing me making sketches, beckoned me to look at their faces, which I watched through all this horrid operation, without being able to detect anything but the pleasantest smiles as they looked at me in the eye, while I could hear the knife rip through the flesh. . . . (1:170-171)

According to Burke, "the idea of bodily pain . . . anguish, torment, is productive of the sublime" (*A Philosophical Enquiry* 79). Catlin can portray the Indians' physical agony

²² Similarly, Tocqueville also mentions Indians' unbelievable power to endure suffering. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America* 34-35.

as sublime, but only when he creates an aesthetic and mimetic safety zone and becomes an observer-painter-teller who sketches the horrific scene with his brush and pen. Catlin is not the only one who maintains distance. The reader too secures “aesthetic distance” as she or he is vicariously removed from the traumatic scene owing to Catlin’s verbal and pictorial mimesis. In Addison’s account, the feeling of the sublime depends on the assumption that the subject’s position is different from that of suffering others:

[W]hen we read of torments, wounds, deaths, and the like dismal accidents, our pleasure does not flow so properly from the grief which such melancholy descriptions give us, as *from the secret comparison* which we make between our selves and the person who suffers. Such representations teach us to set a just value upon our own condition, and make us prize our good fortune which exempts us from the like calamities. (*The Sublime: A Reader* 68, my italics).

Thus it can be said that Catlin’s awe at the suffering Indians stems from his recognition that he is immune to their distress.

In *Roughing It* (1872), Mark Twain also shows clearly how sublime feelings can be evoked from natural scenery when the viewer stands at a distance from the scene:

We rumbled over the plains and valleys, climbed the Sierras to the clouds, and looked down upon summer-clad California. And I will remark here, in passing, that all scenery in California requires *distance* to give it its highest charm. The mountains are imposing in their sublimity and their majesty of form and altitude, from any point of view—but one must have *distance* to

soften their ruggedness and enrich their tinting; a Californian forest is best *at a little distance*. (*Roughing It* 385, my italics)

This distance allows the observer to tolerate the actual ruggedness of nature. Likewise, for Twain, Indians appear noble and sublime only when they are seen “through the mellow moonshine of romance” (129). If the aesthetic veil or distance is removed, the object loses its romantic aura.

As we have seen, the sublime is the aesthetic emotion which arises when the subject secures distance from objects that embody primitive, excessive, and traumatic otherness. These objects are usually terrifying because they cannot be easily mastered by the subject. On the contrary, the subject feels threatened by them. Distantiation in the aesthetics of the sublime is based upon one’s tendency of self-preservation. Within the particular context of the West in the first-half of nineteenth-century America, it can be assumed that this self-preservation underlying the sentiments of sublimity contributed to shaping Americans’ civilized selfhood through differentiation from primitive nature and the savagism of Indians.

In terms of psychoanalytic theory, “distantiation” can be understood as the “pleasure principle”—the inner law for regulating excessive impulses—a basis for establishing civilization. From the psychoanalytic point of view, Nature’s power can be regarded as the power of primitive impulsiveness, unmodified inner force and energy, because it too is commonly untamed, excessive, and lawless. The power of primitive impulsiveness is the “Id” or “libido” in Sigmund Freud’s sense. The following remarks

by Burke suggest an affinity between the sublime and the power of primitive impulsiveness:

I likewise distinguish love, by which I mean that satisfaction which arises to the mind upon contemplating any thing beautiful, of whatsoever nature it may be, from *desire or lust*; which is *an energy of the mind*, that hurries us on to the possession of certain objects, that do not affect us as they are beautiful, but by means altogether different. We shall have a strong desire for a woman of no remarkable beauty; whilst the greatest beauty in men, or in other animals, though it causes love, yet excites nothing at all of desire. Which shews that beauty, and the passion caused by beauty, which I call love, is different from desire, though desire may sometimes operate along with it; but it is to this latter that we must attribute those *violent and tempestuous passions*. . . . (*A Philosophical Enquiry* 83, my italics)

The “desire or lust,” “energy of the mind,” and “violent and tempestuous passions” Burke mentions here are not different from the primal impulse, libido, or Id. This primitive and unmanageable impulsiveness (Id) is involved with the sublime beyond the boundary of the beautiful, which is usually aroused by manageable and controllable objects and generates the feeling of love. Philip Shaw quotes Burke to the effect that “desire or lust” is sublime because it is frequently unaccountable and possesses excessive energy: “[W]here love is linked with the ‘contemplation’ of beautiful ‘things,’ lust is like the sublime . . . in its resemblance to the excessive ‘something,’ the nameless ‘energy’ . . .” (*The Sublime* 56).

In the Burkean sublime, if excessive and traumatic objects evoke “violent and tempestuous passions” (Burke 83) or “an unnatural tension of the nerves” (Burke 119), they lead to pain and fear. In Burke’s words, “whatever is fitted to produce such a tension [unnatural tension of the nerves], must be productive of a passion similar to terror” (Burke 121). Likewise, from the psychoanalytic point of view, primitive impulsiveness brings about pain and fear as well. According to Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, any excessive increase of stimuli—like the “unnatural tension of the nerves” (Burke 119)—in the pursuit of enjoyment (*jouissance*) by the Id generates pain rather than simple pleasure. In “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” Freud mentions that “unpleasure corresponds to an *increase* in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a *diminution*” (SE18:8). For Lacan, searching for limitless and excessive pleasure incurs “*jouissance*”:

[F]or what I call *jouissance*, in the sense that it is experienced by the body, is always a matter of tension, forcing There is *jouissance* incontestably where *pain* begins to appear, and we know that it is only with *pain* that an entire dimension of the organism . . . can be experienced. (qtd. in Nasio 136)

Following Freud and Lacan, Nasio also emphasizes that the true source of pain is “the upheaval of the drives in the Id” (*The Book of Love and Pain* 42). The subject can feel his fear because of his internal turmoil arising out of a chaotic impulse.²³ Faced with its

²³ According to Freud in his *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy*, fear bespeaks one’s repressed libidinal desire. For instance, Hans’s aggressive impulse toward his father, which stems from his Oedipal rivalry, generated his horse phobia. In Hans’s mind, the “horse” embodied his father. Hans’s phobia of being bitten by the horse signifies his fear of his father’s punishment (SE10:126).

inner primitive impulsiveness, in an effort to be delivered from his pain and fear, the Ego follows the “pleasure principle” which regulates the intensity and renders it endurable. In Freud, this principle tends to produce pleasure by reducing painful stimuli in a minimum degree: “The facts which have caused us to believe in the dominance of the pleasure principle in mental life also find expression in the hypothesis that the mental apparatus endeavours to keep the quantity of excitation present in it as low as possible or at least to keep it constant” (*SE*18:9). If the principle is no longer effective in regulating pleasure by encountering a traumatic moment, the Ego represses it through its defense mechanisms (*SE*22:94).

Lacan says that the pleasure principle is “nothing else than the dominance of the signifier” (*S7* 134), or “the effect of the influence of the signifier on the psychic real” (*S7* 134), because it “imposes the detours which maintain the distance” (*S7* 58) from the insatiable libidinal demand. The psychological functioning of the pleasure principle is included in the domain of the Symbolic law, with its occlusion of primitive libido, and thereby becomes the founding principle of civilization.²⁴ Hence, working as an inner regulative force which preserves the self in conformity with the Symbolic law—the fundamental basis of civilization, the pleasure principle can be regarded as a mechanism almost analogous with “distantiation” in the aesthetics of the sublime, which serves for

²⁴ According to Antonios Vadolas, the pleasure principle “functions on the basis of the law of homeostasis. By keeping excitation to an optimum [*sic*] low level, pleasure is obtained. The symbolic law ensures the preservation of this optimum level, by proscribing any excessive excitation, since it commands the subject to ‘enjoy as little as possible’” (*Perversions of Fascism* 178).

self-preservation as well. Faced with primitive and excessive otherness, distanciation becomes a common principle for establishing civilization.

The fact that the principle for establishing civilization resides in the aesthetic experience of the sublime is also noted by Thomas Weiskel in his psychological interpretation of the sublime. As Neil Hertz and Frances Ferguson point out, in his Freudian consideration Weiskel establishes that the faculty of reason is at work in the experience of the sublime:²⁵

To put it sequentially: the excessive object excites a wish to be inundated, which yields an anxiety of incorporation; this anxiety is met by a reaction formation against the wish which precipitates a recapitulation of the Oedipus complex; this in turn yields a feeling of guilt (superego anxiety) and is resolved through identification (introjections). (*The Romantic Sublime* 105)

As Weiskel notes, the subject assumes an ambivalent attitude toward Mother Nature:

“[A] wish to be inundated and a simultaneous anxiety of annihilation” (105). Freud points out that one feels “anxiety in the face of a demand by his libido” (*SE*22:86), and accordingly the anxiety represses the dangerous impulse.²⁶ So, in Weiskel’s explanation,

²⁵ See Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line* 49; Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* 16-17.

²⁶ See Freud, *SE*22:86, 89, 94. According to Ruth Ronen’s observation, “In later years, Freud stresses the relation of anxiety to repression and refers to anxiety as a signal prior to the ego’s ability to withdraw from or otherwise avoid displeasurable excitations” (*Aesthetics of Anxiety* 14). Jacques Lacan develops further this later Freudian argument by maintaining that castration-like separation from a maternal object is what saves the subject from anxiety, rather than the cause of anxiety (Evans 11). In Lacan’s accounts, “if all of a sudden all norms are lacking, namely what constitutes the lack—because the norm is correlative to the idea of lack . . . it is at that moment that anxiety begins” (*S*10

the subject who experiences a “rapid alternation of attraction and repulsion” (105) toward Mother Nature keeps his distance from nature, “a source of pain and terror” (102), as a means of resolving the Oedipal complex. The Burkean “delightful feeling” in sublimity means the mind’s release from the guilty feeling which has produced by one’s incorporation with Mother Nature (Weiskel 96-97). At the final stage, one can strengthen his Superego with his “identification with the power of the father” (Ferguson 17). This “Symbolic identification” with a higher authority in the sublime attests that the subject becomes the self of “reason” sanctioned by a civilized world by distancing and defending himself against the excessive enjoyment of his primitive impulses.

Representations of primitive Indians in travel narratives enable us to see the procedure of civilized subjectivity formation. For instance, from a psychoanalytic perspective, Catlin may be “attracted” to the Mandan Indians’ ritual due to his innermost impulses, such as a destructive and sado-masochistic drive. The fact that he spends many pages in describing this bizarre and bloody scene may suggest that he is secretly “inundated” by it. But Catlin’s Ego becomes repulsed by the scene. Because the self-torturing is cruel, unmanageable, and “excessive,” he recoils from it with horror and anxiety. This recoiling response, in accordance with his Ego’s inner law of the pleasure principle or self-preservation, is a crucial step in securing his civilized selfhood. Through this distantiation, he can assume that he is radically different from the primitive Indians overwhelmed by their dangerous, self-destructive impulses.

34). In other words, Ronen says, “the possibility of nonlacking pleasure elicits anxiety” (45).

Notably, many white Americans thought that Indians represented an unrestrained and unlimited sexual pleasure which was both tempting and dangerous. As an example, in the colonial period, in his *History and Present State of Virginia* (1705), Robert Beverley revealed how much Europeans thought Indians were sexually excessive and seductive:

The *Indian* Damsels are full of spirit, and from thence are always inspir'd with Mirth and good Humour. They are extremely given to laugh, which they do with a Grace not to be resisted. The excess of Life and Fire, which they never fail to have, makes them frolicksom, but without any real imputation to their innocence. However, this is ground enough for the *English*, who are not very nice in distinguishing betwixt guilt, and harmless freedom, to think them *Incontinent*. . . . (qtd. in Marx 79-80, my italics)

Europeans' association of Indian women with excessive sexual enjoyment was already present in the early sixteenth century. In *Mundus Novus* (1503), Amerigo Vespucci considered Indian women to be licentious and mentioned that incest was pervasive among Indians due to their lack of marital law (qtd. in *Early American Writing* 34).²⁷

According to David D. Smits, Puritans also quite often regarded Indian women as

²⁷ See also another description of aborigines of the New World in *Mundus Novus* (1503): “[T]heir women, being very lustful, cause the private parts of their husbands to swell up to such a huge size that they appear deformed and disgusting. . . . They marry as many wives as they please; and son cohabits with mother, brother with sister, male cousin with female, and any man with the first woman he meets” (qtd. in Nagel 64); “When they had the opportunity of copulating with Christians, urged by excessive lust, they defiled and prostituted themselves” (qtd. in Nagel 66).

“seductresses.”²⁸ In Puritan fantasy, Indian women were thought of as tempters like the serpent in the Bible and were supposed to be well aware of their power. Accordingly, white American males who aimed to protect their civilization fled from the allegedly seductive native women. Indian women in *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captain Lewis and Clark* (1814) are described as voluptuous and without scruples in their illicit sexual intimacy. Thus Captain Lewis shows his repugnance or anxiety over the chance to sleep with young Ricara women offered by their husbands as a sign of favor. According to Captain Lewis, except for York, who is Captain Clark’s black servant, “we had equally withstood their temptation” (1:124). Here “temptation” suggests Captain Lewis’s inner attraction toward the possibility of enjoyment; however, on the other hand, his word “withstood” indicates his repulsion at the idea of gratifying sexual desire wrongfully. In other words, we cannot exclude the possibility that Captain Lewis was indeed enticed by the chance to satisfy his pleasure or primordial libido in his encounter with native women. But at the same time he was disturbed by the fact of illicit sex, feeling an “unnatural tension of the nerves” (119) in Burke’s phrase, and developed a repulsive response so as to avoid the fear or pain caused by excessive satisfaction.

In many white Americans’ minds, primitive nature and Indians embodied a countervalue to White civilization: the principle of primal impulse and libido untamed and untouched by the law of reason. In the beginning of his “Philip of Pokanoket: An Indian Memoir” (1819-1820), an historical account of King Philip, Irving writes, “The Indian . . . free from the restraints and refinements of polished life, and, in a great degree,

²⁸ See David D. Smits, “‘We Are Not to Grow Wild’: Seventeenth-Century New England’s Repudiation of Anglo-Indian Intermarriage” 11, 15-17.

a solitary and independent being, obeys the impulses of his inclination or the dictates of his judgment” (252-253). In Gaile McGregor’s words, “the Indian in American mythology has *always* tended to function as a symbol of the libido” (*The Noble Savage* 102). Considering psychoanalytic theory and Weiskel’s interpretation of the sublime, we can see a power struggle going on between the natural Other and the self. As white travelers approached the primitivized Other, they were afraid of being seduced or engulfed by the dangerous enjoyment of unlimited freedom provided by the Other. So, as Neil Hertz argues, when one is on the verge of annihilation by being engulfed by the Other, “the moment of blockage” (51) may secure one’s self from the danger of “utter self-loss” (51) by establishing “the unitary status of the self” (51). Arguably, this self is the civilized self in accordance with the voice of the allegedly “paternal” injunction to enjoy as little as one can.

Another psychological approach to the whites’ perspective toward so-called “primitive” Indians is provided by Michael Rogin. In *Fathers and Children*, Rogin argues that Indians in whites’ imagination were looked upon as objects closely associated with Mother Nature, as seen in the widespread rhetoric of the “children of Nature” or the “sons of the forests” (114). From many whites’ perspectives, Indians appeared to enjoy their unlimited freedom under the protection of a nurturing Mother. Dominant responses of whites toward these Indians were, writes Rogin, a “sense of loss” (116) and “envy” (116). Furthermore, Rogin maintains that whites’ envy toward Indians transformed into rage and aggression toward them. However, Rogin’s interpretation cannot satisfactorily explain, for instance, the case of James, the epistolary narrator of

Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*. He confesses a fear that he might not want to return to the civilized world if he is assimilated into the Indian way of life succumbing to the excessive enjoyment of unchecked freedom in the bosom of Mother Nature (213-215). Considering James's response, it may be more appropriate to say that white Americans' attitude toward Indians who are supposed to enjoy their freedom in Mother Nature was fear and anxiety rather than envy. In *The Machine in the Garden*, according to Leo Marx, on the one hand, pastoralism can be understood as the pursuit of a simple and unspoiled world (8-9), escaping from the world of overcivilization. On the other hand, pastoralism "seeks a resolution of the conflict between the opposed worlds of nature and art" (22) and "is located in a middle ground somewhere 'between' . . . the opposing forces of civilization and nature" (23). Likewise, Crèvecoeur's pastoralism does not seek unlimited freedom but stands in the middle ground between nature and civilization. As Freud notes, humans are ambivalent in their attitudes toward the pursuit of boundless freedom. Even if they may feel discontents over the restraints of civilization, they still tend to move back in their fear and anxiety at the tempting chance of gratifying their desire for unlimited freedom. The pleasure principle as a constitutional principle of civilization may be another name of such a psychological distantiation.

As we have seen, the aesthetic experience of the sublime brings about double consequences with respect to primitiveness. It romanticizes the primitive Other(ness) in nature, while at the same time it allows one to affirm one's civilized selfhood through spatial and psychological distantiation from primitive, excessive, and traumatic

otherness. We can see such forging of the civilized self in the aesthetic representations of the sublime in many travel narratives. In this respect, it is highly suggestive that representing sublimity was prevalent, especially in the period of nation-building in America.

Here we might compare travel narratives with landscape paintings from the first-half of nineteenth-century in order to see if there is any difference or similarity in their portrayals of primitive nature and civilization. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the juggernaut of civilization began to encroach on the nation's wilderness and thereby the collision of nature and civilization was more conspicuous than ever. The representative landscapist Thomas Cole was distressed to see the growing devastation of nature by the reckless advance of civilization: "I cannot but express my sorrow that the beauty of such landscapes are [*sic*] quickly passing away—the ravages of the axe are daily increasing—the most noble scenes are made desolate, and oftentimes with a wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a civilized nation" ("Essays on American Scenery" 109). According to Novak, through visual representations such as *View on the Catskill, Early Autumn* (1837) and *River in the Catskill* (1843), Cole reveals the "poignancy" of the loss of primitiveness of American nature by the inexorable progress of civilization (163-164). Similarly, Tim Barringer points out Cole's regret for the vanishing wilderness presented in his *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)* (40). According to Alan Wallach's interpretation of Cole's *The Course of Empire*, Cole denounces Andrew Jackson's

industrial expansion and utilitarianism in the five-canvas series (Barringer 51).²⁹

Barringer even suggests that “the conqueror robed in red who triumphally crosses the bridge in the foreground of Cole’s *Consummation* represents Jackson himself, for he had first come to prominence as a military hero in the War of 1812” (52). The fact that Cole was politically anti-Jacksonian and Whiggish and supported William Henry Harrison bears out Barringer’s interpretation.³⁰

Given Novak’s thesis, it can be argued that the distance between primitive nature and humans in these landscape paintings was negligible. In Cole, humans were not alienated from nature but almost unified with it (Novak 190). I would point out that, at least in the first-half of the nineteenth century, there was a considerable disparity in this regard between landscape paintings and travel narratives in terms of their overall approaches toward nature and civilization. If Cole presented his dominantly romantic sentiment toward nature through his visual representations, contemporary travel narratives were ambivalent or complex largely due to their more civilization-oriented attitudes. Many romantic travel narratives did not present the advance of civilization negatively. On the contrary, in most cases they affirmed it. For instance, Bartram in his *Travels* envisions the progress of civilization through the expansion of agriculture, mechanics, and commerce into the uncultivated territory of the South, though still admiring the sublime nature present there. In describing Talahasochte, East Florida, Bartram provides his vision of transforming the wilderness into a civilized region:

²⁹ For Cole’s critique of utilitarianism and urban-industrial culture, see also Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* 24.

³⁰ For Cole’s political position as Whiggish and anti-Jacksonian, see Miller 25.

This vast plain, together with the forests contiguous to it, if permitted (by the Seminoles who are sovereigns of these realms) to be in possession and under the culture of industrious planters and mechanics, would in a little time exhibit other scenes than it does at present, delightful as it is; for by the arts of agriculture and commerce, almost every desirable thing in life might be produced and made plentiful here, and thereby establish a rich, populous, and delightful region. (199)

Bernard W. Sheehan in *Seeds of Extinction* also notes that “Bartram, viewing with delight the spacious plains of the Seminoles, envisioned their future development under the direction of ‘industrious planters and mechanicks’” (95). Intriguingly, although Bartram portrays primitive nature as an innocent or sublimely enchanting paradise (107, 289, 290) and also romantically portrays the Indians living there as admirable people, noble savages, when he is alone in the forests he actually longs for the world of human society, human arts, and cultivation (292). We should not ignore Bartram’s predilection for civilization despite his romantic sentiments toward nature and Indians.

Like Bartram, Farnham often renders romantically American nature and Indians in his *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*. With respect to his attitude toward them, he likewise resembles Bartram with his double voice. He provides a vision of westward emigration as he introduces specifically the route of overland travel from the States to Oregon and California. He not only states his belief that the West should be transformed into an empire of civilization by Americans but praises governmental efforts to civilize

Indians. For instance, he admires “the most generous efforts” (26) of the government to elevate the Osages by introducing agriculture to them.³¹

Bartram and Farnham’s double voice is also present in Irving’s Western works. While Irving sides with sublime and wild nature against civilization at times, he ultimately prefers a cultivated nature to a wild and primitive one (*A Tour* 50-51). In *A Tour on the Prairies*, as he watches a swarm of bees expanding their territory westward, he sees the optimistic future of agriculture.³² His envisioning of the westward expansion of agriculture and civilization through his trope of bees is not easily reconciled with his more romantic passages about nature. In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving suggests that the Far West, full of sublime scenery, should eventually be tamed by agriculture. Edgeley W. Todd points out that Irving urged his reading public to emigrate into the Oregon territory: “With sure foresightedness, Irving pointed to the valleys of that distant region, which at that time, he said, lay ‘waste and uninhabited, and to the eyes of the trader and trappers, present but barren wastes,’ as an area that ‘would in the hands of skilful agriculturists and husbandmen, soon assume a different aspect, and teem with waving crops, or be covered with flocks and herds’” (*Bonneville* xlv).

Even Catlin, who is not far behind Bartram and Irving in his primitivism and romantic embellishments of Indians and nature, urges the progress of Indians through the introduction of agriculture and Christianity (1: 184; 2:109, 244-245) and accepts “the

³¹ For Farnham’s vision of expanding civilization, see also his *Travels* 22, 29, 89. For the author’s praise of the efforts to civilize Indians, see *Travels* 23, 24, 26, 77.

³² The trope of bees as the herald of expanding civilization is found in much literature. For instance, see Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* 78-79; William Cullen Bryant, “The Prairies,” *Poetical Works of William Cullen Bryant* 150; and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Song of Hiawatha* 215.

grand and irresistible march of civilization” (2:156)—or “this splendid Juggernaut rolling on” (2:156)—as self-evident. Likewise, John Hausdoerffer, in his *Catlin’s Lament*, points out that Catlin supported the missionary efforts of civilizing Indians despite of his overall romantic sentiments and misgivings that Indians were doomed to extinction.³³ As we have seen, many romantic travel narratives endorsed the advance of civilization, so the emotional affinity between nature (and/or Indians) and white Americans in the narratives was scarcely less than in corresponding paintings. This tendency in the travel writings reflected the contemporary idea of Manifest Destiny that was prevalent in America. The first-half of the nineteenth century, when romanticism about nature and Indians enjoyed its greatest influence, was a period of historical paradox because it was also the time when the westward expansion of civilization and the segregation (or removal) and subjugation of Indians were pursued simultaneously. Many Americans looked upon nature as a divine place and admired its grandeur out of their national pride but did not embrace it altogether. In Bernard Rosenthal’s words, “few Americans succumbed to images of primitive utopianism” (*City of Nature* 22). Rather, they were inclined to see uncultivated nature as an object that needed to be subdued. In *Nature’s Nation*, Perry Miller clearly articulates this inconsistency within Americans’ minds with respect to nature and civilization: “The more rapidly, the more voraciously, the primordial forest was felled, the more desperately poets and painters—and also preachers—strove to identify the unique personality of this republic with the

³³ John Hausdoerffer, *Catlin’s Lament: Indians, Manifest Destiny, and the Ethics of Nature* 86, and *passim*.

virtues of pristine and untarnished, of ‘Romantic,’ Nature.’” (199).³⁴ Also as Tim Barringer points out, an ambivalent attitude toward Indians was not rare, and Catlin was one of those who showed such conflict: “During his earlier travels in the mid-West, Catlin felt a profound ambivalence towards American Indians While appealing to Catlin’s sense of the nobility of ‘savage’ life, freed from the constraints of civilization, the American Indians also presented a major impediment to the expansion of the culture and commerce of the United States” (50). Notably, whether he seemed to be philanthropic or not, Catlin thought that primitive Indians who were unable to cope with the demands of civilization should choose the trans-Mississippi Removal in order to survive (2:97-98). Here Catlin’s view largely mirrored the political logic underpinning the necessity of segregation between whites and Indians. As seen in Catlin, while many Americans satisfied their national pride and romantic taste through the trope of Indian nobility, simultaneously they upheld segregation—a political and social “distantiation”—from the noble but wild Indians and considered them as Others who had to be subdued.

This paradoxical attitude toward Indians—romantic admiration alongside segregation, or admiration accompanied by a policy of subjugation—is rendered well in the nineteenth-century conventional adage that “only good Indian is a dead Indian.” The

³⁴ See also Miller’s remark in *Nature’s Nation* about the inner disparity of idealizing primitivism while welcoming the advance of civilization: “[W]e also, by calling ourselves ‘nature’s noblemen,’ imagine ourselves possessed of the pioneer virtues of Natty Bumppo, yet simultaneously suppose ourselves evolving into an industrial paradise, complete with television and the deep freeze” (12). In *Seeds of Extinction*, Bernard W. Sheehan observes the same paradox: “As pleasant as the pristine condition might be, as exuberantly as its praises might be sung, civilization as a desirable goal always loomed on the horizon” (95). See also Edward Halsey Foster, *The Civilized Wilderness: Backgrounds to American Romantic Literature, 1817-1860* 45-46.

psychological “distantiation” of the aesthetic experience of the sublime that we have examined is also closely related to that egregious notion because the Indian could be considered sublime only when he was no longer dangerous or intimidating, in effect dead. What I want to point out here is that distantiation as a prerequisite of sublime feelings should not always be understood in terms of space. Distancing in time also can be the precondition of the sublime. Remarkably, travel narratives in the first-half of the nineteenth century often described nature and Indians as remote in time as well as in place. This “nostalgically othering” of nature and Indians, associating them with “the distant past,” can be understood as yet another kind of distantiation. According to Hugh Blair in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), “In general, all objects that are greatly raised above us, or far removed from us, either in space or in time, are apt to strike us as great. Our viewing them, as through the mist of distance or antiquity, is favourable to the impressions of their sublimity” (*The Sublime* 215). David Hume points out that distance in time has a stronger impact in generating sublime feelings than distance in space does: “[A]lthough every great distance produces an admiration for the distant object, *a distance in time has a more considerable effect than that in space.* Ancient busts and inscriptions are more valued than Japan tables: and not to mention the Greeks and Romans, it is certain we regard with more veneration the old Chaldeans and Egyptians, than the modern Chinese and Persians . . .” (*The Sublime: A Reader* 199-200, my italics). In Hume’s account, imagination is confronted with more difficulty moving

in time than in space, so the difficulty of the conception can render an object of antiquity far more sublime.³⁵

The antiquity of American nature around the Upper Missouri River is well represented by Catlin. In *Letters and Notes*, he mentions that natural scenery “at the base of some huge clay bluffs” (1:69) looks like “sublime ruins,” unfinished artworks, weathered so long after forsaken by a “giant mason”:

The whole country behind us seemed to have been dug and thrown up into huge piles, as if some giant mason had been there mixing his mortar and paints, and throwing together his rude models for some sublime structure of a colossal city;—with its walls—its domes—its ramparts—its huge porticos and galleries—its castles—its fosses and ditches;—and in the midst of his progress, *he had abandoned his works to the destroying hand of time*, which had already done much to tumble them down, and deface their noble structure; by jostling them together, with all their vivid colours, into an unsystematic and unintelligible mass of *sublime ruins*. (1:69, my italics)

Catlin’s phrase “the ruins of an extinguished volcano” (1:70) reiterates the antique image of the West. Notably, not only nature but also Indians are described in terms of antiquity by Catlin. With a quite romantic perspective, he portrays the Mandans who live on the Upper Missouri as “the most ancient tribes of Indians in our country” (1:80):

I said that I was here in the midst of a strange people, which is literally true; and I find myself surrounded by subjects and scenes worthy the pens of

³⁵ See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* in *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* 201.

Irving and Cooper; or the pencils of Raphael or Hogarth; rich in legends and romances, which would require no aid of the imagination for a book or a picture.

The Mandans (or See-pohs-kah-nu-mah-kah-kee, “people of the pheasants,” as they call themselves), are perhaps one of the most ancient tribes of Indians in our country. Their origin . . . [is] involved in mystery and obscurity. . . . Their existence in these regions has, undoubtedly, been from a very ancient period. (1:80)

According to Catlin, the Mandans are quite exotic people worthy to appear in the “legends and romances” (1:80) of Irving and Cooper, which attests to their association with a lost past. In a similar vein, Irving in *Astoria* compares the Cheyennes to “ancient statues” (220). In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, as Captain Bonneville’s party moves toward the Oregon territory, they encounter Shoshokoes (or “Root digger”) Indians. Irving portrays these Indians as particularly “primitive” (227). In *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, Farnham regards the Indian mounds that he sees as “ruins”: “Near this grove are some interesting Indian ruins. They consist of a collection of dilapidated mounds, seeming to indicate the truth of the legend of the tribes which says that formerly this was the Holy ground of the nations, where they were accustomed to meet to adjust their difficulties and exchange the salutations of peace and cement the bonds of union with smoking and dancing and prayers to the Great Spirit” (9). Here, the Indian mounds indicate the natives’ bygone glory. Although such a perspective may romanticize them, Farnham actually aims to establish distance in time between the

Indians and himself (or his reader) by suggesting that time changes all things and the Indians' former glory is "legend," no longer relevant to the present.

In *The Oregon Trail*, in a condemnatory tone, Francis Parkman insists that the Ogillallah tribes do not change their manners and ideas at all in spite of their contact with white civilization. Parkman even regards the Indians as the "living representatives of the stone age" (205), that is, relics of the past. This antique image of Indians as stone-age primitives implies their inferiority to white people, who live in a world of rapid change, envisioning ceaseless progress. From Parkman's perspective, an unbridgeable gulf or span of time seems to lie between Indians and whites. Thus, it is natural for Parkman to assume that Indians are destined to become extinct (205).³⁶ The only time left to Indians is the past, not the present nor the future, because immutable Indians are "inadequate" when it comes to conforming to dynamic changes of progress.

There was also a striking tendency to compare Native Americans to Greco-Romans. Bartram associates Indians with ancient Romans by noting that Indian costumes look like ancient Roman breeches (*Travels* 394). Farnham finds a similarity between the Roman ceremony of "toga virilis" and Indians' initiation rituals (*Travels in the Great Western Prairies* 60). Irving writes in *A Tour on the Prairies* that the Osages resemble "noble bronze figures" (22) with "fine Roman countenances" (21).³⁷ He also depicts the Crows as Roman cavaliers (*Bonneville* 306). Catlin similarly relates Indians

³⁶ The rhetoric of vanishing Indians was widespread in nineteenth-century American politics and culture. Prior to Parkman, in January 20th, 1819, Henry Clay even compared Indians with the extinct mammoth. See Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* 8.

³⁷ For another delineation of the Osages as Romans, see Irving, *A Tour* 32.

to Grecian “knights” and Roman gladiators,³⁸ implying that Native Americans resemble ancient people who have already vanished, thus suggesting that ongoing extinction is their unavoidable doom.³⁹

As we have seen, nature and Indians in many travel writings were obviously depicted through antique imagery. According to Novak, American landscape paintings representing antiquity provided a sense of “alternative past” (145) to Americans who lacked a long historical tradition, as was the case with Europeans. Simultaneously, Novak argues, antique images provided Americans a measure of nationalistic pride given the American continent was largely “unspoiled by man—purer and by implication closer to God” (145).⁴⁰ Clearly, associating American nature and Indians with primitiveness in travel writings may have been conducive to encouraging national pride by supplementing America’s relative lack of history compared with European nations. Roy Harvey Pearce has noted: “[The] strategy for sustaining the image of the noble savage was to deal with him as he was when he was yet out of contact with a white civilization, to put him safely in the past and to see him as the embodiment of a heroic American antiquity” (*Savagism and Civilization* 190). To describe Indians as if they

³⁸ See Catlin, *Letters and Notes* 1:15, 32, 33, 145, 213.

³⁹ For Catlin, bison are represented as doomed like Indians. Catlin describes bison in parallel relationship with Indians. This animal is described as noble or sublime but destined to vanish: “Of such ‘rudeness and wilds,’ Nature has no where presented more beautiful and lovely scenes, than those of the vast prairies of the West; and of *man* and *beast*, no nobler specimens than those who inhabit them—the *Indian* and the *buffalo*—joint and original tenants of the soil, and fugitives together from the approach of civilized man; they have fled to the great plains of the West, and there, under an equal doom, they have taken up their *last abode*, where their race will expire, and their bones will bleach together” (1:260). See also Catlin, *Letters and Notes* 1: 24, 256; 2:156.

⁴⁰ See also Wilton 29.

were vestiges of a pristine past helped maintain the idealized image of the Noble Savage innocent of the vices of European civilization. At the same time, such an idealization of Indians played into Americans' nostalgia for a Golden Age, that is, a lost paradise. In this respect, according to Ellingson, the tendency to see the Indians as Greeks or Romans is connected with the Greco-Roman myth of the Golden Age in white people's minds, "projecting the Indians as a mirror image of the European past" (*The Myth of the Noble Savage* 26). However, a more important but relatively less emphasized result of the trope of nostalgic othering was to cast white Americans as *modern* and *civilized* subjects. National character is formulated through the radical differentiation between the nostalgic Other and the modern subject. Even if travel writers betrayed nostalgic feelings toward the natives, strictly speaking that nostalgia ironically fed a refusal to identify with them and was fundamental to a rationale for repression. Isaiah Berlin stresses clearly that one can be romantically idealized or serve as a nostalgic object only when one is inaccessible:

[I]f you think that you can actually become a noble savage, if you think that you can actually transform yourself into a simple native of some unsophisticated country, living a very primitive life, then the magic is gone The whole point of the romantic vision of the noble savage was that he was unattainable. If he had been attainable, he would have been useless, because then he would have become an awful given, a frightful rule of life, just as confining, just as disciplining, just as detestable as that which it

replaced. Therefore it is the unfindable, the unattainable, the infinite which are the heart of the matter. (*The Roots of Romanticism* 135-136)

Nostalgia involves a paradoxical logic that “the subject desires the primitivized Others only when they cannot be close to him.” To romanticize Indians and nature *is* to repress them psychologically with distantiation in time and space. This romanticization includes a defense against anxiety over proximity to the primitivized Other. Romantic and sublime representations of Indians and nature as the inaccessible objects of the “there and then” were crucial for white Americans to invent their identity of the “here and now.”

Considering the representations of nature and Indians in travel narratives from Bartram to Parkman, it can be said that white Americans pursued their “double escapes” through their dynamic and complex relations to them. First, they aimed to escape from European aristocracy or monarchism and the evil of European civilization, with the trope of the Noble Savage and the romanticization of nature. This escape was conducive to inventing the national characteristics of freedom and simplicity. Second, they in turn, or simultaneously, pursued another escape from the Indians and nature that they temporarily identified with, employing the aesthetics of the sublime and the trope of antiquity. This distantiation from the Indians and nature’s primitiveness provided them another opportunity to forge the national characteristics of civilization, youth, and progressiveness. To put it a different way, America could save white Americans for their “young and wholesome” civilization by rescuing them from the Old World’s “corrupted” civilization, and in this course of shaping American identity through the “double

escapes,” nature and Native Americans were employed as vanishing mediators both akin and foreign—or, in Lacan’s words, as “the intimate exteriority or ‘extimacy’” (S7 139)—to American selfhood.

CHAPTER V

ROMANTIC RHETORIC AND PERVERSITY IN AMERICAN EXPANSIONISM

According to Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* (1835), Americans pursued their small desires “within bounds” (619) in “a moderate and tranquil” (619) way, and such a “moral orderliness” (620) differed from the European and aristocratic nations’ excessiveness. However, Tocqueville aside, Americans did display an excessive desire for territorial expansion. After the initial founding, the United States continued to extend her territory into the West. Indeed, the first-half of the nineteenth century is frequently called “the age of expansion.” The Louisiana Purchase alone expanded the area of the nation by nearly 140 percent, encompassing about 828,000 square miles (Joy 23). A dramatic increase of American population likely instigated land hunger. In 1850, the population of the nation grew to 23 million (from 3.9 million in 1790), largely through the influx of European immigrants. Americans needed more land and white settlers began to pour into the West. According to Michael Rogin, by 1840 “4.5 million American crossed the Appalachians” (*Fathers and Children* 3-4). Under these circumstances, advancing the American frontier became a national agenda, a fact mirrored in the Western travel and expedition accounts. William Ellery Channing’s definition of national literature in his “Remarks on National Literature” (1830), “the expression of a nation’s mind in writing” (167), obviously applied to travel narratives. This chapter aims to investigate how the widespread desire for expansion was represented in travel narratives, focusing on the iterative pattern of triangular alliance:

romanticism, morality, and expansionism. In Chapter IV, we saw many travel writers' ambivalent and complex attitudes toward both nature and the expansion of civilization (or progress). This chapter will examine further this complex problem because the relationship between romanticism and civilization (progress) can be seen not merely as the coexistence of disparate terms but as a mutual interpenetration or logical connection under the circumstances of the age of expansion. Analysis of the narratives allows us to trace the peculiar attempts to reconcile this tension.

As we have seen in Chapter II, in the formative period Washington Irving was one of the most noticeable writers who wanted to shape national consciousness, envisioning democracy and progress through the representations of the West. As he forges national identity in his Western writings by dealing with subject matter distinctive in America—sublime nature, pathfinders, and Indians in the West—Irving simultaneously represents the nation's widespread interest in westward expansion, furthering American whites' cause of freedom and democracy. In his historical account of the westward expedition promoted by John Jacob Astor, Irving shows the degree to which Thomas Jefferson was enthusiastic over Astor's venture into the Northwest. Jefferson revealed his desire for expansion through the rhetoric of freedom and its moral implication:

“I considered, as a great public acquisition, the commencement of a settlement on that point of the western coast of America, and looked forward with gratification to the time when its descendants should have spread themselves through the whole length of that coast, *covering it with free and independent Americans*, unconnected with us but by the ties of blood and

interest, and enjoying like us the rights of self-government.” (32-33, my italics)¹

The rhetorical linking of freedom and expansion in Jefferson was also noted by the historian Frederick Merk. According to Merk, “in 1813, before [the] news of the fall of Astoria had reached the East, Jefferson responded to a progress report sent [to] him by Astor, expressing pleasure and romantically characterizing the venture as ‘the germ of a great, free and independent empire on that side of our continent’” (*Manifest Destiny and Mission* 13-14). Connecting territorial expansion with the romantic trope of extending freedom was widespread and shared by many Americans in the formative age.² Irving was no exception. Referring to Jefferson’s words again at the end of *Astoria*, Irving writes: “Astoria might have realized the anticipations of Mr. Astor, so well understood and appreciated by Mr. Jefferson, in gradually becoming a commercial empire beyond the mountains, peopled by ‘free and independent Americans, and linked with us by ties of blood and interest’” (504). For Jefferson and Irving, obviously for Astor as well,

¹ See also Irving, *Astoria* 33n32. The editor Edgeley W. Todd presents another letter of Jefferson to Astor, dated November 9th, 1813. In this letter, Jefferson also reveals his rhetoric and vision of pursuing “free and independent empire” (*Astoria* 33n32) in the Oregon territory.

² See Timothy Dwight’s lines in his *Greenfield Hill* (1794): “All hail, thou western world! by heaven design’d / Th’ example bright, to renovate mankind. / Soon shall thy sons across the mainland roam; / And claim, on far Pacific shores, their home; / Their rule, religion, manners, arts, convey, / And spread their freedom to the Asian sea” (II. 707-712). Stephan A. Douglas used the romantic rhetoric of breaking from European monarchism in order to give validity to American expansion: “You cannot fix bounds to the onward march of this great and growing country. You cannot fetter the limbs of the young giant. He will burst all your chains. He will expand, and grow, and increase, and extend civilization, Christianity, and liberal principles” (qtd. in Johannsen 16). John William Ward points out that Andrew Jackson also regarded expansion as an extension of freedom (*Andrew Jackson* 135).

spreading the democratic ideal of freedom and economic expansion were assumed to be synonymous. Even though the United States had achieved political independence from the Old World, real independence depended upon strengthening her economic power. As Henry Nash Smith puts it, Americans began to assume “that trade with the Orient” would “emancipate the United States from its dependence on Europe” (*Virgin Land* 26).³ Accordingly, capitalists’ commercial pursuits were fully compatible with the democratic ideal of pursuing freedom. Indeed, the two impulses became mutually sustainable, and thus westward expansion gained a moral dimension beyond the mundane purpose of materialistic gains.

In Irving’s *Astoria*, the expedition’s commercial expansion is regarded as providential. As noted in Chapter II, when Hunt’s party arrives at the plain of the Columbia River, they are compared to “the poor Israelites” (309) overjoyed at their discovery of the Promised Land. This biblical figure clearly shows that Irving sees their enterprise in keeping with God’s providential design.⁴ In light of Charles L. Sanford’s assertion that the idea of a chosen people was combined with the notion of “Manifest Destiny” to create a “great idealizing slogan of American territorial expansion during the

³ Jefferson sought the nation’s independence from the Old World, not only by promoting the Lewis and Clark expedition and Astor’s venture for commercial purposes, but by boosting agrarianism. John Gatta notes that Jefferson promoted agrarianism to secure Americans’ integrity from the corruption of European commercialism. Territorial expansion toward the West was required for Jefferson to fulfill his ideal of agrarianism as a way of “preserving the ‘sacred fire’ of individual liberty and integrity” (*Making Nature Sacred* 27).

⁴ In a letter to Gouverneur Kemble, dated January 10th, 1838, Irving also voiced his opinion that, even though the excessive pursuits of commercial expansion and land speculation were criticized by some, they were “natural to a young country in a state of rapid and prosperous development . . . [and] devised by an all-seeing Providence for some beneficent purpose” (Pierre M. Irving 93).

nineteenth century” (*Manifest Destiny* 1), Irving’s rhetoric describing Astorians as chosen people bound for the Promised Land legitimizes their commercial or capitalist expansion as divinely sanctioned. Because the will to freedom was likewise assumed to conform to God’s Will, a powerful trope was formed.

Like Irving, in his *Travels in the Great Western Prairies* (1841), Thomas Jefferson Farnham links American incursions into the territories of Oregon and California with the rhetoric of freedom. For Farnham, the nation’s expansion means winning freedom from the shackle of Mexico’s tyrannical government in California:

The overland travel from the States to Oregon and California will find its great highway along its [the Great Platte River’s] banks. So that in years to come when the Federal Government shall take possession of its Territory West of the Mountains, the banks of this stream will be studded with fortified posts for the protection of countless caravans of American citizens emigrating thither to establish their abode; or those that are willing to endure or destroy the petty tyranny of the Californian Government, for a residence in that most beautiful productive country. Even now loaded wagons can pass without serious interruption from the mouth of the Platte to navigable waters on the Columbia River in Oregon, and the Bay of San Francisco, in California. (22)

His justification of defending freedom from tyranny lends its rhetoric to an apologetic for expansion. At their place of intersection, democratic rhetoric, moral duty, and desire for expansion are mutually inclusive.

The triangular relationship between democratic and romantic rhetoric of defending freedom, morality, and expansionism revealed in the narratives of Irving and Farnham is clearly and fully developed in John L. O’Sullivan’s idea of “Manifest Destiny,” a term coined by him in the mid-1840s. It might be said that in 1845 O’Sullivan merely provided a term apt for a pervasive belief like “secular national religion” (Sanford 5), which descended from the earliest American period. In his “The Great Nation of Futurity” (1839), O’Sullivan foretold that the United States would achieve democracy and progress in conformity with “divine principle” (427) and “God’s natural and moral law” (427).⁵ In another editorial, “Annexation” (1845), in *Democratic Review*, O’Sullivan declared that Texas annexation was unquestionably ordained by God’s law, “our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence” (5). His belief that American population is “destined to swell” (“Annexation” 9) reveals an expansionist impulse closely connected with Manifest Destiny. Under demographic pressures, people become mere agents—not independent actors—faithfully following the will of the law-giving Other (God).

The discourse of “Manifest Destiny” which was brought into being and reaffirmed by many influential policy makers, journalists, and writers of the formative period carried within itself certain tensions between morality (and/or law) and desire. With

⁵ In the words of Michael Rogin, “Manifest Destiny cemented the identification of universal freedom with American expansion” (*Fathers and Children* 307). Similarly, Robert W. Johannsen observes that there is an inextricable relationship between romanticism, morality, and expansionism in O’Sullivan’s idea of manifest destiny (“The Meaning of Manifest Destiny” 10-11).

regard to this issue, Albert K. Weinberg in his *Manifest Destiny* points out that expansionism in that period was nourished by various moral and legal rationalizations:

The ideology of American expansion is its motley body of justificatory doctrines. It comprises metaphysical dogmas of a providential mission and quasi-scientific “laws” of national development, conceptions of national right and ideals of social duty, legal rationalizations and appeals to “the higher law,” aims of extending freedom and designs of extending benevolent absolutism. (2)

Weinberg argues that expansionism was born of “the intimate alliance” (12) between moral ideology and self-interest. Anders Stephanson also points out that greed for land, gold, and profits lurks behind the curtain of the moral pursuit of freedom. While recalling that William Ellery Channing criticized contemporary justification of Texas annexation by use of the words “*vile sophistry*,”⁶ Stephanson observes, “the United States had been assigned a purpose in the unfolding of the providential plot that was being perverted” (51).⁷

At this point, psychoanalytic arguments about perversion may shed light on our understanding of the “intimate alliance” (Weinberg 12) between morality (or law) and desire, which was widespread in expansionist utopianism. Here, perversion does not mean merely a description of abnormal behavior, but “a psychic structure—a specific

⁶ In a letter to Henry Clay in 1837, Channing criticized the avarice behind the nation’s rationalization of manifest destiny in its relation with Mexicans and Indians: “Away with this *vile sophistry!* There is no necessity for crime. There is no Fate to justify rapacious nations . . .” (qtd. in Stephanson 50).

⁷ See also Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny* 52.

relation to the paternal function,”⁸ which resides in a social relation. Devising a pun, “*père-version*,” Jacques Lacan emphasizes that the subject within the structure of perversion calls upon the paternal authority (the Symbolic) while anticipating the paternal function’s display of its full power.⁹ The subject fulfills his desire by responding to a (moral) duty or call from the law-giving Other. Usually, the Symbolic Law is supposed to deprive a man of his primal wish, but, in an effort to satisfy his desire, the pervert paradoxically desires the Law itself, not that prohibited by the Law. As Lacan notes, “the subject here makes himself the instrument of the Other’s *jouissance*” (*Écrits* 320)¹⁰ and derives his satisfaction through an “economic” longing for Law or morality itself. Such an odd way of satisfying desire by faithfully corresponding to the law-giving Other can be observed in O’Sullivan’s Utopianism. Given the structure of perversion as understood in psychoanalysis, O’Sullivan’s vision of fulfilling expansion, that is, his mode of satisfying territorial hunger, is perverted by his appeal to the Law—“God’s natural and moral law” (“The Great Nation of Futurity” 427)—which is generally conceived as a check on desire. O’Sullivan furnishes a striking instance of the “perverse” psychic structure in the national discourses promoting expansion.

⁸ See Molly Anne Rothenberg and Dennis Foster, “Beneath the Skin: Perversion and Social Analysis” 4.

⁹ According to Jacques-Alain Miller, “he [Lacan] spoke in French of *père-version*, a word which is untranslatable, made up of *père*, father, and *version*. It implies *a turning to the father, a call to the father*” (“On Perversion” 308). See also Bruce Fink, “Perversion,” *Perversion and the Social Relation* 55.

¹⁰ See also Žižek, *Looking Awry* 109: “[T]he pervert does not pursue his activity for his own pleasure, but for the enjoyment of the Other—he finds enjoyment precisely in this instrumentalization, in working for the enjoyment of the Other.”

Arguably, this oddity with respect to expansionism is reiterated through a diverse but still recognizable pattern in travel narratives. First, regarding the issue of Indian removal, the unusual and perverse relationship between territorial expansion and morality and romantic rhetoric is recurrent in McKenney, Catlin, and Farnham.

In *Memoirs, Official, and Personal* (1846), McKenney's romantic view of Indians is clearly revealed in his trope of the Noble Savage. Indians whom he saw in his travels are portrayed as people with natural virtues like hospitality and affection: "Wherever we found him [the Indian] not yet imbued with the vices of civilization—for these are swift to reach him, and always reach him first—we found a being hospitable, kind, generous, with the natural affections, warm and constant" (*Memoirs* 234). This remark shows well McKenney's romantic assumption that the natives had lived happily in the past, as if they were noble savages in the Golden Age before they became steadily corrupted by the influences of whites' civilization. According to him, it is the vices of civilization that drove the noble Indians into their perilous situation. In his travel narratives, *Sketches to a Tour to the Lakes* (1827) and *Memoirs, Official and Personal*, McKenney mainly ascribes the Indians' degeneration to the introduction of whiskey by whites.¹¹ For instance, he angrily rebukes white fur traders on the frontiers, especially those of John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company, because they used "fire water" in the trade with Indians.¹² McKenney's answer to Indians' such a crisis is the "removal" of them, as

¹¹ See *Sketches* 163; *Memoirs* 20, 176, 241

¹² However, in summer 1827 McKenney and Lewis Cass used 116 barrels of whiskey in treaty negotiations near Green Bay. See Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney* 136. This fact makes their voiced intention of protecting Indians from alcohol highly doubtful.

suggested in his description of the organization objectives of the Indian Board in July 1829:

These intelligent and philanthropic gentlemen [the members of the Indian Board] saw the increasing dangers by which the Indians within our States and organized Territories were surrounded; and contemplated, with anxious solicitude, the perishing result, in the total extinction of the portion of this race who were thus situated, and sought to save them, by the only means which they believed were adapted to so noble an object; and these were, by a proper enlightening of the Indians, to procure their assent to change their relations to the whites, by emigrating to lands west of the Mississippi, and beyond the limits of our States (*Memoirs* 224-225)

McKenney's advocacy of Indian removal resembles the logic set forth by James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Lewis Cass, and Martin Van Buren. Monroe justified removal, appealing to the humanitarian need to promote Indians' happiness by helping them avoid degeneration (Dippie 61). Jackson's rationalization for Indian removal is manifest in his second annual message to Congress (December 6, 1830): "It [Indian Removal] will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers" (*A Compilation* 1083).¹³ Jackson's logic is to some extent romantic in that the removal is a measure to be taken for Indians' happiness, allowing

¹³ See also Jackson's first annual message (December 8, 1829) in *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, vol. 3, 1021.

them to escape from the baneful impact of white civilization and preserve their own simple institutions.¹⁴ Michael Rogin points out that this Jackson's appeal "dressed expansionist self-interest in the clothes of moral concern" (*Fathers and Children* 183).¹⁵ Cass, who was Governor of Michigan Territory (1813 to 1831) and Secretary of War in the Jackson administration, firmly supported removal, arguing that Indians close to white civilization would be corrupted by the vice of alcoholism.¹⁶ In his first annual message (December 5, 1837), Van Buren also rationalized Indian removal under the pretext of saving Indians from the evil of white civilization.¹⁷

Although McKenney objected when the government coercively pushed ahead with the removal plan,¹⁸ he generally agreed with Indian relocation. The principal purpose of his 1827 travels, on which *Memoirs, Official and Personal* was based, was "to enter into conventional arrangements, for an exchange of their [Indians'] country, east, for a country west of the Mississippi" (*Memoirs* 148) and "to negotiate a treaty of cession of a strip of land which remained in Georgia" (*Memoirs* 148). As demonstrated in his *Memoirs, Official and Personal*, McKenney was the very person who managed many treaties over the matter of sale or exchange of Indian territories and removal, through

¹⁴ Similarly, Eric J. Sundquist notes that viewing Indians as innocent children of nature strengthened Jacksonian policy of Indian removal with an appeal to paternalism (*Empire and Slavery* 69).

¹⁵ John Hausdoerffer regards Jackson's logic of Indian removal as "a pseudohumanitarian claim on human displacement" (Catlin's *Lament* 6).

¹⁶ See Lewis Cass, *Considerations* 6; Dippie, *The Vanishing American* 35-36, 62.

¹⁷ See Martin Van Buren, "First Annual Message," *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, vol. 4, 1609: "The decrease in numbers of the tribes within the limits of the States and Territories has been most rapid. If they be removed, they can be protected from those associations and evil practices which exert so pernicious and destructive an influence over their destinies."

¹⁸ See *Memoirs* 38, 161, 259.

councils with the Chickasaws, the Choctaws, and the Creeks. He disclosed his desire for Indian removal by saying “I was anxious for their removal” (*Memoirs* 161), and he was even more resolute when he mentioned that those who were against the government’s Indian removal plan and advised Indians to stay in their territories would face “a tremendous responsibility” (*Memoirs* 244) for their behavior. Furthermore, the historical fact that the Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830 largely through his actions testifies how much he contributed to the Indian removal.¹⁹

McKenney’s championing of removal was supported not only by his morality but by the “Law of Necessity.” In his view, Indians living with whites within the same boundary could not escape the miserable destiny of extinction: “We believe if the Indians do not emigrate . . . they *must perish!*” (*Memoirs* 241). He strongly maintains such is “the truth” (*Memoirs* 242), recalling that Indians such as the Six Nations who shared space with whites melted like snow under the sun.

McKenney is not alone in promoting expansion through Indian removal. The same impulse is recurrent in Catlin. In his *Letters and Notes* (1841), Catlin writes:

In traversing the immense regions of the *classic* West, the mind of a philanthropist is filled to the brim with feelings of admiration; but to reach this country [the mouth of Upper Missouri], one is obliged to descend from the light and glow of civilized atmosphere, through the different grades of civilization, which gradually sink to the most deplorable condition along the

¹⁹ See Viola, *Thomas L. McKenney* 220-222. According to Viola, the Indian Board which was organized by the direction of McKenney petitioned Congress to enact Indian removal legislation.

extreme frontier; thence through the most pitiable misery and wretchedness of savage degradation; where the genius of natural liberty and independence have been blasted and destroyed by the contaminating vices and dissipations introduced by the immoral part of *civilized* society. . . . It is a sad and melancholy truth to contemplate, that all the numerous tribes who inhabited our vast Atlantic States have not “fled to the West.” (1:60)

Catlin traveled to the present Montana-North Dakota border in 1832, when Indian removal was being lively pursued by Jacksonian government. In this context, Catlin’s lament at the “failure” of Southern Indians’ removal cannot be separated from the expansionist ideology underlying his sentimental sympathy toward Indians. Catlin approves “the most strenuous endeavours” (2:120) of the Jacksonian government and the state of Georgia in order to relocate the Cherokees, the Choctaws, and the Seminoles and, moreover, is certain of the final success of the project: “I have not a doubt of their final success” (2:120). Such attitudes clearly indicate that Catlin supported wholeheartedly Jackson’s Indian removal policy.

In *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, Farnham likewise appeals to a theory of vices and virtues:²⁰

[A]ll experience tended to prove that their [Indians’] proximity to the whites induced among them more vice than virtue; and as the General Government, before any attempts had been made to elevate them, had become obligated to

²⁰ According to John M. Coward in *The Newspaper Indian*, in the first-half of nineteenth century, the “common belief . . . that Indians in contact with whites quickly lost their virtues and took up white vices” (69) was prevalent as a “theory of vices and virtues” (69).

remove them from many of the States in which they resided, both the welfare of the Indians, and the duty of the Government, urged their colonization in a portion of the western domain, where, freed from all questions of conflicting sovereignties [*sic*], and under the protection of the Union, and their own municipal regulations, they might find a refuge from those influences which threatened the annihilation of their race. (23)

Farnham seems moralistic here, but his moral position and romantic stance serve to promote expansionism in a perverse manner, justifying the expulsion of the natives from their inherited territories in the name of “the welfare of the Indians and the duty of the Government” (23).

A second aspect of the bizarre alliance between romanticism, morality, and expansion can be found in the rhetoric of a virgin land not technically devoid of inhabitants but peopled solely by those who are ignorant of civilization. The rhetoric of the *vacuum domicilium* (an unpeopled waste) is conspicuous in Farnham. In his *Life, Adventure, and Travels in California*,²¹ a sequel to *Travels in the Great Western Prairies* (1841), Farnham describes California as “an incomparable wilderness” (117). The valley of the San Joaquin, a “wholly uninhabited” (327) place, is strikingly depicted as an empty and virgin land. Farnham discloses his romantic sentiments: “Were I to be exiled from human kind—and cast off from the sight of woman wife and child,—and deprived

²¹ According to Charles B. Churchill, both of Farnham’s travel narratives “were very influential during his lifetime, ran through several editions (with varying titles), and were widely read in the East and Midwest” (“Thomas Jefferson Farnham” 522). The original title of his second book was *Travels in California and Scenes in the Pacific Ocean* when it was published in 1844. I used an edition titled *Life, Adventure, and Travels in California* (1849).

of the deep pulsations of joy which cluster around the holy alter of home, that old Saxon citadel of the virtues, I would pray for a cave in these heights and among these streamy vales” (333-334). Here he seems to become a romantic escapist who wants to flee from the restraints of familial duty. This implies that, in his eye, the western main branch of the Sacramento is the virgin land, a romantic place attractive enough to arouse his longing to live there.

However, in spite of his romantic sentiment, Farnham shows that he is still a person who envisions the expansion of civilization rather than escaping from it. In *Life, Adventure, and Travels in California*, Farnham insists that the San Joaquin is likely to be very fruitful place, if only it is tilled with persistent effort. Farnham similarly admires the lower plains in the Sacramento as “a beautiful wilderness” (330). He does not doubt that the place will become “one of the richest grazing and agricultural districts of the Californias” (331). The same goes for the Jesus Maria River Valley (336).

This agrarian vision accords with the romantic rhetoric of the virgin land or *vacuum domicilium* seamlessly to promote expansion and exploitation of allegedly “empty” land. This idea has a long pedigree. According to Celia Brickman, Columbus interpreted the doctrine of discovery to mean that empty land could be appropriated by the “discoverer” of it, regardless of the fact that the natives had already occupied and cultivated the land (*Aboriginal Population in the Mind* 22).²² Likewise, Farnham

²² According to Wilcomb E. Washburn in his *Red Man's Land / White Man's Law*, the principle of discovery was applied also in legal proceedings like *Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. McIntosh* (1823) by Chief Justice John Marshall, who thought “discovery gave exclusive title to those who made it” (qtd. in Washburn 66). Similarly, according to

suggests that the virgin land of California relatively devoid of inhabitants waits to be peopled and exploited. Here, his vision also reflects Christian attitudes toward cultivating such lands. According to the Reverend John Cotton, people should “multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. If therefore any sonne of Adam come and finde a place empty, he hath liberty to come, and fill, and subdue the earth there” (Sanford 16).²³ Like Cotton, Farnham suggests it is a Christian duty to occupy and cultivate California in accordance with God’s command. Thus, he denounces “lazy” Californians who do not cultivate their land adequately due to slothfulness, though the uncultivated virgin land is waiting to be subdued with the plough:

Rice may be raised in untold quantities about the waters of the San Joaquin [*sic*] and Sacramento. . . . Indeed, it may be confidently asserted, that no country in the world possesses so fine a climate, coupled with so productive a soil, as the sea-board portion of the Californias, including the territory on the Bay of San Francisco, and the Rivers San Joaquin [*sic*] and Sacramento. But its miserable people live unconscious of these things. In their [Californians’] gardens grow the apple, the pear, the olive, fig, and

William W. Stowe, John Filson’s Daniel Boone is portrayed as the righteous inheritor of the seemingly empty land he discovered (“Property in the Horizon” 27).

²³ Undeniably, referring to Genesis 1.28 in the Bible, religious rhetoric was used to defend land exploitation from the colonial period through the first-half of the nineteenth century. John Gatta points out that “religious rhetoric justifying active exploitation or ‘improvement’ of the land abounds in colonial writing” (*Making Nature Sacred* 20). Michael Rogin mentions that the biblical injunction to subdue the land was often employed by whites to justify seizing Indians’ land (*Fathers and Children* 6). Irving thought cultivating virgin land by the plough should be regarded as a moral good, “to multiply and spread out in every direction, and give solidity and strength to our great confederacy” (Pierre M. Irving 93).

orange, the Irish and sweet potato, the yam and plantain most luxuriantly, side by side; and yet they sleep, and smoke, and hum some tune of Castilian laziness, while surrounding Nature is thus inviting them to the noblest and richest rewards of honorable toil. (344)

According to Farnham, the agriculture of Upper California is sustained by the labor of the converted Indians at the missions, and its level is “rude” and “unskillful” (342). Also, raising livestock is ineffectually practiced by Californians (346). This observation indicates that the author moralistically blames Californians for their indifference to fully utilizing fertile land and resources. In Farnham’s racially charged accounts, mestizos in California are described as unintelligent and lazy, using their freedom as a “mere means of animal enjoyment” (356).

By denigrating mestizos as ignorant people, “destitute of industry” (363), and as a morally inferior race (357), and appealing to God’s command to subdue the land through the virtue of industry, Farnham aims to attract and direct the American public’s attention. Assuming a mission to bring progress into backward regions in California, he suggests that California could well become the granary of Western America. His remarks that “the Californians are an imbecile, pusillanimous, race of men, and unfit to control the destinies of that beautiful country” (363) imply that the land is destined to be governed by white Americans who have the moral qualifications to tame it industriously.²⁴ Farnham’s contemporary, the expansionist Thomas Hart Benton, spoke eloquently in a similar vein: “It would seem that the White race alone received the divine

²⁴ Beginning in 1843, Americans started their settlement in the San Joaquin Valley. See Joy, *American Expansionism, 1783-1860: A Manifest Destiny?* 74.

command, to subdue and replenish the earth! For it is the only race that has obeyed it—the only one that hunts out new and distant lands, and even a New World, to subdue and replenish” (qtd. in Sanford 45). Farnham clearly shares his contemporary’s nationalism and belief in whites’ Manifest Destiny to rule the earth in accordance with a sacred command from God. Farnham’s appeal to the Law in order to justify westward expansion is also pervasive in his *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*. He insists that hunting as the Indians’ way of life should give ground to agriculture which represents whites’ civilized way of life, and the subjugation of the former to the latter is the Law of Nature: “[I]n the order of nature, the plough must bury the hunter” (*Travels* 29).

The metaphor of the Indian as a “blank slate” or “blank mind” (*tabula rasa*) has a parallel relationship with the idea of virgin land. In the view of many Americans, just as the virgin land awaited exploitation by the plough, so was the Indian mind regarded as the *tabula rasa* waiting to be civilized and Christianized. The rhetoric of uplifting the Noble Savage from the status of a “blank slate” can be found in Catlin, McKenney, Irving, and Farnham.

Catlin writes: “he [the Indian] is capable of improvement—and . . . *his mind is a beautiful blank* on which anything can be written if the proper means be taken” (1:184, my italics).²⁵ Here Catlin adopts the thinking of John Locke. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke writes:

Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper, void of all Characters, without any *Ideas*; How comes it to be furnished? Whence

²⁵ See also Catlin 2:245.

comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless Fancy of Man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of Reason and Knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, From *Experience*: In that, all our Knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives it self. (104)²⁶

It is noteworthy here that the trope of “white paper” or a “blank slate” is involved not only with the romantic idea of the Noble Savage but with the Enlightenment. Gaile McGregor points out that “the noble savage was given a whole new significance . . . by the associationist psychology of Locke. . . . Locke’s theories had an enormous long term effect . . . on the increasing popularity of the noble savage convention” (*The Noble Savage* 18).²⁷ In Catlin’s mind, the idea that Indians can enjoy the benefits of civilization and have a limitless capability to ameliorate themselves “if the proper means be taken” (1:184) is seamlessly related to the moral and religious obligation to enlighten and uplift their moral condition through introducing Christianity to them. He demonstrates this when he insists on the necessity of “primitive” Indians’ enlightenment:

I have always been, and still am, an advocate for missionary efforts amongst these people [Indians], but I never have had much faith in the success of any unless they could be made amongst the tribes in their primitive state; where,

²⁶ For Locke’s idea of the *tabula rasa*, see also *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 55.

²⁷ Likewise, Peter J. Weston suggests that the idea of a “blank slate” was the actual birth of the notion of the Noble Savage (63). The close affinity of the doctrine of “blank slate” with the idea of the Noble Savage is also observed by Steven Pinker. In *The Blank Slate*, he notes that “a blank slate . . . is bound to impress us more by its inability to do harm than by its inability to do good. . . . [A]ll of us, like Rousseau, associate blankness with virtue rather than with nothingness” (11).

if the strong arm of the Government could be extended out to protect them, I believe that with the example of good and pious men, teaching them at the same time, agriculture and the useful arts, much could be done with these interesting and talented people, for the successful improvement of their moral and physical condition.

I have ever thought, and still think, that the Indian's mind is a beautiful blank, on which anything might be written, if the right mode were taken to do it. (2:244-245)²⁸

Given this mindset, the natives' religion or culture is ignored as insignificant. Catlin considers Indians' religion to be superstitious and even ridiculous (1:40). He assumes that Native American religion has no value and should be replaced by white civilization so that they can "*be saved*" (1:184) and live happily. Catlin's ideas enable the juggernaut of white civilization to move forward relentlessly. Ironically, Catlin's cultural expansionism is justified as meaning the salvation of Indians. It thus springs from a "moral" motive.

In parallel fashion, McKenney applies to Indians the metaphors of flowers and gems: "There were flowers and gems there which needed only to be cultivated and polished, to insure from the one, the emission of as sweet odors as ever regaled the circles of the civilized; and from the other, a brilliance as dazzling as ever sparkled in the diadem of queenly beauty" (*Memoirs* 81). In effect, McKenney simultaneously regards

²⁸ For Catlin's attitude toward Indians' enlightenment and Christianization through ongoing missionary efforts, see also *Letters and Notes* 2:109.

Indians as untainted and innocent people free from the malicious influences of civilization and as sheets of blank paper on which civilization ought to be inscribed.

While he admires the Indians' noble state, McKenney is not satisfied with their present state of nobleness: "The Christian Indians sang again this evening, their hymns being made more strikingly sweet by the yelling and whooping of the wild Indians by whom they were surrounded. What a contrast! The woods made vocal on the one hand by Christian music, and startled on the other by the wild yells of the uncivilized!"

(*Memoirs* 83-84). McKenney's attitude can be understood more clearly by referring to

Louise K. Barnett's definition of "the Good Indian": "[T]his figure [the good Indian] is not simply a noble savage, but a noble savage upon whom certain aspects of white civilization have been engrafted. The good Indian is . . . susceptible to certain white teachings, particularly Christian ideals" (*The Ignoble Savage* 91). In this respect,

McKenney's idea of uplifting noble Indians into nobler Indians seems to make moral

sense. McKenney's idea reflects Jeffersonian Enlightenment thought.²⁹ Jefferson thought

the differences between whites and Indians were "to be found, not in a difference of

²⁹ For an explanation of the close relationship between the romantic idea of the Noble Savage and the Enlightenment in the Jeffersonian age, see Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction* 96, 115. Sheehan notes that noble savagism was used as a way of vindicating Jeffersonian ideas. Reginald Horsman calls Jefferson's thought "moralistic expansion," pointing out that such thought has a moral justification of providing benefits to Indians (*Expansion and American Indian Policy* 106-108). Additionally, Horsman points out that the promotion of expansion through the moralistic pretext of "bringing the chance for perfection of society to the aborigines" began from the Secretary of War Henry Knox in George Washington's administration and continued throughout nineteenth-century expansionism (58).

nature, but of circumstances” (*Notes* 65).³⁰ McKenney likewise believes that Indians can be uplifted to a level as high as whites intellectually and morally:

I did not doubt then, nor do I now, the capacity of the Indian for the highest attainments in civilization, in the arts and religion, but I was satisfied that no adequate plan had ever been adopted for this great reformation. Proof enough, however, had been elicited by the labors of good men, to satisfy me that the Indian was, in his intellectual and moral structure, *our equal*. (*Memoirs* 34).

As indicated in his remarks, McKenney believed that Indians would achieve enlightenment provided that whites took all the actions necessary to reform and uplift them. Accordingly, as superintendent of Indian trade (1816-1822), he founded forty mission schools.³¹ Additionally, through his endeavors, in 1819 the Indian Civilization Act was passed by Congress and schools in Indian territories received ten thousand dollars in aid each year.³²

However, it is noteworthy here that the “favor” or “benefit” provided by the allegedly humanitarian, philanthropic endeavors of introducing Christianity, agriculture, and mechanic arts to Indians was a baleful thing from the perspective of many Indians. It “proved secondary to the goal of extinguishing title to the Indian lands” (Joy 11). According to Richard Drinnon, McKenney “severed the family connections of his ‘little

³⁰ While Jefferson argues that the mental inferiority of Afro-Americans is innate (*Notes* 150-151), he believes Native Americans are equal to whites if only they can ameliorate their cultural environment.

³¹ See Reynolds, *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* 24.

³² See Viola, Introduction, *Memoirs, Official and Personal* vii.

Indians,' [and] used mission schools to batter tribal relations" (*Facing West* 188). "[A]t the Mackinaw school in Michigan" writes Drinnon, "children were bound by legal indenture to the mission so they could not leave or be removed by their families. Everywhere whipping was common" (187).³³ Enlightenment-based paternalism, as clearly shown in McKenney, worked to poison Indian ways of life and culture, rather than serving to secure their happiness. Because of Indians' reliance on oral tradition, there are few extant documents to illustrate their inner reactions. However, Red Jacket provided insight into Indians' responses to Christianization. In 1792, the Seneca orator delivered his indictment of whites' religious imperialism: "Brother! Our seats were once large, and yours were very small. You have now become a great people, and we have scarcely a place left to spread our blankets. You have got our country, but you are not satisfied. You want to force your religion upon us" (*Indian Oratory* 45). McKenney cannot be exempted from such a critique since he overrode Indians' rights to live and maintain their own ways of life with his unilateral enforcement of white civilization over the aboriginal culture. In his paternalism, McKenney sought to instill white civilization into "childlike" Indians under the tutelage of whites and disregarded Indians' culture as insignificant. For example, McKenney deplors Indians' benighted state after observing a Choctaw sorcerer's ritual. According to McKenney, the medicine man prays for the rain to the Great Spirit, but the talisman used for this ritual is merely a glass stopper (*Memoirs* 171). Likewise, in his previous travel narrative, *Sketches of a Tour to the Lakes* (1827), after watching the Chippewa's pipe dance, McKenney discounts it as

³³ In *American Indian Stories* (1921), Zitkala-Ša represented her own anguish in childhood over being forced to trim her long hair at a missionary school (89-91).

purely superstitious (271).³⁴ The author discounts Indians' religious and cultural values altogether,³⁵ suggesting that "all these unmeaning and barbarous customs shall give place to the refinements of civilized life" (236). In McKenney's mind, his pursuit of enlightenment has a moral implication. It is a "moral and religious obligation" (236). His appeal to moral duty thus justified his cultural expansion.

Unlike McKenney, many contemporary thinkers see religious or cultural activities espoused by a certain ethnic group as having a singular value of their own, spiritually and culturally. Religion cannot be measured solely by scientific perspectives, even though religious observances may appear superstitious in the eyes of science. In *The Black Elk Speaks* (1932)—based on John G. Neihardt's interview with Black Elk, a Sioux holy man—one sees that Native American religion provided the way of spiritual communication with ancestors, consolidating the tribe's emotional ties (20-47). This "North American Indian theological canon," in the words of Vine Deloria, Jr.,³⁶ recalls that rituals such as Sun Dance and Ghost Dance were full of symbolic meanings and provided strength, vision, and regeneration (80, 166, 209, 249). Thus, it can be seen that Indian religion was an asset for strengthening the spiritual ties of a cultural community.

³⁴ Viola points out that "he [McKenney] seemed to delight in tearing apart the fabric of Chippewa culture, exposing as frauds its secrets and superstitions" (*Thomas L. McKenney* 144).

³⁵ For McKenney's disparaging of Indians' religion, customs, and medicine, see also *Sketches* 245, 311, 312, 330.

³⁶ Vine Deloria, Jr., Introduction, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, xiv.

McKenney's intolerance is self-serving and necessarily involves "Christian imperialism" (Pearce 20), which led to Indians' cultural disintegration.³⁷

McKenney's cultural expansionism had a persuasive power over his contemporaries by appealing to historical necessity as well as morality. In his view, Indians had no choice but to kneel before the onslaught of "Manifest Destiny," the ascendancy of white civilization sealed by divine necessity: "No longer able to bury himself in his forests, or subsist on their game, or measure strength with the white man, *he will yield to necessity*, resort to the earth for his support, and practice gladly those lessons which are at present lost upon him. Then will be displayed before his eyes, the neat, well-cultivated farm, and the flocks covering the pastures" (*Memoirs* 236, my italics).

Accordingly, we can recognize that McKenney's desire for expansion in terms of culture derives rhetorical power from its "odd" intermixture with morality, Law, and romanticism. In his narratives, the seemingly positive representation of Indians as Noble

³⁷ In his discussion of racial uplift ideology, Kevin Gaines points out its close relationship to Christianity and imperialistic domination: "[T]he finery of civilizationist ideology hid the nakedness of imperial conquest through its promises of bringing Christian enlightenment and moral progress to colonial subjects" ("Black Americans' Racial Uplift Ideology as 'Civilizing Mission'" 440-441). Even if early nineteenth-century American expansionism does not appear to coincide with European imperialism because, in the United States, there was no overseas domination of other nations as in the case of European monarchic nations, American expansionism overlaps with imperialism in the sense that, throughout the nineteenth century, American territorial and cultural expansionism incurred Native Americans' unwanted subjugation by their loss of the materialistic resources (such as land and bison), tribal self-rule, and cultural assets (aboriginal religion and ceremonies), which were vital to leading independent lives. For a critique of American Indian policy during the nineteenth century as a precedent for imperialism, see Walter L. Williams, "American Imperialism and the Indians" 231-249.

Savages and blank slates provides a logical justification for seeking the collapse of the native culture and religion.

In a way similar to McKenney, Irving discloses seemingly self-contradictory views toward Indians in his *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*. On the one hand, Irving admires the Nez Percés as noble; on the other hand, he simultaneously praises Captain Bonneville's teaching of Christianity to the Indians: "Their honesty is immaculate He [Captain Bonneville] exerted himself, during his sojourn among this simple and well-disposed people, to inculcate, as far as he was able, the gentle and humanizing precepts of the Christian faith, and to make them acquainted with the leading points of its history; and it speaks highly for the purity and benignity of his heart, that he derived unmixed happiness from the task" (*Bonneville* 83). These remarks testify that in Irving's mind the romantic admiration of the Noble Savage and the idea of enlightenment or expanding Christian empire were hardly incompatible, as in the cases of writers such as Catlin and McKenney. As noted earlier, the logical connection between romanticism and the triumphalism of civilization is recurrent in these authors' narratives.

Captain Bonneville was welcomed by the Nez Percés when he passed through the Oregon territory in February 1834. In Irving's account, Captain Bonneville finds the Nez Percés hospitable, quiet, inoffensive, and even "the purest-hearted people on the face of the earth" (248). What makes Captain Bonneville surprised is the fact that the natives display "a strong feeling of religion" (248). Captain Bonneville considers their noble aspects to be conducive to making them Christians by striking a chord with their innate religious sentiments. Here we recognize his assumption that the Indians' nobility is a

precondition for their uplift to the status of “good Indians.” Irving also mentions that the Skynses, who possessed noble traits, underwent an even greater “melioration of their manners” (344) once they were enlightened by Christian doctrines. In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, the romantic notion of the Noble Savage is closely associated with the morality of conversion. Romanticism and morality alike serve expansionist ideology in terms of culture and religion.

In *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, while mentioning Marcus and Narcissa Whitman’s mission in the Oregon country, Farnham suggests that in many cases Indians who are noble and live happily already can be “a better and happier people” (78) if only they accept the art and religion of civilized whites, “a superior race” (78). According to him, through the efforts of many mission families he met during his travel, Indians’ moral conditions were significantly improved (89). It cannot be denied that Farnham’s cultural expansionism was inseparable from his romantic rhetoric and morality.

As seen in Catlin, McKenney, Irving, and Farnham, the rhetoric of uplift under the paternalistic tutelage of civilized whites assumes the cultural and religious domination of the natives. As Helen Carr points out, “by the nineteenth century, the idea of the primitive would be much more powerfully a rhetorical tool of colonisation” (67). Romantic views toward Indians often served to endorse the ideology of expansion through paternalism and philanthropism.

In concluding this chapter, I wish to stress again the close affinity between capitalist expansionism and the romantic rhetoric of adventure. If William H. Goetzmann pertinently described the mountain man as “an expectant capitalist” (405),

Irving recreated his historical enterprise in terms of romantic adventure. In Irving's travel accounts, there is an oddly intertwined relationship between capitalist expansionism—the desire for commercial success—and the rhetoric of romantic adventure in American minds in the age of expansion.

Throughout his *Astoria* and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving attempts to show that historical enterprises in the region of the Northwest can be understood within the frame of “romance.” The history of the expeditions promoted by Astor and Captain Bonneville's trek is reshaped by Irving as romance or adventure—as the title of *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* indicates. In his “Introduction” to *Astoria*, Irving tells the reader that adventure stories concerning fur trappers and traders in the wilderness are “perfect romance” to him:

I was at an age when imagination lends its coloring to every thing, and the stories of these Sinbads of the wilderness made the life of a trapper and fur trader *perfect romance* to me. I even meditated at one time a visit to the remote posts of the company in the boats which annually ascended the lakes and rivers, being thereto invited by one of the partners: and I have ever since regretted that I was prevented by circumstances from carrying my intention into effect. From those early impressions, the grand enterprises of the great fur companies, and the hazardous errantry of their associates in the wild parts of our vast continent, have always been themes of charmed interest to me; and I have felt anxious to get at the details of their adventurous

expeditions among the savage tribes that peopled the depth of the wilderness. (*Astoria* xlv-xlvi, my italics)³⁸

Faced with Astor's request to write a narrative about his enterprise, Irving recalls: "It occurred to me that a work of this kind might comprise a variety of those curious details, so interesting to me, illustrative of the fur trade; of its remote and adventurous enterprises, and of the various people, and tribes, and castes, and characters, civilized and savage, affected by its operations" (*Astoria* xlvi). Here, in Irving's eye, the "remote and adventurous enterprises" have romantic implications because the commercial venture, despite its economic motives, takes place in a world uncharted and exotic from the perspective of the reader living in the civilized States.

Peter Antelyes argues that Irving promoted a capitalist expansion within the frame of the adventure story. He shows that in Irving's later Western narratives—*Astoria* and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*—the chivalric romance is reborn through a romantic rhetoric of adventure. In chivalric romance, a heroic knight finally rescues a fair maiden against all odds, such as dangerous and threatening opponents like dragons. This conventional structure of romance is transformed in Irving's narratives in the following ways: Heroic pathfinders try to achieve their economic advancement by conquering the tough environment, the landscape of the West, and dangerous and threatening Indians, who are major impediments in pathfinders' expansion. The keen competition with the British fur traders is also among the hardships the heroic pathfinders undergo in their enterprise. In Irving's reshaping of traditional romance, the

³⁸ See also Irving, *Bonneville* 18.

final goal of romantic quest is capitalist expansion or the promotion of self-interest.³⁹

Utilizing Antelyes's interpretation, it can be said that Irving wrote "romantic historiography" (171) which reconstituted the ventures of capitalists who were dreaming commercial success within the frame of romance where the Far West served as a background to give the romantic effect of remote and exotic world to his contemporaries.

I would emphasize further the "moral" aspect of Irving's rhetoric of the "adventurous spirit." When he writes Western history, Irving combines the chivalric morality of the medieval age with the capitalist "Go-ahead" spirit that pursues the Good of economic expansion against all hardship and peril. This adventurous spirit might be rephrased as the "restless spirit" or the "initiative spirit," and is both romantic and moralistic.⁴⁰ As I mentioned in Chapter II, in many places of his Western narratives, Irving depicts pathfinders in the West as heroes with an adventurous spirit. For instance, John Colter is portrayed as one such exemplary figure. According to Irving, even the threat to Colter's life when he became a captive of the Blackfeet could not dampen his adventurous spirit (*Astoria* 150-151). Also, William Sublette is described as having "game qualities" (*Bonneville* 7) as a legendary pathfinder who inherited the adventurous spirit from his ancestor, a companion of Daniel Boone. To represent Colter and Sublette

³⁹ See Peter Antelyes, *Tales of Adventurous Enterprise* 12, 83, 172.

⁴⁰ According to Angela Miller, in the Jacksonian age Philip Hone, Daniel Webster, and Thomas Cole were concerned about the fact that the go-ahead spirit "undermined traditional restraints on individual passions" (*The Empire of the Eye* 36). David S. Reynolds also mentions that the conservative Whig Hone lamented that the go-ahead spirit became a contemporary "maxim and pass-word," that is, a moral principle of conduct (*Waking Giant* 284).

as heroes clearly shows Irving's idea that the adventurous and ambitious spirit is a trait essential in the Western "enterprise and exploit" (*Astoria* 151). Reconstructing Western history in his *Astoria* and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Irving provides the pathfinders in the West with two conspicuous characteristics: romanticism and morality. They are anything but slothful in their restless pursuit of progress.

Why did Americans in the first-half of the nineteenth century attempt to reconcile their expansionistic desire with a higher morality, as revealed in many travel accounts as well as political discourses? Here, Reginald Horsman's argument is quite suggestive. In his *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1782-1812*, focusing on American governmental discourses in the formative age that sought to place expansion on a moral basis, Horsman argues that such moral justifications rested on the American sense of "moral superiority to the decadent powers of Europe" (172). According to him, the newly established republican government had to provide "an example to Europe . . . showing that nations as well as individuals could live by moral standards" (171) on which the nation was initially founded. As Horsman argues, the nation which was established on republicanism could not ignore morality if it would serve as an exemplar to Europe. On the other hand, westward expansion was urgent for the nation in order to achieve actual independence from Europe.⁴¹ In relation to the Old World, the new nation

⁴¹ As I mentioned earlier, the extension of the nation's commercial power into Asia and the acquisition of North American land were supposed to provide a way of achieving freedom from the influence of Europe. Thus for commercial and agricultural purposes, westward expansion was demanded by many Americans. See Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* 26; Mary E. Stuckey, "Land, Citizenship, and National Identity in Jackson's America" 53; Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny* 31.

could not but pursue simultaneously two rather incompatible goals—higher morality and desire for expansion. Thus a perverse pattern unfolding national desire was forged.

Moral consciousness (moral duty) and appeal to the Law (Historical Necessity, God's Providence, and Natural Law) which stem from romantic rhetoric and ideas perversely legitimize expansionist ideology. In this respect, it can be said that many Americans in the age of "Manifest Destiny" did not think of their expansionism as the pursuit of "desire" or "self-interest." On the contrary, from their perspective, expansionism coincided with the morality (or law) of progress. Travel narratives mirrored a complex mode of national desire in which romanticism, morality, and expansionism were mutually sustainable, and indeed inextricably inseparable, within the particular context of the first-half of the nineteenth century. If we recall again Channing's definition of national literature as "the expression of a nation's mind in writing" (167), the travel narratives surely deserve that designation.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In the formative period when the United States forged the geographical and political framework for the newly founded nation, the genre of travel narratives became closely involved with the contemporary agenda of defining the American “self,” through the traveling observers’ encounter with the frontier environment, Native Americans, and white pathfinders. After his sojourn in Europe of seventeen years, Washington Irving in particular became highly conscious of the urgent need to shape a national identity out of Americans’ singular materials and scenes, and through his three Western narratives he portrayed American pathfinders as nationally idealized and identifiable characters.

Irving “recreated” the class of mountain men and others leading self-dependent and self-reliant lives on the frontier as exemplars of the new republic’s democracy, celebrating their freedom and pitting them against European fur trappers. Before Irving, there were relatively few literary portrayals of hunters, trappers, and traders as nationally symbolic figures. In this regard, the pathfinders portrayed in Irving’s travel narratives constitute part of the “National Symbolic,” in Lauren Berlant’s sense, in that the images and meanings implicit in Irving’s representations work as a discourse strengthening Americans’ identity and even pride in relation to Europeans, while discouraging them from identifying themselves with Europeans or European monarchism and aristocracy.

As seen in Irving and Francis Parkman, portraying the pathfinders as a people of masculine robustness is also conducive to securing national identity, making Europeans,

their foils, seem feminized “others.” In addition to this gendering of the American self, in a biblical trope the pathfinders are described as westering pilgrims looking for the Promised Land, which leads the American reading public to identify itself as a chosen people of progress.

However, casting the pathfinders as the National Symbolic was not always propitious because many mountain men, often called “squaw men,” frequently crossed the racial boundary through their intermarriage with Native American women. Thus, to stabilize Americans’ unity in terms of familial structure, travel narratives of the formative age caution against racial mixing. From Irving and Parkman’s perspectives, mixed-bloods are looked upon as degenerated individuals created by the unwelcome intimacy between whites and Indians. They are described as threatening the nation’s civilization, undermining whites’ national and racial identity as people of progress. Intermarriage between whites and Indians is negatively represented in many travel accounts—for instance by Thomas Jefferson Farnham and Josiah Gregg, in addition to Irving and Parkman—in accordance with the dominant contemporary sentiments stemming from the miscegenation taboo. In the representations of involuntary racial mixing resulting from captivity, Indian males and females are described as savages still in the primitive state: Indian males are violent and females are libidinous. In this respect, hybridity resulting from racial amalgamation was depicted as disastrous. Such a negative representation of racial boundary-crossing reflects and promotes the contemporary theory that whites and people of color are inherently distinct and intellectually and morally hierarchical, and mixed-bloods are a deteriorated type of humans, which was

systematically and mythically sealed as self-evident truth through a pseudo-scientific racialism. Just as the National Symbolic promotes national identity formation by way of prohibiting identification with European values and encouraging an identification with nationally recognized values, so the Racial Symbolic informing the travel narratives discourages identification with people of color. Thus miscegenation taboo supports consolidating the familial and racial integrity of whites.

With regard to national and racial identity construction, Native Americans and nature were represented as primitivized Others that function as foils in highlighting white Americans' civilized qualities. But the result of this identity construction is two-fold. Through the romantic presentation of untamed nature and the Noble Savage, who is supposed to be free and simple, many travel writers such as William Bartram, Washington Irving, and George Catlin attempted to foreground national characteristics such as freedom and simplicity, and their attempts also encouraged the reading public to eschew the vices of European civilization and the politico-social system of aristocracy and monarchism. However, nature and Indians often engendered feelings of fear and dread as well, for they were thought of as untamed, excessive, and violent. Distantiation, a crucial precondition of the aesthetic feeling of sublime (as seen in Joseph Addison, Edmund Burke, and Immanuel Kant), provided an escape from the threatening aspect of primitivized Others. Aside from spatial distantiation, the trope of describing nature and Indians as vestiges of antiquity was also employed, and these strategies of distantiation—in terms of space *and* time—permitted white Americans to reshape their identity as a civilized, youthful, and progressive people, while simultaneously

maintaining their virtues of simplicity and freedom intact. In other words, the romantic aesthetics of the sublime within travel narratives made both “difference” and “deference” possible in whites’ relation to their “Others.” Or, it might be said that Americans could “regenerate through distancing” (to twist Richard Slotkin’s phrase “regeneration through violence”) from the American Others. In this dynamic of identification and distantiation with regard to the primitivized Others, white Americans could portray themselves as people living in a wholesome and young civilization, distinct from a corrupt and out-of-date European civilization. In such identity construction, the intended idealized creation of the American self could only be sustained when the darker elements—nature and Native Americans—were forced into the background. In this respect, the primitivized Others were both exterior and interior to the boundary of Americanness.

Romantic travel narratives of the formative age employ white pathfinders, nature, and Indians not only in shaping the self-definition of Americans in terms of nation and race, but also in representing the national desire for territorial, cultural, and capitalist expansion, and by doing so strengthen their significance as a national literature—given that a national literature is the expression of a nation’s interest, as William Ellery Channing pointed out in “Remarks on National Literature” (167). After the initial nation-building, the rationalization of westward expansion in the name of securing the nation’s freedom was pervasive in political discourse, as well as contemporary travel narratives. The romantic image of the Noble Savage was oddly (mis-)used in validating Indian removal, as a prerequisite of territorial expansionism. Thomas L. McKenney, with his

simultaneous praise of noble Indians and enthusiastic promotion of Indian removal, demonstrates the case. A similar aspect of the bizarre relationship between romanticism and expansionism can be seen in the rhetoric of *vacuum domicilium* and *tabula rasa*, applied to the land and the Indian mind respectively. Farnham strikingly encourages his contemporaries to consider expropriating allegedly abandoned California from the “lazy” Californians, describing it as a virgin land of milk and honey almost devoid of occupants. In a similar way, Catlin and McKenney promote the idea improving the Indians’ benighted state through philanthropic paternalism, yet another rationale for expansion. Likewise, Irving’s reshaping of Astorians and Captain Bonneville’s historical expeditions following the literary convention of chivalric romance makes capitalist expansion, materialistic and mundane, seemingly romantic through the sanitizing lens of adventurous quest.

In justifying expansionism, whether territorial, cultural, or economic, there is throughout a tendency to combine morality with self-interest under the banner of “Manifest Destiny.” The perversity of binding expansionist desire through an appeal to higher moral authority is symptomatically recurrent in travel narratives, as well as in the contemporary political discourse. Given that the appeals to morality and the Law are based frequently on romantic rhetoric, travel narratives show how a dynamic, triangular, and “perverse” relationship between romanticism, morality, and desire for expansion was forged under the particular context of the American formative period out of the commonly accepted binarism of romanticism/civilization or morality (Law)/desire.

As Eric J. Sundquist notes,¹ in order to do justice to travel narratives of the formative period, they should be understood in terms of a national literature because they served to shape identity and mirrored the collective desire of Americans, growing out of complex ideologies such as nationalism, racism, territorial and capitalist expansionism.

¹ See Sundquist, *Empire and Slavery* 12.

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