The "Noble Savage" in American Music and Literature, 1790-1855

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THE "NOBLE SAVAGE" IN AMERICAN MUSIC AND LITERATURE,
1790-1855

A thesis submitted to
The Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Music History and Literature
by
Jacob Mathew Somers
Approved by
Dr. Vicki P. Stroeher, Committee Chairperson
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Marshall University
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APPROVAL OF THESIS

We, the faculty supervising the work of Jacob M. Somers, affirm that the thesis, The “Noble Savage” in American Music and Literature, 1790-1855, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the School of Music and Theatre and the College of Arts and Media. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, Jim, Jennie, and Clifton; my mentor, Dr. Vicki Stroeher; and my love, Amber, whose encouragement, support, and kind words inspired me to be the scholar and person I am today. Without their unwavering faith, this work would have never been possible.
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ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of the War of 1812, America entered a period of unprecedented territorial expansion, economic growth, and political unity. During this time American intellectuals, writers, and musicians began to contemplate the possibility of a national high culture to match the country’s glorious social and political achievements. Newly founded periodicals urged American authors and artists to adopt national themes and materials to replace those imported from abroad, and for the first time Americans began producing their own literary, artistic, and musical works on a previously inconceivable scale. Though American writers and composers explored a wide range of “national themes,” beginning around the 1830s hundreds of novels, poems, and songs sentimentalizing the lives and activities of the American Indians graced the book shelves and piano racks of middle-class American homes. Though the way in which Native Americans were portrayed varied by artist (and even by work), there are several characteristic inconsistencies that reveal a disparity between how American Indians were represented in the emerging national culture and how they were perceived by white Americans historically. By reviewing works such as James Fenimore Cooper’s The Last of the Mohicans (1826), Henry Russell’s “The Indian Hunter” (c.a. 1837), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s The Song of Hiawatha (1855) in their historical and cultural context – taking into account the relationship between the historical and literary images of Native Americans – the adoption and persistence of this particular imagery, rhetoric, and musical language reveal the detachment the American public must have felt towards the Native Americans they had displaced, and suggest the way Americans understood Native American life in relation to their own society during the first half of the nineteenth century.
Prologue

Following the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), the fledgling United States embarked on an ambitious process of nation building and territorial expansion. Driven by the pressures of a growing population and economy, the American government began to aggressively acquire new territory. What started slowly with the admission of Kentucky (1792), Tennessee (1796), and Ohio (1803) as states, soon led to the Louisiana Purchase, an acquisition of the territory stretching from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, which doubled the size of the United States in 1803.¹ Emboldened by the promise of a republican society, President Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) confidently predicted the course of the nation in 1801. “However our present interests may restrain us within our own limits,” Jefferson asserted, “it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, & cover the whole Northern, if not the Southern continent with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms.”² In 1793, fifty-two years before the newspaper editor John O’Sullivan coined the term “Manifest Destiny,” the Revolutionary General and political figure Benjamin Lincoln implicated the spread of American society as divinely ordained:

When I farther consider the many natural advantages, if not peculiar to yet possessed by this country, and that it is capable of giving support to an hundred times as many inhabitants as now occupy it (for there is at present little more to be seen on the greatest proportion of the lands than here and there the footstep of the savage,) I cannot persuade myself that it will remain long in so uncultivated a state; especially, when I consider that to people fully this earth was in the original plan of the benevolent Deity.³

¹ Leonard Dinnerstein, Natives and Stranger: Blacks, Indians, and Immigrants in America. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University, 1990), 73-4.
Conscious of America’s unique position as new nation and confident in their hard fought political and economic independence, Americans began to contemplate the possibility of a national culture “which would be a glory to America comparable to her military and commercial achievements, and which would serve to bind the nation spiritually and intellectually.”

The impulse for the formation of a national culture became especially prevalent after the second war with the British in 1812, particularly in regards to an independent national literature. Authors were urged to draw from the American landscape, domestic life, and the country’s history for inspiration, but attempts to translate these subjects into “national themes” were ill fated – America seemed to lack the depth of character and historical incidents that made for compelling literature. However, there were those who argued that the history, customs, and superstitions of the American Indian could provide a satisfactory topoi that was both rich in detail and distinctly American. What started at the turn of the century as a handful of poems sentimentalizing the life of Native Americans grew to a flurry of literary activity by mid-century, producing such classics as James Fenimore Cooper’s (1789-1859) *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s (1807-1882) *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855). Though the way in which Native Americans were portrayed varied by artist (and even by work), their inspiration all derived from the “noble savage” figure in European literature and social criticism – a character that had existed in literature, drama, and music since European explorers first contacted the inhabitants of the New World.

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In these European sources, the noble savage was an idealized “natural man,” whose simple life and connection to nature allowed him to comprehend natural law and “reason” more clearly than civilized men. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the noble savage figure played an important role in the writings of Enlightenment reformers as a critical counter-image to the European social and political institutions that encouraged inequality and corruption. America’s authors and poets still relied heavily on the models and themes of their European forbearers in the early nineteenth century, but they found the noble savage character at-odds with how they generally understood Native Americans. The discovery and settlement of North America was an act of violent conquest, and the deleterious relationship between whites and Native Americans resulted in an overtly negative conception of Native American life; one in which the Indians’ “nobility” was replaced with savagery deficiency according to their supposed difference from civilized life. Writers struggled to maintain the literary image of the noble savage in light of their national experience, and it was not until the second decade of the nineteenth century that authors found means to reconcile the two.

At the same time authors were committing their Indian characters to paper, American musical culture was in a state of flux. Until the nineteenth century, music was a social activity performed in the home and at church; art music was rare and for a privileged few with the means to hire performers and rent rehearsal space. However, a rift developed following the second peace with Britain between the preferences of the general public and a musical “elite” devoted to the high ideals of European cultivated music and its benefits to society. The ensuing debate over “correct” musical taste continued into the

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second half of the nineteenth century, leaving little opportunity for American composers to explore “national” themes, let alone engage with Native American subjects. Conversely, the market for vernacular music – driven by economics and broad accessibility – was unhampered by the idealism of musical reformers. Beginning in the 1830s, lyricists and composers of popular songs began to utilize “Indian” themes and hundreds of simple songs with titles like “The American Indian Girl” (1835), “The Indian Hunter” (c.a. 1837), and “The Indian Warrior’s Grave” (1850) graced the piano racks of middle-class homes. Written for amateurs, a handful of these songs were quite successful, and some were even performed at the widely-attended concerts by popular musicians like Henry Russell (1812-1901) and the Hutchinson Family Singers.

One may question why, if Native Americans were so widely understood as “deficient savages,” they were such popular figures in America’s emerging literary and musical traditions. The majority of Americans shared expressly negative views about Native Americans, and yet, some of the most significant literary achievements of the first half of the nineteenth were written about Indians or contained Indian characters. In a musical culture obsessed with “correct taste” and “refinement,” why would simple songs about a “primitive” race attract such a broad audience and the recognition of musical professionals? That Native American subjects did not appear in music until thirty years after their inclusion in literature also raises important questions: why was engagement with the subject delayed? What are the parallels between representations of Native Americans in literature and music? And, what forces shaped these representations? Though scholars have addressed these issues individually, when taken together they reveal a web of interrelated ideas and images that Americans relied on to understand their
connection to one another, their role in history, and the future of their nation. By tracing the historical and literary image of the Indian from the colonial era to the mid-nineteenth century, it becomes clear that the emergence of literature and music on Native American subjects was not only part of the broader attempt to construct a distinctive American national identity, but also the way in which Americans tried to make sense of their relationship with Native Americans during the crucial period of nation building.
Chapter One

The Indian in American Life

Colonial settlers believed in a divinely ordered universe, one in which the principles of progress and the elevation of civilized men made intelligible their relations to one another, their world, and their life in society. The English were certain that man could only reach his highest potential under the ordered society they had left behind, and in the New World – with its wealth of natural resources and space – they witnessed the potential for creating just such a society in its purest and most abundant form. “America was more than just a place,” writes historian Colin Calloway, “it was a second opportunity – a chance, after the bloodlettings and pogroms, the plagues and famines, the political and religious wars, the social and economic upheavals – for Europeans to get it right this time.” However, in America the English found not only an uncivilized environment, but also uncivilized men whose appearance and dress were exotic and whose religion, government, modes of war, and ways of subsistence were alien. The perceived “alienness” of American Indian culture is evident in early descriptions of Native societies by the Europeans, who tended to characterize Indian life in terms of its “deficiency,” or according to its supposed difference from white society. Whether describing physical appearance, manners, housing or sexual habits, government, or religion, European observers measured the Indians as a general category against those beliefs, values, or institutions that constituted their worldview.

Colonizing Europeans failed to see anything of value in Indian society, viewing Indian peoples

2 Robert F. Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Random House Publishing, 1979), 26-7. See also: John Smith, Travels and Works of Captain John Smith: President of Virginia, and Admiral of New England, 1580-1631, vol. 1. Ed., Edward Arber and A. G. Bradley (Edinburgh, UK: John Grant, 1910), 65-84. The account by Captain John Smith (1580-1631) methodically describes Indian civilization as he had observed it, including vivid characterizations of Native dress, appearance, and behavior as well as diet, weapons, tools, utensils, boat-building, cloth-making, fishing, hunting, war, music, entertainment, and medicine.
as “primitive” or “barbarous” according to the dual criteria of Christianity and civilization, and regarded the Indians’ lands as virgin wilderness.⁵ “[The Native American’s] land is spacious and void, and there are few,” wrote Plymouth Colony agent Robert Cushman (1577-1625) in the Pilgrim’s journal-account, *Mourt’s Relation* of 1622. “They are not industrious, neither have art, science, skill or faculty to use either the land of the commodities of it; but all spoils, rots, and is marred for want of manuring, gathering, ordering, &c.”⁴ Though the Indians were clearly entitled to the land they coveted – it was natural, not divine law that dictated land ownership – it was God’s will for men to occupy the land and improve it.⁵ Cushman concluded, “As the ancient patriarchs, therefore, removed from straiter places into more roomy, where the land lay idle and waste, and not used it, though there dwelt inhabitants by them […] so it is lawful now to take a land which none useth, and make use of it.”⁶

Settlers immediately set about subduing the “wilderness” and remaking the natural world into what historian William Cronon has described as “a world of fields and fences.”⁷ European powers partitioned the continent, creating a patchwork of claims and jurisdictions and sometimes exchanging territory where Indian people still lived. In their scramble for resources and land, Europeans not only changed the landscape, but also introduced new concepts of ownership to North America – Indians learned to view land as Europeans did, as a commodity to be bought, sold, and owned exclusively.⁸ Because colonial economies depended on agriculture and its

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³ Calloway, *New Worlds for All*, 10.
⁵ Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization*, 3, 6.
⁸ Calloway, *New Worlds for All*, 22-3.
associated trade, and, because farming demanded the extensive and exclusive use of the land, the English gradually expanded their domain through treaties, alliances, and purchase, and brought control over the native resources and populations. Nevertheless, if the English were obliged to improve the land by divine right, they were equally responsible to “give civil and spiritual form to aboriginal dwellers in those lands,” and convert the “heathen savages” to the Christian religion.

The Introduction of Christianity and the Missionary Enterprise

To bring the Indians to Christianity, and consequently under English jurisdiction, missionaries were tasked with converting and propagating English customs and values to Indian communities. It was reasoned that if the missionaries could bring the Indians the Gospel and teach them basic technical and economic skills, they could organize the natives into some ordered society and fulfill the basic spiritual and temporal conditions for a properly civilized life. “The Civil and Holy Covenants of man with God were parts of a cosmically great principle of order,” writes Pearce. “The practical problem of bringing savages to civilization was to be solved by bringing them to Christianity which was at its heart. Success in empire-building and trade would be judged by success in civilizing and Christianizing; success in civilizing and Christianizing would assure success in empire-building and trade.”

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9 As English settlements spread to the north and west throughout the seventeenth century, it became general practice for colonial leaders to buy native territories when possible, a peace-keeping measure thought cheaper and more practical than forceful seizure. Peter Heylyn, an Anglican priest and author, outlined the process and justification for purchasing native land in a brief statement in his geographical survey of the world, Microcosmus (1636). “The lands lie in common to all Natives and Comers, though some few parcels are sown […] Their Petty Kings do indeed frequently sell their kingdoms, but that in effect is only taking Money for withdrawing and going further up the Country, for he is sure never to want land for his subjects because the Country is so vastly bigger that the Inhabitants, who are very few in proportion to its greatness and fertility. […] This [purchasing the land] will show that we have done them no Injury by settling amongst them; we rather than they being the prime occupants, and they only Sojourners in the land: we have bought however of them the most part of the lands we have, and purchased little with our Swords, but when they have made war upon us.” Quoted in Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 130-31.


11 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 6; and “The ‘Ruines of Mankind’,” 212.
edict, propaganda pamphlet, and theoretical treatise, spokesmen for the exploration and
settlement of the New World touted the ideals and interests of missionaries, policy makers, and
private profit seekers as compatible, if not intertwined. The English were initially optimistic
that their faith and society would be welcome and that the Indians would adopt Christianity
readily, despite their perceived barbarism. “[The Indians are] so bad people, having little of
Humanitie but shape,” Reverend Samuel Purchas (1577-1626) penned in *Hakluytus Posthumus,
or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625), his posthumous edition of Richard Hakluyt’s (1553-1616)
voyage narratives. The Native Americans were “more brutish then the beasts they hunt, more
wild and unmanly then that unmanned wild Countrey, which they range rather than inhabite;
captivated also to Satans tyranny in foolish pieties, mad impieties, wicked idlenesse, busie and
bloody wickedness.” Nevertheless, Purchas found the Indians “fit objects of zeale and pitie,”
whose conversion would be rewarded with the abundant riches of the land. “All the rich
endowments of Virginia, her Virgin-portion from the creation nothing lessened, are wages for all
this worke,” concluded Purchas, “God in wisedome having enriched the Savage Countries, that
those riches might be attractives for Christian suters, which there may sowe spirituels and reape
tempoartals.” The image of the savage Indian effectually rationalized European conquest and
spurred patrons of missionary organizations to larger contributions.

A series of ineffectual laws enacted throughout the 1630s in New England intended to
provide funds for missionary work, but little or nothing was achieved until the mid-1640s, when
ministers were elected to engage in “gospel work” every year. John Eliot (c. 1604-1690), who

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13 Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes: contayning a history of the sea voyages and
lande travells by Englishmen and Others* (1625; repr., Glasgow, J. MacLehose and sons, 1905), 241. Original
spelling retained.
14 The following summary of missionary efforts in New England follows those by Pearce, “The ‘Ruines of
Mankind’,” 210-11; Calloway, *New Worlds for All*, 74-6; and Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White
began working with Indians in 1634, was the most successful of these elected officials. Eliot began to learn the local Algonquin language in 1643, with the belief that missionary efforts had so far been unsuccessful in large-scale conversion due to ineffectual communication. With the help of a Native American interpreter, Eliot translated prayers, scriptural texts, and various promotional tracts into the Algonquin language, and in 1646 began successfully preaching to the local Indians in their own dialect.\(^\text{15}\) In 1651, Eliot oversaw the founding of the first of fourteen Indian “praying towns,” communities where Indian converts could live model Christian lives according to the strict rules Eliot enforced and where they could be quarantined from the negative influence of unconverted family. Converts were expected to dress and wear their hair like the English, live in European-style communities, and conform to Western divisions of labor, often enforced by harsh penalties for breaking the rules. These “Christian Indians” were never treated as equals, however, and accounts detailing the abuse and mistreatment of converts, especially during periods of Anglo-Indian conflict, are numerous.\(^\text{16}\) As the century wore on, it seemed evident that the missionary enterprise was to fail. “At their height,” explains Calloway, “Eliot’s praying towns held only about eleven hundred people, and the extent of individual conversions among these people, and how many accepted Eliot’s complete program of social change, remains uncertain.”\(^\text{17}\) A list drawn up in 1698 by Reverend Nicholas Noyes (1647-1717) reveals only 2,500 as the number of converts in Indian towns, and points out that most of these individuals were dying off rapidly.\(^\text{18}\) Though the records of seventeenth-century missionaries
demonstrate remarkable efforts by individuals, their “accomplishments” paled in comparison to their grand aims.

**The Introduction of European Secular Culture and Trade**

The introduction of European commerce and secular culture produced more significant results than the efforts to bring Indians in line spiritually with Europeans. Merchants funneled their wares through the inroads established by English missionaries, flooding native economies with European manufactured goods and supplanting traditional methods of production and trade in favor of establishing exchange networks to bring the Indians into the emerging Atlantic economy. However, the transformation of Native economies came with hidden costs – ecological damage due to mass hunting and grazing, a decline in traditional crafting skills, increasing violence, and dependence on European goods and alcohol. As Native American communities became more reliant on trade goods, some groups found it difficult to preserve their lands and independence. Imported grazing livestock such as sheep, cattle, and horses trampled fields and drove away game, and, as domesticated animals became a part of Native American community life, altered traditional divisions of labor. Trade in American furs formed the economic backbone of French and many English colonies, and hunting *en masse* became a commercial necessity for Native Americans to meet the demands of deerskin and fur traders. As game disappeared and territories shrank before white expansion, tribes began encroaching on each other’s lands, creating new frictions, irritating old ones, and adding a previously unknown

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19 A representative statement by Eliot exemplifies the importance of secular and religious values to the English: “[The Indians] began to enquire after baptism and church ordinances, and the way of worshipping God as the Churches here do, but I showing how incapable they be to be trusted there within [*sic*], while they live so unfixed, confused, and ungoverned a life, unsubdued to labor and order; they began now to enquire after such things. […] I have propounded to them that a fit place be found out for cohabitation wherewith they may subsist by labor, and settle themselves in such a way: And then they may have a Church, and all the Ordinances of Christ amongst them.” Quoted in Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 132-33.


desperation to intertribal warfare. By the eighteenth century, squabbles over hunting territories had grown into formal war between tribal groups, which was now fought with the deadlier weapons of European civilization.\textsuperscript{22}

Another consequence of trade was the spread of previously unseen illnesses like smallpox and measles, which wreaked havoc on Indian populations with little to no immunological resistance. Well-established trade routes helped spread diseases, and inter-tribal commerce contaminated peoples further inland who may have never had contact with Europeans, leading to widespread pandemics.\textsuperscript{23} Alcoholism added to this list of killer imported diseases and brought with it a myriad of destructive consequences – disruptions to family and social life, the breakdown of traditional morals, impaired health due to excessive drinking or exposure, maiming, prostitution, venereal disease, murder, and a lowered birth rate.\textsuperscript{24} Having seen the devastating impact alcohol had on the communities he engaged with, the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder (1743-1823) remarked sadly, “A person who resides among them may easily observe the frightful decrease of their numbers from one period of ten years to another […] Our vices have destroyed them more than our swords.”\textsuperscript{25} “Drunkenness was, in microcosm, the entire Indian problem,” argues historian Brian Dippie, “upon contact with [whites], the Indians exchanged his virtues for civilized vices,” to which they had no defense.\textsuperscript{26} Though English missionaries and merchants may have conceived their motives and goals differently, the effect of their efforts can be viewed as bringing the Indians more fully under white legal and social

\textsuperscript{22} Calloway, \textit{New Worlds for All}, 16, and Dippie, \textit{The Vanishing American}, 42.
\textsuperscript{23} Calloway, \textit{New Worlds for All}, 33.
\textsuperscript{24} Dippie, \textit{The Vanishing American}, 34, and Calloway, \textit{New Worlds for All}, 37.
\textsuperscript{25} Calloway, \textit{New Worlds for All}, 37. The prolific writer and outspoken Puritan minister, Cotton Mather (1663-1728) argued that the failure of New England missions should be blamed on the introduction of liquor and vice by English traders. Instead of being converted, he sermonized, the Indians were being perverted and Indian “drunkenness” came regularly to be denounced in a kind of ritualistic Puritan breast-beating.” See Pearce, “The ‘Ruines of Mankind’,” 213.
\textsuperscript{26} Dippie, \textit{The Vanishing American}, 36.
control while also making them more amenable to economic and social exploitation. Through a combination of secular and religious means, the Indian would be subdued, paving the way for national expansion through peaceful conquest, all while it saved souls from eternal damnation.\textsuperscript{27} For all their trust in their society and the Indians’ potentialities for civilization and God, the English continually met resistance from the peoples they dispossessed and exploited.

**Native American Resistance in the Seventeenth Century**

For many Native Americans, missionaries did not dispel the darkness, but created it. Bearing a destructive culture and promising salvation, “the newcomers infected their bodies, stole their land, killed their game, and threatened to sever sacred relationships that had kept the world in balance for thousands of years,” explains Calloway.\textsuperscript{28} “Indian people were dying of new diseases, succumbing to the inroads of alcohol, losing their economic independence, fighting new wars with deadly new weapons, struggling to hold on to their lands, and watching the physical world change around them.”\textsuperscript{29} Europeans not only reshaped the world they invaded, they demanded that Indian people cast aside their traditions and culture and view the world they had inhabited according to the criteria of white Christianity and “civilization.” Yet there were those who fought tooth and nail against the alien religion and society that threatened them, resisting every effort to separate them from their cultural and spiritual roots.\textsuperscript{30} In Virginia, rapid population growth and the subsequent demand for cultivatable land resulted in violence early in the century between Native Americans and colonists. Competition for limited land resources increased as the colony grew in strength, and in 1622 the Powhatan Confederacy coordinated an

\textsuperscript{27} Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 116-17, 133; Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization*, 28-9.
\textsuperscript{28} Calloway, *New Worlds for All*, 69, 72.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 71.
assault against Jamestown, killing a quarter of the white population there and prompting a series of punitive expeditions by the English in 1622 and 1623.\textsuperscript{31}

The first in a line of Anglo-Indian conflicts in the centuries leading up to the Revolution, the 1622 attack destroyed any regard the colonists had towards the Indians, a hardening of feelings evidenced by the pioneering declaration from 1622 by Edward Waterhouse, a secretary of the Virginia colony:

Because our hands which before were tied with gentlenesse and faire usage, are now set at liberty by the treacherous violence of the Savages, not untying the Knot, but cutting it: So that we, who hitherto have had possession of no more ground then their waste, and our purchase at a valuable consideration to their owne contentment, gained; may now by right of Warre, and the law of Nations, invade the Country, and destroy them who sought to destroy us.\textsuperscript{32}

For the average colonists in the New World, the Indian was not a hypothetical man in “savage ignorance” who could be civilized, but rather one whose nature and whose way of life was antithetical to their own.\textsuperscript{33} When the Powhatan Indians tried to wipe out the English again in 1644, the Virginians were prepared and defeated what organized resistance they met by 1646.\textsuperscript{34}

Rising tensions between fur traders and the Pequot tribe in Massachusetts erupted into armed conflict in 1636, when Pequots killed an English trader whom they accused of kidnapping and then murder the principle Pequot leader or sachem. In retaliation, Puritan colonists and their Native allies, the Mohegan and Narragansett tribes, led an organized raid on a Pequot village on the Mystic River in 1637, razing the village and shooting those that fled, killing between four-hundred and seven-hundred men, women, and children.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{31}Pearce, \textit{Savagism and Civilization}, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{33}Pearce, \textit{Savagism and Civilization}, 41.
\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}, 11.
Land hunger in the 1670s led to more war as colonists in eastern Massachusetts and Virginia placed tremendous pressure on neighboring tribes to relinquish their land, threatening the independence of those tribes that had traditionally been amenable to the English, or who had acted as allies in the past. Believing that the colonial administration had been overly protective of Indians by passing laws to prevent incursions on Native land titles, landless colonists near the Virginia frontier rebelled against the colonial government there in 1676 and led a series of raids against largely unarmed and friendly Indian communities throughout Virginia. Termed Bacon’s Rebellion (1676) after the movement’s leader, the vigilante forces destroyed Indian towns, most of whom were members of already-weakened groups that depended on the English.\(^36\) The most significant conflict of the seventeenth century, King Philip’s War (1675-1676), involved the Wampanoags of eastern Massachusetts and their southern allies the Narragansetts and Nipmucks. Under mounting pressure from Puritan authorities, the Wampanoag leader Metacom (referred to as King Philip in English accounts) attended a meeting at Plymouth in 1671, where he was forced at gunpoint to surrender his people’s firearms and sign a retroactive agreement ceding all land and jurisdiction to the colonial governor. Following the event, Metacom and his allies carried out raids on colonial towns, striking a serious blow to the colony. The Puritans, aided by the allied Mohawk tribe, were successful in killing Metacom in mid-1676 and ending the conflict, but at a significant cost for both sides.\(^37\) Ultimately, Indian resistance figured for little by the eighteenth century. As the colonies developed in holdings and in power, the English moved further inland from their coastal settlements and took over more Indian land. Indian

\(^37\) Kicza, *Resilient Cultures*, 135-136. Victory came at a significant cost. Several thousand Puritan settlers and perhaps double that number of Indians died during the conflict, and the surviving natives were sold into slavery in the West Indies. Indians had raided some 52 of 90 Puritan towns and destroyed at least a dozen, forcing the English back and undoing some 40 years of westward expansion.
troubles steadily became frontier troubles, and missionary work became a matter of distant, enlightened philanthropy and charity.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{The Iroquois Confederacy and the French and Indian War}

In the hundred years between the end of the King Philip’s War in 1676 and the American Revolution, Native Americans residing in the east struggled to retain a degree of cultural distinctiveness and self-reliance. War and disease left many of the lesser tribal groups in the East broken up and scattered, forcing those that remained to the West, or in some cases eradicated them entirely. Moreover, even in what few Christianized communities remained, few natives could sustain themselves on their own lands and many became laborers and merged into the growing working class in eastern cities. However, until the last third of the eighteenth century, there remained a significant and unrivaled Indian power in the East – the Iroquois Confederacy. The Confederacy was a diplomatic compact of five major tribes: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. Formed more than a century before European contact, the Confederacy was created to ensure unity between eastern tribal groups when negotiating with foreigners and to adjudicate disputes between the constituent tribes.\textsuperscript{39} United in peace, war, and trade, the Iroquois Confederacy commanded power enough to negotiate with French and English colonial governments to their own benefit. The Iroquois were located in the Ohio River Valley, the border region between the French Empire and England in the north and the main source of the furs that fed both colonial economies. The location and organizational unity of the group enabled the Confederacy to leverage treaties in 1701 with both the French, their enemy during the previous century, and English, who were their primary trading partners. The treaties allowed

\begin{footnotes}
\item[38] Pearce, \textit{Savagism and Civilization}, 11-12, 20.
\item[39] Kicza, \textit{Resilient Cultures}, 139.
\end{footnotes}
the Iroquois to remain neutral in cases of war between colonial powers and conceded hunting grounds in the west to the English as a gesture of good faith.\textsuperscript{40}

For most of the first half of the eighteenth century this two-pronged diplomatic approach allowed constituent tribes of the Iroquois to prosper and grow when other groups were dying out; they remained central players in the fur trade and assimilated remnant populations of devastated coastal peoples, replacing their own declining numbers.\textsuperscript{41} However, in the 1750s, the Iroquois were forced to abandon their neutrality when the continental Seven Years War (1754-1763) between England and France spilled over into the North American theater, and disputes over territorial control of the fur trade west of the Allegheny Mountains escalated into the French and Indian War (1756-1763). Though the Iroquois had maintained a peaceful relationship with both nations, many factions of the Confederacy elected to side with the French, who they viewed as more trustworthy than the English and who were less likely to inundate the region with settlers.\textsuperscript{42} The combined French and Indian forces were successful in driving the English back for a time, inflicting major defeats and even requiring some settlements to withdraw to the east. After several years, French fortunes turned and they were forced surrender and cede to the English under the Treaty of Paris (1763) the area of New France, consisting all of continental North America east of the Mississippi River.\textsuperscript{43} With only a single colonial power in North America, the Iroquois no longer benefited from the unique position that had allowed the five tribes to remain economically independent and territorially secure. However, as long as British and Iroquois interests coincided, the British were inclined to protect Iroquois land holdings against colonists’ demands.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 139.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 139.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 140-41.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 140-41.
The Iroquois during the American Revolution

After the French and Indian War, England began to centralize the imperial administration in North America, and home officials passed proclamations and instructions restricting colonial legislatures’ control of Indian trade and land-acquisition. Hoping to avoid future conflicts with the American Indians, the British Crown signed the Royal Proclamation of 1763, a diplomatic measure intended to regulate colonial expansion by creating the first official boundary separating the Atlantic British colonies and Indian controlled lands west of the Appalachian Mountains. When the colonists rebelled against the crown in 1775, due in part to these restrictions on trade and settlement, British agents and administrators convinced their Indian allies that victory for the colonists would mean the end of their way of life. The English were skilled negotiators and their appeals were direct and realistic: the guaranteed preservation of Native American territories, rights, and trade in exchange for their loyalty and support against the rebelling colonists. Barely able to handle the British in the east, the Americans on their end hoped for the support, or at least the neutrality, of the Indian tribes, arguing that both American Indians and native-born Americans faced a common threat in the English. “We are sprung from one common mother,” the American commissioners at Pittsburg related in 1776, attempting to solicit the support of visiting Iroquois delegates, “we were all born in this big Island.” However, there was little trust between Native Americans and the colonists, and native support was limited.

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44 Some historians have argued that the restrictions posed on settlers were one of the many reasons America declared independence from Britain. Berkhofer contends that, “Once the colonists had declared their independence, they watched warily any attempts to re-create such central authority over their affairs. States with claims to trans-Appalachian lands opposed giving too much power over Indian affairs to the Continental Congress,” and after the war several states challenged the authority of Congress to negotiate with Indian tribes within or near their borders. Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 141.
45 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 53.
46 Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 140; and Calloway, New Worlds for All, 1.
Over the course of the War of Independence (1775-1783), Americans struggled to maintain control of the western theater, but managed to put down British-encouraged uprisings, withstand repeated frontier raids, and even attack Indian settlements directly.\textsuperscript{47} Frustrated by recurrent land losses, members of the British-allied Cherokee tribe besieged frontier settlements and military outposts early in 1776, but faced swift and bitter retaliation by colonial militias in a string of punitive expeditions through the Carolinas, Virginia, and Georgia. British-backed Iroquois forces also leveled attacks on isolated frontier settlements in New York, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania, a tactic that provoked the Sullivan Expedition in 1778, when American marched through Iroquois territory, razing more than forty villages and much needed supplies of Iroquois loyalists and forcing the them to flee to British-held forts in near Quebec.\textsuperscript{48} By the 1780s, most of the Indians allied with British had retreated to the Lake Erie basin. The Americans had gained significant ground, but fear of raiding parties prevented them from holding the region, and the war on the western frontier ultimately ended in a stalemate.\textsuperscript{49} The Treaty of Paris formally ended the war in 1783, and under its terms Britain acknowledged American sovereignty and relinquished all of its territory east of the Mississippi, south of the Great Lakes, and north of Florida to the new nation. The Treaty made no mention of Great Britain’s Native American allies, however, and Indians who had supported the Crown and who still inhabited the transferred area were never consulted.\textsuperscript{50} As news of the peace terms reached Indian country, many Native American leaders expressed anger and disbelief that their protectors would abandon them.

British officers and agents, aware of the native’s discontent and fearful that their former allies

\textsuperscript{47} Pearce, \textit{Savagism and Civilization}, 53.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Collin G. Calloway, \textit{The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities} (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 272-73.
would betray them in turn, scrambled to reconcile with the Indians and protect their economic interests in the north. The British postponed abandoning strategic frontier posts – which were to be vacated “with all convenient speed” under the peace agreement – and continued to disperse presents and supplies to the Natives who continued to oppose American advances on Native American land post-Revolution.\textsuperscript{51} In the wake of the war, the official American view was essentially the British colonial view: that Indian land was “conquered territory” under the stewardship of the national government; however, as long as the British retained forts and soldiers in the area Americans had obtained in their diplomatic coup, the English and their Indian allies remained a significant military and diplomatic threat to the new nation.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{The Beginning of United States Indian Policy}

Nevertheless, the foundation of the United States at the end of the eighteenth century brought new meaning to the terms “America” and “American”; the ideas and images harbored by American leaders on what the nation could be as a society directed their conception and policies towards Native Americans more reliably than the image of degraded or bloodthirsty savage.\textsuperscript{53} From the settled east, where the threat of Indian incursions was a distant memory, leading Americans hoped, as had the English, that Native Americans could be absorbed into the white population and enjoy education and Christianity.\textsuperscript{54} “Let it not be said, that they are incapable of improvement,” one of Jefferson’s contemporaries penned in 1798. “Natural history […] teaches us, that the physical differences between nations are but inconsiderable, and history informs us, that civilization has been constantly preceded by barbarity and rudeness.”\textsuperscript{55} Believing that

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibid.}, 277.
\textsuperscript{52} Pearce, \textit{Savagism and Civilization}, 54.
\textsuperscript{53} Berkofer, \textit{The White Man’s Indian}, 134-35.
\textsuperscript{54} Pearce, \textit{Savagism and Civilization}, 54.
education and opportunity were the only barriers preventing Indians from achieving civilized life, early approaches to Indian affairs by the new American government focused on education and assimilation. Officials knew that “civilized” Indians would be much easier to negotiate with, and both Washington and Jefferson supported efforts to supply animals, tools, and training in domestic manufactures to Native communities. “I consider the business of hunting as already become insufficient [to the Indians],” Jefferson explained in a letter to the Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins (1754-1816) in 1803. He continued, “the promotion of agriculture, therefore, and household manufacture, are essential in their preservation, and I am disposed to aid and encourage it liberally.” Once Native Americans abandoned their life as sedentary hunters and became cultivators of the land, they would cease to be savages. Jefferson even urged a plan for complete racial assimilation, “the ultimate point of rest & happiness for them is to let our settlements and theirs meet and blend together, to intermix, and become one people.”

Experience had made officials wary, however, and it was reasoned that closely regulated contact on a federal level was necessary to secure peace between races.

With the knowledge that white advancement on native lands was as unpreventable as it was inevitable, Congress moved in 1786 to centralize Indian affairs under the purview of the newly appointed Secretary of War, Henry Knox (1750-1806). Knox also saw the importance of civilizing efforts “by which the source of future life and happiness [could be] preserved and extended,” but was of the shared opinion that “the deep rooted prejudices, and malignity of heart, and conduct, reciprocally entertained and practiced on all occasions by the Whites and Savages will ever prevent their being good neighbours.” Consequently, “either one or the other party must remove to a greater distance, or Government must keep them both in awe by a strong hand,

and compel them to be moderate and just.”  

With this in mind, Knox put forward a basic policy of segregation and assimilation, summarized here in a declaration from 1789:

Although the disposition of the people of the States, to emigrate into the Indian country, cannot be effectually prevented, it may be restrained and regulated.  
It may be restrained, by postponing new purchases of Indian territory, and by prohibiting citizens from intruding on the Indian lands.  
It may be regulated, by forming colonies, under the direction of the Government, and by posting a body of troops to execute their orders.  
As population shall increase, and approach the Indian boundaries, game will be diminished, and new purchases may be made for small considerations. This has been, and probably will be, the inevitable consequence of cultivation.  

In line with the general policy of segregation and assimilation, Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance in 1787 – the first comprehensive order laying the foundations for the American public land system – dividing American lands west of the Appalachian Mountains into rectangular “territories,” and defining the process by which these were admitted as States.  

To maintain peace between settlers and Native Americans in these territories, Congress enacted a series of laws from 1790 to 1802 intended “to regulate trade and intercourse with Indian tribes, and to preserve peace on the frontiers.” These acts regulated Indian trade through licensing, established a boundary for “Indian Country,” and prescribed punishments for whites who illegally trespassed or committed crimes on Indian land.  

Additionally, the laws authorized superintendents and field agents acting under the War Department “to promote civilization among Indian tribes” through “the introduction of the Arts of husbandry, and domestic

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57 Henry Knox, Report of the Secretary of War to Congress, 10 July, 1787, in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C., 1934); quoted in Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 47. Knox argued that disputes between frontier citizens and Native Americans were too contentious to be handled fairly by civil authorities. “In such a case [of dispute], the sword of the republic only, is adequate to guard the due administration of justice and preservation of peace.”  
59 Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization*, 54; Berkofer, *White Man’s Indian*, 140-41. Notably, the act granted preemption to the federal government—the exclusive right to purchase Native American land—and required Indian titles and claims be formally extinguished by the government before Americans could occupy it.  
manufactures, as means of producing, and diffusing the blessings attached to a well-regulated civil society.\textsuperscript{61}

The superiority of American life was self-evident to the early policy makers, and the belief that the natives would relinquish their lands peacefully in exchange for the blessings of American civilization – segregation, then education and assimilation – defined Native American policy until the 1820s when situations demanded they change. The similarities of these aims to pre-Revolutionary colonial practice is obvious. By defining an “Indian country,” regulating trade and land purchase, and appointing representatives to negotiate treaties and oversee Indian affairs, Congress continued a legacy of failed colonial policies. The image of Indian “savagery” evoked in the Declaration of Independence was a powerful and long lasting one: “He [King George III] has excited domestic insurrection amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.”\textsuperscript{62} Treaties were made, and boundaries set by the new American government, but the high-minded aims of policy makers meant little to pioneering Americans, who had little respect for their government and even less for “the animals, vulgarly called Indians.” \textsuperscript{63} Enforcement of the trade and intercourse acts depended on the power of the small and ill-funded U.S. army, which was ineffective in preventing whites from committing crimes on Indian land or maintaining peace on the extensive frontier.\textsuperscript{64} Frontier citizens wantonly

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{63} Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Indian atrocities: narratives of the perils and suffering of Dr. Knight and John Slover, among the Indians, during the Revolutionary War: with short memoirs of Col. Crawford & John Slover and a letter from H. Brackinridge, on rights of the Indians, etc. (1782; repr., Cincinnati, OH: U. P. James, 1867), 62.
\textsuperscript{64} Berkofer, The White Man’s Indian, 147. Berkofer explains the tendency for the government to under-fund the military a result of its purpose: “Congress only supported an army in “peace time”—a phrase that discounted battles with Native Americans as mere police actions and not full-fledged wars with foreign powers—as a result of Indian hostilities.” Ibid., 147-8.
\end{footnotesize}
violated Indian land and, often with the help of local militias, killed Natives with impunity, justifying their acts with tales of Indian brutality and savage warfare. As explorers and pioneers cut into the unknown wilderness, a growing number of newspaper and literary sources provided sensational depictions of savage warfare, scalpings, and heathen rituals, and narratives of Indian captivity became “a staple of source of thrilling and shocking details of frontier hardships.”

Ultimately, frontier Americans and territorial governors justified their violations on the same grounds as federal Indian policy, and colonial policy before it: the superiority of civilization over savagism, the Biblical injunction to work the land, and the principles of higher uses. “By the law of nations,” argued the governor of frontier Tennessee in 1798, “it is agreed that no people shall be entitled to more land than they can cultivate. Of course no people will sit and starve for want of land to work, when a neighbouring nation has much more than they can make use of.”

The frontier drive for land and power was more aggressive than during the colonial period, however. When northwestern tribal representatives refused to cede more land in 1802 to the territorial governor of Indiana, William Henry Harrison (1773-1841) defied the federal government and threatened to take the land by force. Policy makers had been idealistic in presuming that Native Americans would so readily adopt white ways and relinquish their lands, and actions such as Harrison’s pushed remaining Indian groups in the northwest and southeast into unified resistance against American advancement in the 1780s, 1790s, and again in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

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65 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 58.
67 Letter from John Sevier to James Ore, May 12, 1798, quoted in Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years, 143.
68 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 55.
The “Tecumseh Confederacy” and the War of 1812

The years 1790 to 1812 also marked a period of Native American cultural and religious revival, cultural assertiveness, and political movements that stressed pan-Indian unity, this time under the Shawnee leader Tecumseh (1768-1813) and his half-brother Tenskwatawa (1775-1836), or “The Prophet.” Armed and supplied by the British, the “Tecumseh Confederacy” – a pan-tribal alliance of smaller groups in the Great Lakes region – stalled American advances in the Northwest on multiple occasions. As tensions mounted between the United States and Great Britain, President James Madison (1751-1836) in 1811 condemned the actions of Tecumseh and his Confederacy, citing “several murders and depredations committed by Indians […] under the influence and direction of a fanatic of the Shawanese tribe.” On November 6, two days after the address, William Henry Harrison scored a major victory over the Shawnees at the Battle of Tippecanoe (1811), but Harrison’s actions pushed many Native Americans further towards the British camp. Two weeks before the U.S. declared war on Great Britain, Madison wrote to Congress again:

In reviewing the conduct of Great Britain toward the United States our attention is necessarily drawn to the warfare just renewed by the savages on one of our extensive frontiers. […] It is difficult to account for the activity and combinations which have for some time been developing themselves among tribes in constant intercourse with British traders and garrisons without connecting their hostility with that influence and without recollecting the authenticated examples of such interpositions heretofore furnished by the officers and agents of [the British] Government.”

As with previous conflicts, the War of 1812 returned the propagandistic image of “merciless savages” to public prominence. By siding with the British and conspiring to oppose America’s

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71 James Madison Address to Congress, 1 June, 1812, in Ibid., 503-04.
push west, the Indians had shattered the illusion that they would gladly exchange their lands for civilization.  

In his second inaugural address from March of 1813, Madison praised the nation’s “scrupulous regard” to the obligations of just and honorable war, and damned the British for enlisting Indian allies. Though they had not “taken into their own hands the hatchet and the knife, devoted to indiscriminate massacre,” the British had, “let loose the savages armed with these cruel instruments, have allured them into their service […] eager to glut their savage thirst with the blood of the vanquished and to finish torture and death on maimed and defenseless captives.” With little hope of defeating the British navy in the Atlantic, America set its sights on Britain’s Canadian territories as a way to force their concession. In October of 1813, Harrison led a force of regular soldiers and Kentucky militiamen against the British and Tecumseh’s forces in present-day Ontario. The ill-prepared English forces retreated, and Tecumseh was killed near the forks of the Thames River; news of his death spread quickly and the pan-tribal alliance dissolved. Less than six months later, Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) defeated the British-allied Creek Indians in Alabama, virtually ending Native resistance in the South. By 1814, with peace talks between the two nations underway, the area east of the Mississippi River had been effectually secured.  

**Formulation of U.S. Indian Policy after the War of 1812** 

During negotiations, the British ministers accused the American government of complete disregard for Native land titles, “thereby menacing the final extinction of those nations,” and demanded an Indian “barrier state” be erected as a way to secure their future and define the

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73 James Madison Second Inaugural Address, 4 March, 1813, in *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902*, 1, 525.  
boundary separating British territories and the United States. Outraged, American diplomats rejected the proposals outright, citing Great Britain’s own history of conquest in North America. “If the United States had now asserted that the Indians within their boundaries, who have acknowledged the United States as their only protectors, were their subjects, living only at sufferance on their lands […] they would only have followed the example of the principles uniformly and invariably asserted […] by the British Government itself.” Further, the Americans had practiced a far more “humane and liberal policy” towards the Indian than had the European powers:

The Indian residing within the United States are so far independent that they live under their own customs, and not under the laws of the United States; that their rights upon the lands where they inhabit or hunt, are secured to them by boundaries defined in amicable treaties between the United States and themselves; and that whenever those boundaries are varied, it is also by amicable and voluntary treaties, by which they receive from the United States ample compensation for every right they have to the lands ceded by them. […] Whether called subjects, or by whatever name designated, such is the relation between them and the United States.

Concerns over America’s moral image after the war impelled American policy-makers and religious leaders to prove that they had indeed been “humane and liberal” in their approach to Indian affairs. In December of 1815, President Madison renewed the promise to protect native titles to land in a proclamation, “commanding and strictly enjoining all persons who have unlawfully […] made any settlement on the public lands [which had not been ceded to the government] to remove therefrom,” and threatened military intercession against those who did not comply. The following year he was happy to announce “the tranquility which has been restored among the tribes themselves,” as well as between Native Americans and whites and

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76 Message from the American to the British Ministers, Sep. 9, 1814, in Ibid., 715-16.
77 [James Madison] A Proclamation By The President of the United States of America, Dec. 12, 1815, in A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, 1, 572.
urged “the resumption of the work of civilization,” to establish “the true foundation for a transit from the habits of the savage to the arts and comforts of social life.”

The devastating long-term effects of the War of 1812 on Native American communities was initially obscured by the flurry of efforts, both public and private, to resume missionary and educational activity in Indian communities. The Second Great Awakening in the 1790s and the Indian’s tarnished image after the war gave a new urgency to missionary work, and government officials subscribed to the same logic of Christianization and civilization as the missionaries and their patrons. In 1819, Congress passed an act appropriating ten thousand dollars annually “for the purpose of providing against the further decline and final extinction of the Indian tribes [...] and for introducing among them the habits and arts of civilization.”

To policy makers of the time, “Americanism rested upon a firm religious and moral groundwork, and so naturally religion [...] was presumed to be an inextricable part of the acculturation process for Indians.”

Thomas McKenney (1785-1859), the Superintendent of Indian Affairs when the act was passed, used the “Indian Civilization Fund” to subsidize missionary societies that established Indian schools, and that stressed practical instruction in agriculture and domestic arts. In the face of increasing pressure, many Native American leaders accepted missionary-run schools and agricultural practices to preserve their culture and land. However, there were those who still clung to their tribal cultures and rejected white society; by repudiating white goals, these groups fed the perception of their innate “inferiority” and “savagery.”

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79 An Act making provisions for the civilization of the Indian tribes adjoining the frontier settlements, 15th Cong., 2nd sess. Richard Peters, ed., *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States* (1846) 3: 516-17. The Act was intended to “employ capable persons of good moral character, to instruct [Indian tribes] in the mode of agriculture suited to their situation; and for teaching their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic.”
80 Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 150.
To Americans in the nineteenth century, the Indian had failed to live up to the expectation that they would become civilized. In the minds of “the great mass of the community,” the Indians belonged to “an inferior race of men […] neither qualified to rise higher in the scale of being, nor to enjoy the benefits and blessings of the civilized and Christian state.”

When Americans tried to introduce the benefits of civilization, they saw that civilization was what led to the Indian’s decline. In coming into contact with civilization, the Indian had traded savage virtues for civilized vices, and though Americans could pity his condition, they saw the Indian’s destruction as inevitable. As one religious writer contended, “There seems to be a deep rooted superstition [...] that the Indians are really destined, as if it were some fatality in the case, never to be christianized, but gradually decay till they become totally extinct.”

Even those who had experience with Natives subscribed to the notion of their impending doom. William Clark (1770-1838), co-captain of the 1804-1806 overland expedition and a leading participant in Indian affairs, commented sadly that before 1815, “the tribes nearest our settlements were a formidable and terrible enemy; since [the end of the war] their power has been broken, their warlike spirit subdued, and themselves sunk into objects of pity and commiseration.”

The 1819 comments of Speaker of the House Henry Clay (1777-1852) to Congress amount to a formal expression to the ubiquitous belief in the Indians’ imminent extinction. When the colonies were established, “we were weak, and they were comparatively strong,” Clay noted, “they were the lords of the soil, and we were seeking […] asylum among them.” Now the situation had changed:

To use a figure drawn from their own sublime eloquence, the poor children of the forest have been driven by the great wave which has flowed in from the Atlantic ocean to

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82 The Removal of the Indians. An Article from the American Monthly Magazine: An Examination of an Article in the North American Review; and an Exhibition of the Southern Tribes, in Civilization and Christianity (Boston: Pierce and Williams, 1830), 72; quoted in Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 10.

almost the base of the Rocky Mountains, and, overwhelming them in its terrible progress, has left no other remains of hundreds of tribes, now extinct.84

The time had come for America’s approach to the “Indian problem” to change. Segregation and assimilation had apparently failed and, without some kind of intervention, Native Americans would soon vanish. The eradication of an entire race was unthinkable, and in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, American political leaders shaped a new policy with the hope of arresting, or at least slowing, the Indian’s decline.

A Change in U.S. Policy: The Case for Indian Removal

Though the War of 1812 temporarily stymied American expansion, the demand for resources and elbowroom in the years immediately following the war initiated a new wave of settlement west and brought the “Indian problem” into sharp focus. Citizens in territories with burgeoning populations demanded further land cessions from Native Americans, and officials who favored the standing policy of segregation and assimilation did not anticipate the speed and fervor with which Americans expanded into western territory. Contemporary U.S. policy rested on the assumption that Indians would either adopt an agrarian lifestyle and assimilate into white society, or sell their lands to the government and retire west where they could live as hunter-gatherers. Native Americans were not so easily swayed to part with their lands, and pressure mounted for the federal government to enact plans to evacuate Indian land for white use.

In response, for the first time the U.S. government attempted to articulate a clearly defined and legally justifiable Indian policy to satisfy the demands of settlers and retain their commitment to civilizing American Indians. 85 Under this policy, known as Indian removal,

Native Americans would exchange their lands in the east for an area west of the Mississippi River exclusively their own. The removal scheme was not new; Jefferson had previously entertained the possibility of removing Native American away from the corrupting influences of white society as a justification for the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. In a draft for a possible Constitutional Amendment, Jefferson proposed that Congress have the power “to exchange the right of occupancy […] where the U.S. have full right for lands possessed by Indians within the U.S. on the East side of the Mississippi.” However, the plans were premature and were dropped at the federal level until circumstances demanded under the administration of President James Monroe (1758-1831). During his tenure, Monroe and his Cabinet worked earnestly to arrest the Indian’s decline – for instance, John C. Calhoun (1782-1850), Monroe’s Secretary of War, was a key architect of the Indian Civilization Act (1819) – but they were not as optimistic as Jefferson had been. The depopulation of Native American groups in the Northeast and mounting resistance to expansion in the Southeast served as a grim reminder that previous attempts at Indian policy had failed. Monroe’s second annual message to Congress from 1818 attests to the fundamental shift in the way Native Americans were perceived after the war, and foreshadowed the resulting U.S. Indian policy for the next century:

Experience has clearly demonstrated that independent savage communities can not long exist within the limits of a civilized population. The progress of the latter has almost invariably terminated in the extinction of the former. […] To civilize them, and even to prevent their extinction, it seems to be indispensable that their independence as communities should cease, and that the control of the United States over them should be complete and undisputed.87

87 President Monroe’s Second Annual Address, Nov. 6, 1818, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, 2, 46.
According to Monroe, Indian emigration would be the only practical solution that would advance the nation’s progress, “which the rights of nature demand and nothing can prevent,” and uphold its duty “to make efforts for the preservation, improvement, and civilization of the Native inhabitants.” 88 The removal policy was popular, even with those who favored gradual assimilation. Safely isolated, unassimilable Indians could be given a fair chance to abandon the “hunter state,” learn to rely on the land, and engage in “other pursuits tending to dissolve the ties which connect them together as a savage community.” 89 Calhoun even estimated that within thirty years of moving west the tribes might be “civilized” enough to rejoin the white majority. 90

However, it was not until the end of Monroe’s administration that he recommended enacting a general law for the removal of Indian tribes. In a special message to Congress from January of 1825, Monroe made his case for removal:

In [the Native Americans’] present state it is impossible to incorporate them in such masses, in any form whatever, into our system. It has also been demonstrated with equal certainty that without a timely anticipation of and provisions against the dangers to which they are exposed […] their degradation and extermination will be inevitable. 91

Fearing the worst, Monroe called for “some well-digested plan” by which Native Americans could be “prevailed on to retire west and north of our States and Territories on lands procured for them by the United States, in exchange for those on which they now reside.” 92 This relocation could be done honorably, he argued, if Congress guaranteed the emigrant Indians a permanent title to their land in the West, created “a system of internal government which shall protect their property from [white] intrusion,” and continued the process of civilization to “prevent their

88 President Monroe’s First Annual Address, Dec. 2, 1817, in Ibid., 16.
89 President Monroe’s Second Annual Address, Nov. 6, 1818, in Ibid., 46.
90 Dinnerstein, Natives and Strangers, 40.
91 Special Message to Congress, Jan. 27, 1825, in A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, 2, 281.
92 Special Message to Congress, Jan. 27, 1825, and Special Message to Congress, Mar. 30, 1824, in Ibid., 261, 281.
degeneracy.”

“Through the agency of such a government,” Monroe concluded, the conditions of the Natives would improve, and “permanent peace may be preserved with them.”

Monroe’s appeal was benevolent and direct, but the possibility of Indian removal was complicated by the special circumstances of an ongoing legal dispute between the Southeastern Cherokee tribe and the state government of Georgia. As expressed by a majority of supporters, the primary goal of removal was to protect Native Americans and provide an intermediate step between savagery and civilization. However, the Cherokees were not a “wandering horde” of hunter-gatherers, but an assimilated and highly advanced society who were determined to hold their lands at all costs, no matter what the United States might offer them as an incentive to move.

The Cherokee Controversy

The conflict between the Cherokee and Georgia arose in 1802 from an ill-planned compact between the federal government and the State of Georgia. Per the compact, formally the Articles of Agreement and Cession (1802), Georgia agreed to relinquish all of their western territory to the United States. In return, the United States would extinguish Indian title to lands within the state and turn them over to the Georgia government, as soon as it could be done peaceably and on reasonable terms.

The government was initially reluctant to act; Cherokee lands were protected by a multitude of treaties between the English and American governments before and after the revolution. In these agreements, the Cherokee were treated as independent political powers with the right of occupancy and self-governance, “according to the laws and customs” of the tribe.

The issue was made more complicated by the state of Cherokee society

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93 Ibid., 281.
94 Ibid., 282.
96 Ibid., 66-7. This decision is what gave impetus to Jefferson’s drafted proposal for removal in 1803.
itself. With the resources and encouragement provided by the U.S. government, the Cherokee people had long abandoned the “hunter state” in favor of agriculture and domestic manufacture. Occupying nearly fifteen million acres of fertile land in North Carolina, Tennessee, and north Georgia, the Cherokee owned at least twenty-two thousand cattle, some thirteen hundred slaves, thirty-one grist mills, ten saw mills, eight cotton gins, and operated around eighteen schools. 98 Many had adopted white manners and dress, and some wrote and spoke in fluent English. After 1821, the tribe constructed an eighty-five-symbol alphabet for their language, and in 1828 published the Cherokee Phoenix, a bilingual Cherokee-English newspaper. 99 Christianity had flourished in areas with larger populations, and formal education in English-language schools had produced a cadre of sophisticated leaders (mostly of mixed heritage) who commanded an arsenal of legal weapons to deal with the pressures imposed by the federal and state governments. 100

Cherokee society was, by contemporary standards, the model of a civilized Indian nation. In their habits and governance, they exhibited the success of the philanthropic efforts of previous decades. Far from being a cause for celebration, however, the civilization of the Cherokee Indians presented a glaring obstacle to further expansion. When Monroe revived removal as a permanent solution to the “Indian problem” in 1817, the Cherokee acted to prevent the measure at all cost. Knowing that their land was essential to maintaining their autonomy, the Cherokee authorized the death penalty in 1819 as punishment for any land cession made without the consent of tribal government, and in the 1820s, waged a series of legal battles with the state of Georgia and the federal government. In 1825, the Senate acted on Monroe’s request and passed a

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98 Dinnerstein, Natives and Strangers, 38.
99 Ibid., 38.
100 Prucha, The Great Father, 66.
removal bill in February, though it was struck down in the House. Acting in response, the Cherokee met in July of 1827 and drafted their own constitution modeled after United States, establishing themselves as an independent Nation with sovereignty over territory in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama.101 Outraged and eager to prevent more obstacles for removal, the Georgia legislature replied in 1829 with a series of laws enacted to subvert the statutes and ordinances adopted by the new Cherokee government. Georgia considered the tribes’ actions a violation of their own state’s sovereignty, and in a set of resolutions, they asserted their control over all lands within the state’s borders:

Resolved, That all the lands appropriated and unappropriated within the conventional limits of Georgia, belong to her absolutely; that the title is in her; that the Indians are tenants at her will that she may at any time she pleases determine their tenancy, by taking possession of the premises; and that Georgia has the right to extend her authority and laws over the whole territory, and to coerce obedience to them from all descriptions of people, be they white, red, or black, within her limits.102

Cherokee lands were added to existing counties, and in the following year – in direct conflict with the federal government’s obligation to uphold Indian sovereignty in their own territory – Georgia extended state laws over the Native inhabitants residing there. Due in part to the failed compact of 1802, Georgia leaders questioned federal authority over their relations with the Native Americans, and the conflict over sovereignty became as a division between the federal government, the Georgia government, and the new Cherokee government.103 The controversy over removal finally reached a head in 1829, when the celebrated “Indian hater” Andrew Jackson (1767-1845) was elected President.

101 Dippie, The Vanishing American, 59.
103 Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 159-61.
Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830

Jackson rose to national prominence as a military and political during the War of 1812 while leading the American forces in the South. When serving as military commander during the Creek and Seminole Wars (1813-1817), he repeatedly opposed treating Native American tribes as independent political entities. He was often critical of the treaties written in the aftermath of the War, and considered Native Americans as subjects of the U.S., “inhabiting its territory and acknowledging its sovereignty.” The tribes, he concluded, “have only possessory right to the soil […] not the right of domain,” hence, “Congress has full power, by law, to regulate all the concerns of the Indians.”

In his first annual message in December of 1829, Jackson set the plan for removal in motion. He found the Indians “present condition” a “most powerful appeal” to Americans sympathies:

By persuasion and force they have been made to retire from river to river and from mountain to mountain, until some of the tribes have become extinct, and others have left but remnants to preserve for awhile their once terrible names. Surrounded by the whites with their arts of civilization, which destroying the resources of the savage doom him to weakness and decay […] this fate surely awaits [the Southeastern tribes] if they remain within the limits of the states.

It was crucial, Jackson alleged, that “to preserve this much-injured race” Congress set apart “an ample district west of the Mississippi […] to be guaranteed to the Indian tribes as long as they shall occupy it.” There, they could continue to develop arts of civilization, and create “an interesting commonwealth” which could “perpetuate the race.”

The myth of the “vanishing Indian” made Jackson’s humanitarian argument difficult to dismiss, and his request for support was directed at those who may have opposed the measure:

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105 Andrew Jackson, First Annual Message, 8 Dec. 1829, in A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, 2, 458.
106 Ibid., 458-59.
May we not hope [...] that all good citizens, and none more zealously than those who think the Indians oppressed by subjection to the laws of the States, will unite in attempting to open the eyes of those children of the forest to their true condition, and by a speedy removal to relieve them from all the evils, real or imaginary, present or prospective, with which they may be supposed to be threatened.\textsuperscript{107}

By drawing on the traditional imagery of the wild and the vanishing Indian, regardless of its applicability, Jackson justified the removal of the acculturated Cherokee as well as other tribes to the “wild” lands of the West. Although the tribes fought back, Jackson’s position was clear – those who would not remove “must be subject” to state laws.\textsuperscript{108}

In February of 1830, just two months after Jackson’s call for action, the Committee on Indian Affairs sent a report to the Senate recommending the removal policy, and on April 6, a bill was drafted to enact the committee’s recommendation.\textsuperscript{109} During debate, opponents of Indian emigration proposed amendments that would guarantee Indians’ rights would be protected should they choose not to remove. They argued that removal was a dangerous departure from previous U.S. Indian policy that would undermine the federal government’s credibility and honor. The United States were obliged through treaty, legislation, and custom to uphold Native title to land so long as they occupied it.\textsuperscript{110} Supporters of Jackson and Georgia countered that the Cherokee had violated the U.S. Constitution by establishing an independent nation within Georgia’s borders – an \textit{imperium in imperio}, or foreign state within an existing state – without their consent.\textsuperscript{111} They likewise downplayed the extent of Cherokee acculturation, claiming that progress only applied to a handful of tyrannical “mixed-blood elites,” who held their own

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\textsuperscript{107} Andrew Jackson, Second Annual Message, Dec. 6, 1830, in \textit{A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902}, 2, 521-23.
\textsuperscript{108} Andrew Jackson, First Annual Message, Dec. 8, 1829, \textit{A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902}, 2, 459.
\textsuperscript{109} Dippie, \textit{The Vanishing American}, 68.
\textsuperscript{110} Berkhofer, \textit{The White Man’s Indian}, 160-61.
\textsuperscript{111} Washburn, \textit{Red Man’s Land/White Man’s Law}, 40-1; and Berkhofer, \textit{The White Man’s Indian}, 161.
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interests above the tribe’s. Ultimately, the efforts of anti-removal activists were fruitless. The Senate rejected two proposed amendments and the bill passed on April 24, less than a month after it was drafted. The document reached the House of Representatives on April 26 and, without substantial modification, passed by a narrow margin on May 26. That same day, the Senate approved the amended bill despite last-minute protests, and two days later Jackson signed into law, “an act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the States or Territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi.” It was no longer a question of whether removal could be accomplished, but how quickly.

The Removal Act is a legal expression of the abiding paternalistic relationship between whites and Native Americans. The law specifically noted that it did not authorize or direct any violation of existing treaties, and applied only to those “tribes or nations of Indians as may choose to exchange [their] lands.” However, the majority of the document outlined the protections afforded Native Americans after they had emigrated. It authorized the president to divide lands west of the Mississippi “not included in any state or organized territory, and to which the Indian title has been extinguished” to be exchanged for Indian land in the east. Further, the president was to assure the emigrant Indians that “the United States will forever secure and guaranty to them, and their heirs or successors, the country so exchanged with them,” so long as those lands revert to the U.S. “if the Indians become extinct.” The act compensated individuals the valuation for any improvements made on the land exchanged (e.g. houses, farms, mills, etc.), provided aid and assistance for actual emigration and resettlement, and offered protection “at

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112 Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 162.
113 Dippie, The Vanishing American, 68.
115 Ibid., 52.
their new residence, against all interruption or disturbance from any other tribe” or whites. Additionally the law extended the same “superintendence and care” over the tribes who elected to remove that was afforded at their former place of residence. Protections for Native Americans who would not emigrate are conspicuously absent from the document; those who remained would be at the mercy of the states. More important than the provisions of the act, perhaps, was the symbolic victory of “civilization” over “savagery” – its passage authorized congress a legal means to alleviate the “Indian problem” and constituted a new, functioning isolation policy that paved the way for the reservation system in the late nineteenth century.

**The Cherokee and Removal, 1830-1840**

Emboldened by the passage of the Removal Act, Georgia passed a slew of oppressive laws meant to coerce the Cherokees to abandon their territory, but Cherokee leaders contended that their lands were protected by treaty and petitioned the federal government for protection. Unsurprisingly, Jackson refused to intervene, replying simply, “the President of the United States has no power to protect them against the laws of Georgia.”\(^{117}\) Disappointed by the breach of faith, the Cherokee brought legal action against Georgia to the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice John Marshall (1755-1835), in 1831. Though Marshall was sympathetic toward the Cherokees and an avowed opponent of Jackson, he had to consider the deleterious consequences for the Supreme Court’s authority if the president refused to enforce the Court’s decision.\(^{118}\) Marshall side-stepped the issue in *The Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia* (1831) by ruling that the Cherokee Nation was unable to seek redress because it was not a foreign nation under the Constitution:

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\(^{116}\) *Ibid.*, 52-53


Though the Indians are acknowledged to have an unquestionable, and, heretofore, unquestioned right to the lands they occupy […] it may well be doubted whether those tribes which reside within the acknowledged boundaries of the United States can, with strict accuracy, be denominated foreign nations. They occupy a territory to which we assert a title independent of their will, which must take effect in point of possession ceases.119

The Indians were recognized, both at home and abroad, as being “completely under the sovereignty and dominion of the United States.” At best, Marshall concluded, the Indian tribes were a “domestic dependent nation” whose relationship with the United States resembled “that of a ward to his guardian.”120 Vindicated by Marshall’s ruling, Georgia passed a law in March of 1831 prohibiting whites from residing in Cherokee territory without a license. These licenses were never actually granted, as the measure was intended to prevent missionaries from encouraging or advising the Indians to stand against removal. When two prominent missionaries refused to leave they were arrested and imprisoned, and the Cherokee, with the help of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, once again brought their case before John Marshall.121

The court stood by its earlier ruling in the subsequent case, *Worcester vs. Georgia* (1832), but sought to limit authority over Native Americans to the federal government. Marshall argued that the independence of the Cherokee Nation was not revoked by U.S. treaties, but qualified. Because the Cherokee Nation was “a distinct community, occupying its own territory, with boundaries accurately described,” the Court ruled that the citizens of Georgia had no right to enter, nor extend state laws over, Cherokee land. In line with this decision, the Supreme Court issued a special mandate to reverse the state court’s ruling against the missionaries, but Georgia completely ignored the request and the Court adjourned before it could report the state’s failure

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120 Ibid., 59.
121 Prucha, *The Great Father*, 76-7.
to conform. 122 “The decision of the supreme court has fell still born,” Jackson declared, “and they find they cannot coerce Georgia to yield to its mandate.” 123 Georgians continued to harass and dispose of the Cherokee, and the federal government was unable (and in the case of Jackson, unwilling) to intercede on the Indians’ behalf.

The dramatic nature of the removal and the tendency to focus on the acculturated southeastern Indians obscures that many tribes had already begun to emigrate by the 1830s. The War of 1812 had weakened and scattered the tribes in the Northeast and Midwest, and many Northern Indians ceded their land through treaties piecemeal during and after the termination of the war. 124 In the Southeast, pressure from white settlers and state governments had seriously eroded the autonomy of the Five Civilized Nations – consisting of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee, and Seminole tribes – and they too began ceding their extensive land holdings (willingly or by force) and moved west throughout the 1830s. 125 However, the Supreme Court’s ruling was a perceived victory for the Cherokee and anti-removal advocates, and a significant number of Native Americans continued to resist removal, including a majority of the Cherokee Nation. Jackson hoped that the Court’s inability to enforce their ruling for Worcester would help convince the Cherokees to move, but the tribe continued to appeal to the executive branch and Congress to uphold their obligation to protect them where they stood. 126 Secretary of War, Lewis Cass (1782-1866) met repeatedly with Cherokee delegations to explain the potential consequences if they refused to leave, and in 1835, Jackson addressed them directly in a circular

122 Ibid., 76-7
123 Andrew Jackson, quoted in Prucha, The Great Father, 77. Jackson’s apocryphal quote, “John Marshall has made his decision, now let us see him enforce it,” is thought to have been derived from this original statement.
124 Prucha, American Indian Treaties, 129-30.
125 Dinnerstein, Natives and Strangers, 39. Usually, the federal government appointed special agents to gather, organize, and supply Native Americans, but civilian contractors and military personnel carried out the actual relocation.
126 Prucha, The Great Father, 78.
distributed to the tribe. Jackson’s announcement was paternalistic and threatening; after reiterating that the tribe was now subject to state laws, he lambasted Cherokee leaders, “the pernicious counsels” who had led them to reject the government’s “liberal offers,” and issued an ominous ultimatum: relocate or perish.

The choice now is before you. May the Great Spirit teach you how to choose. The fate of your women and children, the fate of your people to the remotest generation, depend upon the issue. Deceive yourselves no longer. Do not cherish the belief that you can ever resume your former political situation, while you continue in your present residence. As certain as the sun shines to guide you in your path, so certain is it that you cannot drive back the laws of Georgia from among you. Every year will increase your difficulties.

In the aftermath of Jackson’s address, the condition of the Cherokee only continued to worsen. Political action proved fruitless, and undaunted whites continued to encroach on Cherokees land, destroy their property, and threaten their lives.

The conflicts between the Cherokee and Georgia were finally “resolved” in December of 1835, when a dissenting faction of the Cherokee Nation, known as the “treaty party,” broke rank and met with white officials to negotiate for removal. Under the Treaty of New Ecohta, drawn up jointly by state and federal officials, the Cherokee agreed to exchange all of their land east of the Mississippi for five million dollars and several million acres of land in the “Indian Territory” established by the Removal Act of 1830. Additionally, the treaty made provisions for the emigration and specified that removal be accomplished within two years of its ratification. Because the treaty was signed with the elected tribal government’s permission, the remainder of the Cherokees rejected the deal and continued to resist efforts to eject them from the state. In

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127 Ibid., 86.
128 Andrew Jackson, “To the Cherokee Tribe of Indians East of the Mississippi River” Macon Weekly Telegraph 9 (Apr. 9, 1835), quoted in Ibid., 86.
129 Dinnerstein, Natives and Strangers, 36-7.
130 Prucha, The Great Father, 87. The number of members of the “treaty party” is contested; estimates are that only between three and five hundred Cherokees out of a tribal population of seventeen thousand were present at the signing.
May 1838, as the deadline for removal neared, Jackson’s successor Martin Van Buren (1782-1862) ordered federal troops to enter Cherokee country and began the process of relocation by force.¹³¹ Emigration was delayed until the fall due to drought, but in the winter of 1838, the entire tribe began the overland march to Indian country in present-day Oklahoma. An estimated four thousand of the thirteen thousand tribesmen who started west died from disease, malnutrition, or exposure during the “Trail of Tears,” or during their first months after resettlement. By 1840, the last major group of Native Americans were gone from the eastern third of the country (nearly eighty-one thousand according to estimates by the commissioner of Indian Affairs) and only a few scattered remnants of the once powerful tribes remained.¹³²

**American Expansion and the Future of U.S. Indian Policy**

The physical removal of tribes in the east alleviated many of the pressing concerns American officials faced in 1830s, but the arguments for removal had also entailed the formation of tribal governments independent of the U.S. and guarantees to ownership of the land in the west. Territorial status (and the possibility of statehood) with an elected representative for Native American interests would have been the most logical and expedient measure to fulfill Jackson’s pledge to “preserve the peace on the frontier and between the several tribes.”¹³³ Both the Jackson and Van Buren administrations urged Congress to organize the Western Territory and provide a government for the emigrating Indians, but Congress rejected nearly all of the bills put forward. Pro- and anti-removal advocates feared that the founding of a racially based state would set a precedent for future actions that could block expansion, and Southerners were particularly

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concerned with the influence it would have on emancipation. Additionally, these bills often failed to establish an actual Indian territory, and all interfered with tribal governance by imposing federal restrictions on Native American land. Though the idea of an “Indian territory” resurfaced frequently in the 1830s, support for the measure gradually diminished as the decade wore on. As long as the American West remained “wild” and underpopulated, conditions were ideal for a policy of isolation. The historian Daniel Boorstin argues that the success of removal relied on this belief, which he calls the “vagueness of the land.” Until the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth centuries, the Louisiana Purchase was the frontier. However, legislators could not anticipate the speed and intensity pioneering Americans spread across the country in the 1840s. The enlargement of national boundaries, the increase in white settlement, and the inability for the federal government to secure an Indian “territory” in the 1840s transferred the “Indian problem” from the east to the Trans-Mississippi west.

Beginning in 1845 with election of James K. Polk (1795-1849), the United States underwent a period of immense territorial expansion. Overland settlement to the Oregon Territory sped up in 1846 when the United States ended joint occupation with Great Britain for the area stretching west of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Coast. That same year, only a month before signing the Oregon Treaty, the United States declared war on Mexico, resulting in the annexation of Texas and practically all of modern day California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and parts of Wyoming and Colorado. Finally, in 1853 American negotiators rounded out America’s southern border through the Gadsden Purchase, adding the area of southern Arizona.

134 Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 164-65.
135 Dippie, The Vanishing American, 69-70, and Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 164.
137 Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 165.
and southwestern New Mexico.\textsuperscript{138} The Louisiana Purchase, once the westernmost edge of the United States, was now at the center of the growing nation.

The creation of the expansive American interior in the 1840s encouraged white settlement and expansion, but also brought a load of administrative issues that the U.S. was unprepared to handle. To deal with the bureaucratic chaos, Congress in 1849 transferred the Bureau of Indian Affairs from the War Department to the newly created Department of the Interior. The move was made with the assumption that the duties performed by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs were likely to increase as the nation continued to grow, and that relations between the tribes and the U.S. were no longer a military matter.\textsuperscript{139} The Democratic representative, Jefferson Davis (1808-1889) framed the exchange positively. In the past, the War Department was best equipped to negotiate Indian relations, but now, “happily for them, honorably for us, the case has greatly changed.” “I hope, before a distant day,” Davis concluded, “to assume a character consonant with the relations of guardian and ward, which have been claimed by us as those existing between our Government and the Indian tribes.”\textsuperscript{140} However, it was clear to Americans by mid-century that the isolation policy was failing; settlers coveted lands that had been promised to Native Americans in the 1830s, forcing the federal government to formulate a new policy to fulfill its obligation to protect the tribes.

Officials knew that events of the 1840s had altered their relationship with the natives, and a new policy was required to uphold their promises to protect Native land and further the program of civilization. “A temporizing system can no longer be pursued,” conceded Secretary

\textsuperscript{138} Dippie, \textit{The Vanishing American}, 71-2; Dinnerstein, \textit{Natives and Strangers}, 35-6.
\textsuperscript{139} Washburn, \textit{Red Man’s Land/White Man’s Law}, 69-70.
\textsuperscript{140} Representative Jefferson Davis, speaking to the House of Representatives, on March, 3 1849, 30th Cong. 2nd sess. \textit{Cong. Globe}, 1833-1873, 18, 678, quoted in Dippie, \textit{The Vanishing American}, 73. Jefferson Davis later served as Secretary of War for Franklin Pierce (1804-1869) and as the President of the Confederate States during the Civil War.
of the Interior Alexander Stuart (1807-1891) in 1851.” The policy of removal […] must necessarily be abandoned; and the only alternatives left are, to civilize or exterminate them.”  

However, the government agencies responsible for Indian affairs were in a period of transition in the 1850s, and the American government was unable to formulate a substantial alternative to the isolation policy. Instead, Congress opted to pursue the reservation system – a modified form of Indian segregation that had begun to win support in government circles in the 1840s. Under this new policy, Native Americans would be settled in a series of small Indian countries spread across the West – as opposed to a large autonomous Indian Territory – under the jurisdiction of the federal government. The traditional humanitarian aim of civilizing the Indians was also scrapped; rather, the reservation system was to be an official “alternative to extinction.” The program would save the “colonized tribes from being injuriously pressed upon, if not eventually overrun and exterminated,” argued the Indian Commissioner Orlando Brown (1801-1867). It was the only means by which the Indian would “be able to maintain themselves in close proximity with, or in the midst of, a white population.”

When the reservation system was enacted in 1853, the tribes who had settled in the new Indian Territory were asked to relocate once again, initiating a second phase of removal and sparking a series of violent conflicts, or “Indian Wars,” that lasted from the 1840s until the 1870s. This second phase of removal did not draw the same interest or protests that the emigration of the Cherokee had, but it is likely that concerns for the Indian were overshadowed by the events preceding the Civil War.

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143 Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 165-67.
The creation of an independent United States at the end of the eighteenth century fulfilled what had only been philosophized by European social theorists – social equality, political liberty, and religious freedom – all instituted by a republican government ruled by popular sovereignty and dedicated to the natural rights of man. Americans could sense their place in history and actively sought social and cultural innovations in line with how they conceived the future greatness of the nation. Sentiments for a national literature, independent of English influence, were especially strong in the new republic. Similar calls for literary independence had certainly existed in the New World during the half century before the Revolution, but the demands for cultural autonomy accelerated greatly in the 1780s and 1790s following the termination of the war.144 “For America in her infancy to adopt the present maxims of the old world,” wrote Noah Webster (1758-1843) in Part I of A Grammatical Institute of the English Language (1783), “would be to stamp the wrinkles of decrepit age upon the bloom of youth.”145 “America must be as independent in literature as she is in politics,” Webster asserted, for “In truth, [Americans] shall always be leading strings till we resort to original writers and original principles instead of taking upon trust what English writers please to give us.”146 What followed was an ongoing discussion on what native elements would be appropriate for a distinctly American literature, a debate that played out in countless periodicals and public addresses well into the nineteenth century.147 Though authors took many approaches to answering this question, the most successful attempts were by writers who turned to the Indian for inspiration. Though American’s

144 Benjamin T. Spencer, The Quest for Nationality: An American Literary Campaign (Syracuse, 1957), 25-72; documents the campaign for national literature made in contemporary periodicals during the period between 1783-1814.
145 Noah Webster, A Grammatical Institute of the English Language...in Three Parts, Part I (Hartford, CT: Hudson and Goodwin, 1783), quoted in Ibid., 27-8.
146 Ibid., 28.
feelings toward Native Americans had been largely negative throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the sensationalism and nostalgia engendered by the “dying race” made for the best Romantic literature, and the American reading public indulged themselves on sentimental fiction celebrating the inevitable death of the Indian and the future progress of their nation.\footnote{Kay Seymour House, \textit{Cooper's Americans} (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1965), 60-61.}
Chapter Two

The Indian in American Literature

In the search for “national materials,” authors were urged to scour America’s past, yet those who tried the history of the nation found a distressing baldness. Without a “useable past,” America lacked the picturesque scenes and customs needed for convincing literature. “We want a remote antiquity,” Dr. Walter Channing, a professor of medicine at Harvard, complained in an article titled “Reflections on the Literary Delinquency in America” (1815). “Without antiquity,” Channing asserted, American literature could “[not] hope much for distinction.”1 Similar issues were raised with contemporary American domestic life. In a comprehensive survey of American literary resources published in 1818, John Bristed (1778-1855) observed “Our democratic institutions [place] all the people on a dead level of political equality; and the pretty equal diffusion of property throughout the country affords but little room for varieties and contrasts of character.”2 An unfortunate number of literary critics believed that American’s adherence to “common sense” principles and the “dead level of equality” were the very qualities that prevented American writers from achieving any international success. Though it seemed that America’s history and modern life were as fruitless for authors as were their prospects, many critics held hope that subjects which were distinctly American could raise her authors and poets to respectability.

More so than any other topic, literary nationalists believed that the American landscape seemed to offer ample material for an American literature. Successive writers in the post-

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2 John Bristed, *America and her Resources; or, A view of the agricultural, commercial, manufacturing, financial, political, literary, moral, and religious capacity and character of the American People* (London: H Colburn, 1818); quoted in Sedgwick, “The Materials for an American Literature”, 147.
Revolutionary period championed the quantitative and aesthetic superiority of American nature to that of Europe. The poet James Hillhouse (1754-1832) saw little in American history and domestic life worth attention, but found the “sublime” in the American landscape:

> Our forest breathe upon us the freshness of nature [...] Whoever rises here must rise by irrepressible internal energies and the impulse of noblest inspirations—the grand eternal forms of nature. Vast, solitary and sublime, pressing on the mind the symbols of creative power [...] It may stamp our poetry with the image of its own virgin grandeur; its influence confirmed by the want of a national heroic or barbarous age, may direct us toward the springs of our religion; which, whenever smitten by a commissioned rod, will gush forth purer and more abundant waters than ever flowed from Hippocrene.3

Despite enthusiasm for the potential of American nature, however, little poetry or literature on the subject was forthcoming. In an article written for *The American Register*, novelist and historian Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810) typified critics’ frustrations over the matter:

> We have skies, which give us the varied and kind returns of seasons; we have winds, which one would think would blow the spark of genius into flame; we have waters, which should allure to their banks the fragrant foot of enthusiasm; we have mountains which furnish us with all that is grand and elevating in prospect. Why then slumbers the poetical muses of America? 4

Though the country held abundant scenes of natural beauty and splendor for inspiration, it was ultimately insufficient. For many writers, the same problems that prevented the use of American history or domestic life loomed just as large in her natural scenes. “The aspect of nature in the United States, presents magnificence and beauty in all profusion,” Bristed acknowledged in his survey of literary resources, “but hill and dale, and wood and stream are not alone sufficient to breathe the inspirations of poetry, unless seconded by the habitats and manners, the feelings,

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3 James A. Hillhouse, “On Some Considerations which should influence and Epic or a Tragic Writer in the Choice of an Era,” (oration, Phi Beta Kappa Society of New Haven, 12 Sept., 1826), 31-2; Quoted in William Ellery Sedgwick, “The Materials for an American Literature: A Critical Problem of the Early Nineteenth Century.” *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 17 (1935), 158. Hippocrene was the name of the spring on Mt. Helicon, which was sacred to the Greek Muses and thought to be the font of all poetic inspiration.  
4 Charles Brockden Brown, “Notices of American Writers and Publications,” in *The Literary Magazine, and American Register* 2, no. 6 (April, 1804); 335.
taste and character of the inhabitants.”⁵ Another common opinion held that American landscapes offered nothing to poetry because, however beautiful, American landscapes showed no traces of a heroic past. Even Hillhouse questioned that the “solitary and sublime” natural scenes, “without the traditionary associations connected with strongest features of Nature, even in the old world, what could be made of them?” “It is the magic of association,” Hillhouse explained, “that fits everything for the poet’s hand.”⁶ Post-Revolutionary writers were painfully aware that America was a land virtually devoid of historic associations, and lacking the objects and scenes that could “reliably serve as symbolic reminders of the range of human destiny.”⁷

However, the opinions cited were not universal. There were those, like William Tudor (1779-1830), cofounder of The North American Review, who argued that to find the “stirring incidents” and “romantic associations” in America’s history, writers needed only to look to her pre-Revolutionary past. “From the close of the 16th to the middle of the 18th century, many most interesting events took place […],” Tudor noted in 1815, “and circumstances have concurred with time in casting a shade of obscurity resembling that of antiquity.”⁸ Tudor examined these materials with enthusiasm, especially “the remarkable Confederacy of Indian tribes [i.e. the Five Nations],” which he believed “exhibit the counterpart of what the Greeks were in the heroick ages, and particularly the Spartans during the vigour of their institutions.”⁹ “If variety is wanted,” wrote another in The Atlantic Magazine, the customs, ceremonies, “fabulous legends and religious superstitions” of the Indian could supply it.¹⁰ The writer continued:

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⁵ John Bristed, America and her Resources, quoted in Sedgwick, “The Materials for an American Literature,” 147.
⁷ Benjamin T. Spencer, The Quest for Nationality: An American Literary Campaign (Syracuse, 1957), 69.
⁹ Ibid., 19.
If scenes of unparalleled torture and indefatigable endurance, persevering vengeance, and unfailing friendship, hair-breadth escapes, and sudden ambush…if faith in wild predictions, and entire submission of the soul to the power of ancient legends and visionary prophecies, are useful to the poet or romancer, here they may be found in abundance and endless variety.\textsuperscript{11}

Moreover, from the perspective of those living in the eastern United States where this literary output originated, the Indian truly seemed like a figure from antiquity. In a nostalgic letter to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams (1735-1826) reminisced on his youth, opining the days “at least seventy Years ago,” when “Aaron Pomham the Priest and Moses Pomham the King of the Punkapaug and Nepomsit Tribes, were frequent Visitors at my Fathers house.”

I have a distinct remembrance of their Forms and Figures. They were very aged, and the tallest and stoutest Indians I have ever seen. […] There were numerous Family in this Town, whose Wigwam was within a Mile of this House […] and I in my boyish Rambles used to call at their Wigwam, where I never failed to be treated with [berries and fruits] […] for they planted a variety of fruit Trees about them. But the Girls went out to Service and the Boys to Sea, till not a Soul is left. We scarcely see an Indian in a year.\textsuperscript{12}

Through disease, warfare, and the destruction of native food sources, Native American populations in the East had declined to a point that few in the post-Revolutionary era could claim to have any first-hand experience with Native peoples. The only “real” Indians, it seemed, were those residing on the untamed western frontier – a region as mysterious and exotic to Americans on the coast as the “Orient” and the Far East to Europeans.\textsuperscript{13}

As the United States gradually moved into Western territories, thrilling descriptions of geography, animal life, and the Indian tribes who inhabited these unknown regions became available through a growing number of newspapers and literary sources. Accounts such as the

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 151.
\textsuperscript{13} Michael V. Pisani, Imagining Native America in Music (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 88.
History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, 1804-6 and John Bradbury’s (1768-1823) *Travels in the Interior of America, 1809-11* provided Americans with an image of a people that they believed still adhered to unbroken and uninfluenced traditions dating back to ancient times.\(^{14}\) The Indian seemed to offer the variety of character and sense of antiquity post-Revolutionary writers demanded; however, before the second victory over Britain in 1815, American authors struggled to find the Indian’s place in their nation’s literature. Partially to blame was the ambiguity of what “originality” meant to authors and critics. Despite exhortations for cultural emancipation, American literature and criticism was founded upon traditions imported from England, leading writers to emulate their European forbearers and “chart a course for American literature within the bounds of what was adjudged to be universal taste.”\(^{15}\)

Founding Father Benjamin Rush (1746-1813) was of the belief that Americans lacked the flexibility and imagination to repudiate their inherited traditions and insisted that native authors “borrow imagery from the many useful and well-known arts which have been the inventions of modern ages, and thereby surpass the ancients in the variety and effect of our compositions.”\(^{16}\)

“Originality” therefore implied a reordering or purification of European ideals in a New World context setting, rather than a stark departure from Old World genres. Indian characters had already existed in European literature and drama since Columbus’s discovery of the New World, and between the sixteenth and late seventeenth century they played an important role as a critic of European political and social inequality in the writings of reformers like Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) and John Dryden (1631-1700).\(^{17}\) Though these European writers lacked familiarity

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\(^{14}\) *Ibid.*, 89.

\(^{15}\) *Spencer, The Quest for Nationality*, 58.


with actual Native history or society, the representation of the Indian as “Noble Savage” by Enlightenment thinkers became the most conventionalized characterization of Indian in eighteenth and early nineteenth century literature on both sides of the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{The Noble Savage in Europe}

The noble savage archetype was a product of the Renaissance intellectual and imaginative tradition called primitivism – the belief that humans in their “natural” state were basically good, and that simple people dwelling in nature according to natural law were happier than modern Europeans, who suffered the burdens and complexities of modern life. During the Renaissance, this intellectual current directly supported two complementary European cultural beliefs – Eden and Arcadia, or Paradise and a Golden Age – which combined in a myth of lands far away to the west or long ago in the past, where man lived in harmony with nature according to universal laws of reason.\textsuperscript{19} The primitive citizens of this Arcadian landscape “lived without property, injustice, or kings, and often without work or war,” possessing those virtues that commentators found lacking in their own society: “sexual innocence, equality of condition and status, peaceful simplicity, healthful and handsome bodies, and vigorous minds unsullied by the wiles, complexities, and sophistication of modern civilization.”\textsuperscript{20} The discovery of the New World and its inhabitants provided examples of both, and the influence of this paradiasiac conception can be noted in Renaissance explorers’ accounts of the land and native peoples they encountered.\textsuperscript{21} As more information about the inhabitants of the New World reached the Old, the American Indian began to figure into European literary and imaginative works, particularly in

\textsuperscript{19} Berkhofer, \textit{The White Man’s Indian}, 72-3.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 3-22; 72-6.
France, as a part of the *bon suavage* or noble savage tradition that accompanied Golden Age and paradisiacal mythology. The noble savage was a “natural man,” who was, “naturally dignified, poetic, serene, generous, essentially egalitarian, economically stable, and living in harmony with nature. In contrast, the civilized person appeared insecure, materialistic, selfish, warlike, oppressed and depressed by brutalizing class differences, and essentially out of touch with or opposed to nature.”

The primitivist intellectual trend reached its height with the French *philosophes*, with authors such as Diderot (1713-1784), Voltaire (1694-1778), and Rousseau (1712-1778) who used the noble savage to critique existing social institutions and propose measures of reform. Fundamental to their thinking was the dichotomy between nature and convention: if what was natural was inherently good, then what was civilized was artificial, decadent, and bad. According to the universal laws of nature, “reason” and the instinct for good were common to all humankind, and thus, primitive peoples – uncorrupted by the practices and prejudices of society – could apprehend natural law more clearly than the civilized European. In a popular treatment of the noble savage, Guillaume Thomas Raynal (1713-1796) questioned whether “those untutored nations are more or less happy than our [European] civilized people?” The natural man, Raynal contended, “enjoyed both independence and secure subsistence,” he suffered no

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22 The *bon suavage* was only one of the exotic figures used by Europeans to criticize European society. The *bon éthiopien*, *bon oriental*, and *bon nègre* also served as conventions for “enunciating the hopes and desires of European authors or for criticizing the institutions and customs of their own society, or in providing new imagery for the intellectual, literary, and artistic styles of the day.” See *Ibid.*, 73-4; 77-8.


24 Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 76.

artificial desires, and required only the simplest form of social organization.\textsuperscript{26} Without social convention and artificial civilization, the noble savage lived free from outworn institutions that encouraged inequality and corruption. Therefore, whether used to criticize politics, social equality, or religion, the American Indian’s idealized way of life stood as a critical counter-image of eighteenth century European society, and suggested the need for an overhaul of standing institutions in favor of the political rights and civil freedom of Enlightenment thought.\textsuperscript{27} The “noble savage” theoretically embodied all that man ought to be, though the archetype was created with virtually no consideration of actual Native society and culture. Besides, critics did not intended for their readers to adopt the lifestyle of “savages,” noble or otherwise. Rather, “the object of this primitivistic critique,” writes Pearce, “was to make man live up to his truly civilized nature.” True civility meant a life that was simpler, less sophisticated, rationally self-controlled, and enlightened.\textsuperscript{28}

**The Noble Savage in America**

This European, primitivist ideal came to America fully formed in the late eighteenth century and was adopted by numerous writers in their approach to Native American subjects; however, Americans could not possibly ignore the actuality of Native life. Writers in the New World did not benefit from the geographical remoteness and general ignorance that allowed for the detached and “ennobled” characterization of the Indian by Old World writers. They objected to idealized characterizations of Natives, asserting that Europeans writing about America had failed to treat the Indian realistically. Out of foreign ignorance, European writers had “[laid] down positions of [their] own construction, the weakness of which is equaled by nothing but

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 297-302, quoted in Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 97.

\textsuperscript{27} Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 76.

their frivolity and their fallacy."29 In fact, their conception of the Indian – termed “savagism” by
Pearce – had long censored or denied Indian “nobility” to justify the appropriation of Native
American land and rationalize colonist’s history of violent imperialism. In the process of
building a new republican society, Americans could only find a place for the Indian if he were to
be as they were – settled, steady, and civilized. By the War of Independence, it was apparent to a
majority of Americans that the Indian would or could not be civilized. As Pearce explains,
“[Americans] knew [the Indian] was bound inextricably in a primitive past, a primitive society,
and a primitive environment, to be destroyed by God, Nature, and Progress to make way for
Civilized Man.”30 The Republic was conceived in an intellectual environment that assumed man
“achieved his highest humanity by taking something out of nature and converting it with his
labor into a part of himself,” and that widespread ownership of private property afforded
stability, self-respect, and the basis for social equality. To leading Americans, agriculture was the
preferred use of the land because it provided economic and social independence, political
autonomy, and the surest guarantee to unalienable rights. 31 The emphasis on individualism and
liberal institutions under the new American government placed the Indian and his way of life in
direct opposition to “Americanism” – whites could not see the Indian as anything more than a
wandering hunter, his life, achievement, and virtues sharply limited by his savage nature.32
“The Indian belonged in the American past and was socially and morally significant as part of
that past,” Berkhofer argues, “coming to understand their past as the crucial modern working out
of the law of progress, Americans were able to put [the Indian] in his place.”33 Thus, when the

29 Benjamin Smith Barton, Observations on some parts of natural history: to which is prefixed an account of several
remarkable vestiges of an ancient date, which have been discovered in different parts of North America, Part I
(London: Printed for the author by C. Dilly, 1787), 7-16, 22-4, 53, quoted in Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 78.
30 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 4.
31 Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 137-38.
32 Ibid., 151, 155.
33 Ibid., 155, 160.
“noble savage” as critic of society first appeared in American literary periodicals in the late eighteenth century – themselves written in imitation of the European model – the ennobled characterizations were necessarily viewed as radical. “Let us never undervalue the comfort and security of municipal and social life,” cautioned the minister Timothy Flint (1789-1840) in the *Western Magazine and Review* (1827). “The happiness of savages steeled against feeling, at war with nature, the elements, and each other, can have no existence, except in the visionary dreaming of those, who have never contemplated their actual condition.” As a symbol, the Indian as “noble savage” provided a necessary moral counterweight to the declining confidence in European institutions during Enlightenment, but in the United States, Native Americans persisted as a real and significant obstacle to American progress, and an enduring political issue.

One critique published in the *American Museum* in 1789 exemplifies an early attempt to apply the primitivistic mode to the new American institutions. The article, titled “Letter from an Indian Chief to his Friend in the state of New York,” featured an educated Indian dignitary, living among whites, who questions whether “civilization” was preferable to the happiness attending savage life. “In the governments you call civilized,” the chief contemplates, “the happiness of the people is constantly sacrificed to the splendor of empire; hence your code of civil and criminal laws have had their origin; and hence your dungeons and prisons.” By contrast, “among us [American Indians], we have no law but that written on the heart of every rational creature by the immediate finger of the great Spirit of the universe himself. We have no prisons—we have no pompous parade of courts […] We have among us no splendid villains, above the controul of the law […] daring wickedness here is never suffered to triumph over helpless innocence.” The chief concludes, “Cease then, while there practices continue among

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you, to call yourselves christians, lest you publish to the world your hypocrisy. Cease to call other nations savage, while you are tenfold more the children of cruelty, than they.”

The author’s argument conceived the Indian as a paradoxical man who was “truly civilized” because he was uncorrupted by the “hypocritical” institutions of civilization. In America, where the institutions of civilizations were being “perfected,” such a conception was fatally weak when set against the “facts of savage life.”

Detractors were quick to defend the superiority of American institutions to those of their Indian neighbors, and it became a “kind of intellectual flourish” for American writers to refute the European image at all possible points. A characteristic rebuttal in the American Museum, titled “The Savage and the Civilized Man, an European and an American Picture” (1792) argues the primacy of American society explicitly, comparing the brutish life of the savage to the comfortable and civilized American’s. While the savage, “leads a life of stupid insensibility,” has “but few ideas, and few pleasures,” [and] feels no anxiety for the future,” the civilized man, “has a boundless circle of enjoyments; his views are expanded, his ideas unlimited.” “[The civilized man] labors to promote the happiness of his family,” and above all, “his declining years are crowned with respect and vernation,” rather than moldering away unhappy and insecure as did the savage. Until the second peace with Britain, the conflicting images of Indian “savagism” and supposed “nobility” only produced a confused image for poets and authors inclined to adopt the Indian as a serious literary subject in the years up until 1815.

35 “Letter from an Indian Chief to his Friend in the state of New York,” The American Museum: or Repository of Ancient and Modern Figurative Pieces 6 (Sep., 1789), 226, quoted in Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 136-37.
36 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 138, 146-47, 154. Many of the American critiques were reprints of pieces from English sources; however, the amount of plagiarism is difficult to distinguish and many English periodicals were still directly available to American readers.
37 Ibid., 78, 137.
38 “The Savage and the Civilized Man, an European and an American Picture,” The American Museum: or Repository of Ancient and Modern Figurative Pieces 11 (1792), 212-14.
The Indian in Literature Before 1815

Before the second peace with Britain, the contradictory images of Native Americans translated into a series of “poems” easily categorized by their adherence to primitivist or antiprimitivist conventions. Compositions such as the “Fragment of an Indian Sonnet” (1797) and “The Warrior’s Death Song” (1797) pictured Indians as stoic warriors or noble heroes, standing defiantly in the face of death. Conversely, such works as the broadside The Columbian Tragedy from 1791, or the anonymous “On the Emigration to America, and Peopling of the Western Country” (1782) depicted Natives as bloodthirsty sadists, relishing in the torture of captives, or in their animal-like refusal to become civilized. Whether the Indian was depicted as nature’s nobleman or a merciless savage, writers could only manage to produce work either overly sentimental or melodramatic. However, at the time these poems were being written and achieving popularity, the Indian was being understood according to the idea of savagism, and in their relation to the progress of the whole of American society. The intellectual climate that developed in America near the end of the eighteenth century emphasized the importance of viewing Native life in its entirety. Thus, writers who subscribed to the literary image of the noble savage were forced to accommodate the larger, intellectual idea of savagism, which denied the Indian’s “nobility” or qualified it to demonstrate that their “nobility” was indistinguishable from ignobility. The overwhelming perception that the Indian was a dying race also seemed to

39 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 178-79. Though the works are intended to be poems (and titled as such), they typically took the form of narrative or historical essays in verse form.
41 For example: Ezekiel Russell, The Columbian Tragedy: Containing a Particular and Official Account of the Brave and Unfortunate Officers and Soldiers, Who Were Slain and Wounded in the Ever-Memorable and Bloody Indian Battle ... Nov. 4, 1791 (Boston, 1791); and “Defeat of Stuart’s Indians in the South,” Massachusetts Magazine 4 (1792), 51-2.
42 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 95-96, 194.
support the theory that Native Americans, be they noble or ignoble, were doomed to extinction because they would not abandon the customs and habits that attended their way of life. Authors were quick to recognize the literary potential passing of the Indians; as a doomed noble savage, the Indian was attractive as a sympathetic character. To make their case, writers and poets drew images from nature to summarize the Indian’s destiny. The Indian was at the sunset of his existence; night was about to swallow a race fated to vanish “as the snow melts before the sunbeam,” or “like the morning dew, insensibly and mysteriously to disappear, before the lights of civilization and Christianity.”

The pitiable vanishing Indian became a staple of American literature during the first half of the nineteenth century, beginning with the poems of Philip Freneau in the 1780s, reaching its peak popularity with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* in 1855, and declining in the years leading up to the Civil War.

**Early Representations of the Noble Savage**

Authors who were still inclined to primitivist representations found methods to avoid the conflicts between image (nobility) and idea (savagism). For example, the “Father of American poetry,” Philip Freneau (1752-1832), demonstrates in a majority of his poems that the Indian’s “virtues” are what ultimately led to his destruction. Though this strategy did not fully accommodate the idea of savagism, it at least made intelligible the relationship between civilization and the Indian’s decline. Freneau was an important figure in social criticism and an ardent primitivist who was a pioneer in the American use of the Indian as a poetic subject. His interest in Native Americans began early in life, and his poem “The American Village” (1772),

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written at the age of twenty, demonstrates the primitivistic tendencies that underlie his poetry and social criticism:

Nor think this might land of old contained
The plundering wretch, or man of bloody mind:
Renowned SACHEMS once their empires rais’d
On wholesome laws; and sacrifices blaz’d.
The gen’rous soul inspir’d the honest breast,
And to be free, was doubly to be blest.

Freneau dispels the notion of the bloodthirsty Indian by assuring the reader that it was only upon the arrival of Europeans that conditions demanded violence. Freneau maintains the Indian’s nobility, even at war, relating it to the heroics of the ancients:

And rav’nous nations with industrious toil,
Conspir’d to rob them of their native soil:
Then bloody wars, and death and rage arose,
And ev’ry tribe resolved to be our foes.
Full many a feat of them I could rehearse,
And actions worthy of immortal verse:
Deeds ever glorious to the INDIAN name,
And fit to rival GREEK or ROMAN fame.44

Like Rousseau and other eighteenth-century primitivists, Freneau believed in the absolute goodness of man’s natural state, a theme that is worked-over in the majority of his poems on Indian subjects. Yet, many of Freneau’s works written after the Revolution indicate that he too believed Native Americans to be vanishing race. Poems such as “The Dying Indian, Tomo-Chequi” (1784), “The Indian Burying Ground” (1787), and “On American Antiquity” (1790) focus on the tragedy of the Indian’s passing, and are intended to elicit regret from the reading audience for the Indian’s fate.

Freneau’s 1782 poem, “The Prophecy of King Tammany” recounts the destruction of Native Americans from an Indian’s perspective, and condemns whites for celebrating a fate that

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they may one-day share. The use of the Tammany as subject is notable; the Delaware chieftain is traditionally depicted as the first Indian to welcome William Penn to America, and in this work he is depicted as a heroic figure at the end of his existence. Tammany’s nobility is symbolic of that of all Indians, and his death signals the end of an entire way of life. In the opening stanzas, the chief laments the coming of Europeans and the violence they brought; he questions why the gods would scorn them and, in an eloquent rage, demands that the invaders cease, “and stain with blood these ravaged glades no more.” But the natives cannot match the Europeans, and are swept away by the invader’s advance:

“In vain I weep, in vain I sigh,
These strangers all our arms defy
As they advance our chieftains die! —
What can their hosts oppose!
The bow has lost its wonted spring,
The arrow faulters on the wing,
Nor carries ruin from the string
To end their being and our woes.

Intellectuals often stressed the Indian’s ferocity and “war-like spirit” as a major cause of their decline, but references to hostilities between whites and Natives tended to be minimized in contemporary discussions, as they brought into focus Americans’ direct role in the Indian’s destruction. Freneau does not shy away from the subject, instead portraying the natives as innocents, trying vainly to defend themselves. Sensing his end, the chief damns the white men and issues a prophetic final warning:

“But mark me, Christian, ere I go—
Thou, too, shalt have thy share of woe;
The time rolls on, not moving slow,
When hostile squadrons for you blood shall come,
And ravage all your shore!
Your warriors and your children slay,
And some in dismal dungeons lay,
Or lead them captive far away
To climes unknown, through seas untried before.
“A sordid race will then succeed,
“‘To slight the virtues of the firmer race,
“That brought your tyrant to disgrace,

The passage unfolds as a graphic catalogue of white indiscretions; the Indian is painted as wholly innocent, and Americans as cruel oppressors. Nevertheless, the cruelest punishment whites would endure was that their virtues would in-turn be found deficient – that they would be the true savages. In the end Tammany resigns to his fate, but looks to the future.

“But why these weak complaints and sighs?
“Are there not gardens in the west,
“‘Where all our far-famed Sachems rest?—

In a final act of manly resistance, the chief takes his own life. In this instance, the “prophecy” is also the chief’s “death song” – a Native American cultural practice that fascinated eighteenth-century readers in both England and America:

So spoke the chief, and raised his funeral pyre—
   Around him soon the crackling flames ascend;
He smiled amid the fervours of the fire
   To think his troubles were so near their end,
‘Till the freed soul, her debt to nature paid,
Rose from the ashes that her prison made,
And sought the world unknown, and dark oblivion’s shade.45

Welcoming death as a release from his fate, Tammany demonstrates extraordinary courage by refusing to relinquish to his enemies, even under the extreme pain of self-immolation. Native Americans’ heroic endurance and stoical resistance to the ruthless Europeans resonated with American audiences during the Revolutionary period, and hundreds of sensational anecdotes of Indian fortitude can be found in eighteenth century literature alone.46 In “The Prophecy of King

46 Frank Edgar Farley, “The Dying Indian,” Kittredge Anniversary Papers (Cambridge, MA: Ginn and Company, 1913), 251-52. Typical examples of Indian “death songs” can be found in abundance in the literary periodicals from
Tammany,” Freneau turns the idea of savagism on its head: it is not the Indian’s way of life that leads to his (and by extension all Native Americans’) death, but the white man’s conquest. Tammany retains his nobility, his virtue, even in his attitude towards death and dying.

**Romanticism and the Vanishing American**

While cultural nationalism impelled American writers to turn to Native Americans for literary materials, the importation of Romanticism from Europe in the second decade of the nineteenth century provided the artistic language and style that could elevate the subject to respectability. Romanticism in literature is characterized by an emphasis on imaginative and emotional themes; the importance of heroic and tragic individuals; an interest in nature and the sublime; regional customs and non-literate folk cultures; and the treatment of the past, especially in the search for antiquity.47 Through authors such as Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) and Lord Byron (1788-1824), American authors found adaptable models for their own national materials. The popularity of Romanticism with the American reading public also stimulated a growing interest in the Indian as a serious subject for a National literature. Though Native Americans still posed an obstacle to American expansion, the “Indian problem” was really a frontier problem, and coastal Americans were more inclined to accept idealized notions of native life.48 A contributor to *The New York Literary Journal* expressed this fresh optimism in 1820. “The history of the Indian will, hereafter, undoubtedly form the classic lore of American literature,” the reviewer declared, “for the most interesting […] development of incident, for the most striking and vigorous grouping of characters, and for the most splendid and glowing description

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of landscape ever offered to the imagination by the history of any people.” 49 Everywhere Indian life provided rich examples of the mysterious customs, superstitions, savage warfare, and heroic acts of self-sacrifice and endurance. Native languages – a fascination for eighteenth and nineteenth century scholars – were filled with picturesque allusions and metaphor. The legends and superstitions of a primitive race, the heroic figures of their warrior Chiefs, and the mysterious sublimity of the American wilds that they inhabited provided authors with an American mythos to furnish their own Romantic literature and assert a new national identity. The most romantic, however, was the impression of Native Americans as a race rapidly passing away before civilization’s advance. The pathos of the “vanishing American” provided the nostalgia and sentimentality that the American Romanticism demanded. 50 The image of the dying Indian is most fully exhibited in a series of descriptive and narrative poems written in the 1820s, the first decade in which the Indian figured prominently in American fiction. 51

Between 1824 and 1834, over a hundred poems and some forty novels included dying Indians as subjects or secondary characters, accounting for what literary historian, G. Harrison Orians termed the “cult of the Vanishing American.” 52 The number of these poems and the popularity they achieved demonstrate the pervasiveness of the “vanishing” image, which dominated characterizations of Native Americans in literature until the Civil War. However, the sense of personal tragedy or regret for the Indian’s fate – exemplified in poems by Freneau – is superseded by the sentimentality evoked by the Indian’s impending racial doom. The poet and editor for The New-York Evening Post, William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), helped define the

50 Berkhof, The White Man’s Indian, 88.
51 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 187-88.
“Vanishing American” trope in an 1824 composition titled “An Indian at the Burying-place of His Fathers”:

But now the wheat is green and high,
   On clods that hid the warrior’s breast,
And scattered in the furrows lie
   The weapons of his rest;
And there, in the loose sand, is thrown
Of his large arm the mouldering bone.

Ah, little thought the strong and brave
   Who bore their lifeless chieftain forth,
Or the young wife, that weeping gave
   Her first-born to the earth,
That the pale race, who waste us now,
Among their bones should guide the plough

They waste us—aye—like April Snow
   In the warm noon, we shrink away;
And fast they follow, as we go
   Towards the setting day,—
Till they shall fill the land and we,
Are driven into the western sea.\(^5^3\)

In this and dozens of similar verses, American writers assert that aboriginal life had run its course; the destruction of the noble savage is not explained, but accepted as a fact. The “Vanishing” theme is reinforced by Bryant in lines such as “They waste us—aye—like April Snow/ In the warm noon, we shrink away;” but the sentimental language and comforting allusions to nature barely mask the underlying belief that the Native Americans’ fate was predestined. To these writers – and a majority of Americans – Indian society represented a static form of civilization that had not progressed past a “hunter state” (i.e. savagism) and would be superseded by white (agrarian) civilization.\(^5^4\) The striking (and somewhat gruesome) imagery

evoked in Bryant’s lines, “in the loose sand, is thrown/ Of his large arm the mouldering bone,”
and “That the pale race, who waste us now,/Among their bones should guide the plough,” is
symbolic of the Native Americans’ literal death and the victory of the agrarian future over the
savage past. Ultimately, the battle between savagism and civilization formed the theme and
metaphor, if not the explicit plot of the literature depicting the Indian between 1815 and the
1850s. Even those authors who championed the nobility of the Indian agreed that the fate of
Native Americans had to be measured against the destiny of American progress; whether noble
or ignoble, the Indian would inevitably be replaced by white civilization and its benefits.55

Sir Walter Scott and the Historical Romance

Arguably, the most significant product of Romanticism was the availability of literary
examples that American could emulate. The most popular and frequently imitated examples were
the metrical novels and historical romances of the Scottish novelist and poet, Sir Walter Scott
(1771-1832). The immense popularity of Scott’s works in the United States, particularly the
Waverly novels (pub. 1814-1831), combined with the general absence of historical fiction on
Indian subjects before Scott, indicate the importance of his work as formative influences on
American writers.56 For Americans, Scott’s novels combined the most desirable elements of
Romanticism: decaying ruins, ancient legends, daring skirmishes, and long-dead heroes.
However, his novels’ strongest appeal were their focus on national features: provincial
characters, typically marked by their rustic dialects; realistic and detailed descriptions of the
Scottish landscape; and vivid illustrations of the customs and manners of the Scottish people.57
Scott demonstrated that the past could be presented imaginatively; that historical actors could be

55 Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 92.
imparted with personality, and their subjective experiences recorded as compelling works of fiction.

Crusaders for American literature emphatically urged their compatriots to apply his methods to their own literary works. “There is a growing taste for historical truths, and romantic fictions, connected or associated with the progress of this nation,” one reviewer observed:

If a writer of this country, wishes to make its history or its traditions the subject of romantic fiction [...] he must go back to the aborigines. It is there that the character, situation, and superstition, are to be found in abundant profusion; it is among them that life is full of romance and adventure; that high figurative eloquence and unrestrained passions of the most heroic kind are the ordinary attributes of tribes and nations.58

This was affirmed in 1820 with tremendous success of James Eastburn (1797-1819) and Robert C. Sands’ (1799-1832) *Yamoyden, a tale of the wars of king Philip, in Six Cantos*, which loosely follows William Hubbard’s (1621-1704), seminal account of King Philip’s War, titled *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New England* (1677) and a handful of other learned sources.59 The critical success and international popularity of *Yamoyden* proved “the unequalled fitness of [American] history for the purposes of a work of fiction,” and inspired a generation of imitators.60 With adaptable patterns for historical romance and a growing enthusiasm for the “Vanishing American” theme there resulted a wave of successive Romantic narratives that celebrate the death of the noble savage and the coming of white civilization. Indian heroes are resurrected in works such as Joseph Dodridge’s *Logan* (1821), Lydia Maria Child’s *Hobomok* (1824), Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* (1827), James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Wept Wish-Ton-Wish* (1829), Henry Whiting’s *Sannillac* (1831), and George H. Colton’s *Tecumseh* 

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(1842) so that they can die forecasting the glory of the American civilization that will supersede them. A fitting theme during the period when American legislators were debating the removal of Indian tribes east of the Mississippi as a permanent solution to the “Indian problem.”

**James Fenimore Cooper and the Last of the Mohicans (1826)**

No author was more successful in combining the historical romance form with the “Vanishing American” theme than novelist James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1859). Eleven of Cooper’s many novels include Native Americans as essential characters, five of which feature the frontiersman Leatherstocking or Natty Bumppo (called Deerslayer or Hawk-eye by the Indians) and his Indian companion, Chingachgook. Cooper first experimented with Indian characters in *The Pioneers: The Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale*, a novel he wrote in 1823. Here he formulated a model for what Louise K. Barnett has termed the “frontier romance.”61 The frontier romance model exhibits all the major characteristics of the eighteenth-century English historical romance à la Scott, but transposed to an American setting – a genteel hero and heroine experience some adventure (set against a significant historical backdrop) that separates them before the story resolves and the lovers are reunited.62 In the American context the adventure consists a series of interconnected captivity episodes where the genteel party (frequently the white heroine) is captured by bloodthirsty savages, prompting daring escapes, chase scenes, heroic rescues, and usually battles between the white heroes, their good Indian allies, and the evil savages. With multiple captivity incidents, writers could repeat the excitement and suspense inherent to chase and capture scenes, and provide numerous instances of whites’ superior ingenuity while escaping or rescuing others. With few exceptions, the stories conclude with the marriage of the white hero and heroine after the antagonists are vanquished and the

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primary Indian villain is killed in the final scenes. Indian companions, or a numerically ambiguous group of “good Indians,” that help the white heroes are another staple of the genre. However their fate is no less tragic; good Indians die in their attempts to rescue whites, die later from wounds sustained while saving whites, or live on as the last of their race only to die out because they have no heirs. Whether good or bad, the Indian characters’ deaths are symbolic of the inevitability of civilizations’ advance over primitive savagism.

Cooper initiated the first wave of “frontier romances” in 1826, when he published *The Last of the Mohicans: a Narrative of 1757*. The novel made an immediate impression on the reading public and remained wildly popular in American and Europe for much of the nineteenth century, due not only to Cooper’s artful portrayal of Indian characters, but also the constant and exciting action inherent to the frontier romance genre. The narrative is organized as a symmetrical arrangement of “episodes,” broken up over two volumes and set during the French and Indian War. The first part deals with the adventures of Major Duncan Heyward, Alice and Cora Munro, and their companions on their journey through upper New York from Fort Edward to Fort William Henry. Along the way, they meet with the British scout Natty Bumppo (Hawk-eye), his Mohican friend Chingachgook, and the Indian’s son, Uncas. When it is revealed that the party’s guide, Magua, is a spy for the French, the villain captures Heyward and the Munro sisters with the aid of the evil Huron tribe, forcing Hawk-eye and his Indian allies to retreat. In an ingenious rescue attempt, Hawk-eye and Chingachgook free the captives and the group make their way to a besieged Fort William Henry. At the climax of the first volume the English are denied reinforcements and forced to surrender the fort to the French; however, as the English are fleeing, they are waylaid by a band of two thousand Hurons, and in the ensuing massacre the

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Munro sisters are captured by Magua once again. The second volume includes a canoe chase, a second and third rescue of the Munro sisters (requiring a French medicine man disguise and a bear costume), a grand battle between the “good” Delawares and the “evil” Hurons, a final pursuit, and the climactic fight of Uncas and Magua at the edge of a cliff. In the fight, Uncas, Magua, and Cora are killed, and the novel ends with exhaustive accounts of Cora and Uncas’ funerals, and the marriage of Heyward and Alice.

The “Vanishing American” in *The Last of the Mohicans*

Perhaps made obvious in the title, the nostalgic “Vanishing American” is the omnipresent theme in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Early in the first chapter, Chingachgook, in an elegant flourish of allegories, foreshadows the death of Uncas, his son and the last chief of the Mohican tribe:

> Where are the blossoms of those summers!—fallen, one by one; so all of my family departed, each in his turn, to the land of spirits. I am on the hill-top, and must go down to the valley; and when Uncas follows in my footsteps, there will no longer be any of the blood of the Sagamores, for my boy is the last of the Mohicans.64

 Appropriately, the plot unfolds as a tragic clash between “savagery” and “civilization,” with the death of the noble savage as a necessary prelude for the future of civilized life. Cooper draws on a whole range of emotional responses over the death of his Indian characters, from sympathy and nostalgia to regret and despair. However, their deaths are an inevitability of the progress of American society (a convention enforced by historical fact) and are glorified such.

The “Vanishing American” theme in *The Last of the Mohicans* derives from both the widely held popular understanding of the Indians’ fate and the sources Cooper used to construct his tale. Like many eastern novelists, Cooper had no personal experience with Native Americans,

and relied heavily on the writings of John Heckewelder, Nicholas Biddle’s account of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and Edwin James’ account of the expedition of Major Long. Cooper was politically minded and an avid reader, and it is likely he also read the government-sponsored reports of Jedidiah Morse (1761-1826) and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793-1864), as well as the internationally popular *Yamoyden* (1820) by Eastburn and Sands. In his own analysis of American life, *Notions of the Americans* (1828), Cooper reiterates the well-worn notion common to all of these sources: “As a rule, the red man disappears before the superior moral and physical influence of the white […].” Though Cooper hoped for gradual assimilation, he was of the popular opinion that “[the Indians] become victims of the abuses of civilization, without ever attaining to any of its moral elevation.”

To elicit regret for their fate, Cooper’s Native American characters, whether “good” or “evil,” are treated as noble savages. Though his depictions are not primitivistic *per se*, his Indians are imbued with a “savage nobility,” which accounted for both the good and bad in Indian life. He sums up his total view in the introduction to the revised edition of *The Last of the Mohicans* from 1851:

> Few men exhibit greater diversity, or, if we may so express it, greater antithesis of character, than the native warrior of North America. In war, he is daring, boastful, cunning, ruthless, self-denying, and self-devoted; in peace, just, generous, hospitable, revengeful, superstitious, modest, and commonly chaste. These are qualities, it is true,

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66 John T. Frederick, “Cooper’s Eloquent Indians,” *PMLA* 71, no. 5 (Dec., 1956): 1006-7. Frederick writes, “If Cooper did read *Yamoyden*, he found Sands’ elaborate and extensive notes—which exceed the text of the poem in number of words—but also to the *Travels* of Johnathan Carver and those of Companius Holm, to Hubbard’s *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians* (of which a new edition had appeared in 1814), to Thomas Church’s *Entertaining History of King Philip’s War*, and to numerous other books.”


which do not distinguish all alike; but they are so far the predominating traits of these remarkable people as to be characteristic. 69

In the story, Chingachgook, Uncas, and their Delaware allies are drawn as nature’s noblemen; their bravery, cunning, artfulness and courtesy contrasted by the villainous Hurons led by Magua. The more mature Chingachgook leads the party, and he exhibits all of the warlike qualities associated with savage life. He is an expert at survival (surpassing even Hawk-eye), a skilled and fierce warrior, and he partakes in scalping, a gruesome act justified by Hawkeye as “the gift of natur’ of an Indian.” 70 His noble qualities are limited only by his life of hunting and warfare. The titular hero Uncas is introduced as an “upright, flexible figure [...] graceful and unrestrained in the attitudes and movements of nature.” His physical features are emphasized, particularly in the description of the warrior’s “dark, glancing and fearless eye, alike terrible and calm; the bold outline of his high, haughty features, pure in their native red; or the dignified elevation of his receding forehead, together with all the finest proportions of a noble head, bared to the generous scalping tuft.” 71 Perhaps the most idealized character in The Last of the Mohicans, Uncas embodies all the best qualities of the dying Mohican line. Cooper treats the villain of the story, Magua, as a vehicle for gothic themes like terror and disgust. The Huron chief is prone to exaggerated fits of rage, inhumane cruelty towards innocents, and a terrible lust for revenge; though, even he is imparted with the best qualities of savage nobility. Magua is brave, cunning, resourceful, and a skillful orator and diplomat, who would be a commanding leader were he not debauched by liquor and the influence of the French. 72

70 Cooper, The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757, 199-200.
71 Ibid., 72.
Uncas and Magua stand as the two extremes of the literary image of the Indian, and as the story progresses, the characters grow from hero and villain to the abstraction of Indians generally. Uncas’ symbolic value as a paragon his race is reinforced so frequently by Cooper that he is “converted, by imagination, into an exquisite and faultless representation of the warlike deity of his tribe.” Uncas rescue from the Hurons near the end of the novel not only sets up the necessary chase and battle scenes that conclude the work, but also provide a tableau that elevates Uncas’ death to the symbolic extinction of all Indians. When Uncas is presented before the Delaware sage Tamenund – an abstraction of the wizened ancient chief character – he confuses the boy with a Lenape chief from his youth. Is Tamenund a boy? he wonders:

Have I dreamt of so many snows—that my people have scattered like floating sands—of Yengeese, more plenty than the leaves on the trees! The arrow of Tamenund would not frighten the fawn; his arm is withered like the branch of a dead oak; the snail would be swifter in the race; yet is Uncas before him as they went to battle against the palefaces! Uncas, the panther of his tribe, the eldest son of the Lenape, the wisest Sagamore of the Mohicans! Tell me, ye Delawares, has Tamenund been a sleeper for a hundred winters?

Uncas is thus conflated with a century of Delawares, and with his death in the ensuing battle with Magua, the “Vanishing American” theme comes full circle. At Uncas’ funeral, the aged Tamenund laments:

The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red men has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans.

Only Chingachgook remains as the last of his kind, left to mourn his departing race qua Uncas.

“As for me, the son and the father of Uncas, I am a blazed pine, in a clearing of pale faces. My

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73 Cooper, The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757, 368.
75 Cooper, The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757, 460.
76 Ibid., 520.
race has gone from the shores of the salt lake, and the hills of the Delaware. […] I am alone.” According to Cooper, although Uncas represents natural virtue, and Magua, evil savagery, both share a “savage heroism” that must ultimately be destroyed as the necessary result of the plot – the progress of civilization over savagism.

The pathos that surrounds the five Leatherstocking Tales reveals Cooper’s own uncertainty about the virtues of progress and civilized life. As Pearce argues, the five Leatherstocking Tales taken as a whole are, “an examination of the heroic, adventurous progress of American civilization westward and of the very process of civilizing the savage frontier.”

Taken in chronological order (instead of the order of publication), they show the “borderer” Natty Bumppo, a man neither civilized nor wholly savage, steadily pushed westward until he dies on the prairies. In The Deerslayer (1841), Hawk-eye is young and untested, but repudiates civilized life out of loyalty to Chingachgook and his adoptive Delaware family. In The Last of the Mohicans (1826) and The Pathfinder (1840) he is the triumphant frontier hero, fighting Indian-style to blaze the trail for the civilization to come. In The Pioneers (1823) he is an aging hunter, moving west with the debauched Chingachgook, another victim of liquor and white vices, and in The Prairie (1827) he dies alone in the west, aware that he will never participate in the richer, complex life that is to come. Having grown in the forest and been raised in the “Indian way,” Hawk-eye is unable to participate in the civilized life that he had cleared the wilderness to create, but his death functions much the same as Uncas or any other Indian protagonist in the frontier romance. Cooper was deeply conscious of the “vanishing” of the American wilderness and the fundamental changes that were occurring in American society.

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77 Ibid., 519.
78 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 201.
79 Dippie, The Vanishing American, 42.
during his lifetime. Written over a nearly thirty-year span, the Leatherstocking Tales are Cooper’s own perspective on the westward course of American society.

**Longfellow’s The Song of Hiawatha (1855)**

Though considerable impetus to Indian writing came from the controversy surrounding public debates over removal, Cooper was responsible for developing the form and function of the frontier romance genre. With the publication of *The Last of the Mohicans* and the rest of the Leatherstocking tales, the floodgates of Indian fiction were opened and the idealization of the death of the noble savage did not cease for nearly forty years – long after the genre had lost its novelty and critical merit.\(^{80}\) The wave of fiction did not subside, however, before it had produced monumental works such as William Gilmore Simms’ *The Yemasee* (1835) and *Cassique of Kiawah* (1859), James S. French’s *Elkswatawa* (1836), and Daniel P. Thompson’s *The Doomed Chief* (1860?).\(^{81}\) In addition, this output was accompanied by sixteen long, metrical romances in the style of Scott, including *Red Eagle* (1855) by Alexander B. Meek, George H. Colton’s *Tecumseh* (1842), Peter H. Myer’s *Ensinore* (1840).\(^{82}\) Though not outright primitivistic in their representation, the Indians in these texts were romantic, eloquent, poetic in speech, stoic, and brave – imbued with all of the qualities of Cooper’s noble savages. However, as Orians suggests, from a different perspective the nobility imputed on Indian characters was essentially

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“the normal glorification of a fictional [romantic] hero.” Authors may have felt regret or pity over the issue of Indian removal, but they were conscious of their reader’s expectations and unopposed to exploiting the Indian as a stock romantic hero or gothic villain. The glorification of the noble savage in fiction reached its artistic height with the publication of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s (1807-1882) long narrative poem, *The Song of Hiawatha* in 1855.

Set before the coming of whites, Longfellow’s “Indian Edda,” depicts the imagined history of Native Americans under the leadership and tutelage of the legendary hero Hiawatha. Unlike Cooper, Longfellow had many opportunities to meet with Native Americans, but he still drew a majority of his source material from the work of prominent nineteenth century historians and ethnologists. The author was particularly attracted to the *Algic Researches, comprising Inquiries respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indian Tribes of the United States* (1839), a collection of Algonquin myths and legends by the eminent ethnologist, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793-1864). To this he added Schoolcraft’s *Oneóta, or Characteristics of the Red Race of America* (1845), and his *History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*, an ethnographic study funded by President Polk’s administration and the chief source of the Hiawatha legend. Longfellow also engaged Heckwelder’s *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations* (1819) and John Tanner’s autobiographical *Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner* (1830), but found himself having to “disentangle the legends” to remove inconsistencies and elements of the myths

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83 Ibid., 215.
84 Keiser, *The Indian in American Literature*, 199-200.
that detracted from the dignity and seriousness of the Hiawatha character, or that might offend his genteel readership.\textsuperscript{86}

The myths center on the Algonquin hero, Manabo\textsuperscript{zho}, a trickster god that Longfellow (and Schoolcraft) conflated with the sixteenth century statesmen and prophet, Hiawatha – though Longfellow may have preferred the title for its assonance rather than due to a historical blunder.\textsuperscript{87} Described by the author as “a kind of American Prometheus,” Hiawatha is a messianic figure who secures for his people the gift of agriculture (in the form of maize), teaches them to use the canoe to fish, and brings peace between the Ojibway and Dakotah tribes through his union to the Dakotah chief’s daughter Minnehaha.\textsuperscript{88} The couple’s wedding feast initiates a new era, when “Buried was the bloody hatchet,/ Buried was the deadly war-club,/ Buried were all warlike weapons,/ and the war-cry was forgotten.”\textsuperscript{89} During this idyllic time, the Chief muses on the deeds of his ancestors, and teaches his people to preserve their history through painting and picture writing. When the Indians are threatened by famine and disease, Hiawatha provides remedies and instructs them in the sacred art of healing, but the age of peace cannot last. He receives word of the white men and induces his people to welcome the “messengers of the Great Spirit” as brothers, prophesizing the westward march of “unknown, crowded nations.” But his vision is soured as he sees the fate of his race:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Ibid.}, 196-97.
\textsuperscript{89} Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, \textit{The Song of Hiawatha} (1855, repr. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1857), 175
\end{flushright}
Then a darker, drearier vision
Passed before me, vague and cloud-like;
I beheld our nations scattered,
All forgetful of my counsels,
Weakened, warring with each other;
Saw the remnants of our people
Sweeping westward, wild and woeful,
Like the cloud-rack of a tempest,
Like the withered leaves of autumn!^{90}

Longfellow then rushes to a hasty conclusion (a weakness the author acknowledged), as the aged Hiawatha welcomes with open arms the coming of the whites and Christianity:

From the distant land of Wabun,
From the farthest realms of morning
Came the Black-Robe chief, the Prophet
He the Priest of Prayer, the Pale-face,
With his guides and his companions.

And the noble Hiawatha,
With his hands aloft extended,
Held aloft in sign of welcome,
Waited, full of exultation,

Till the Black-Robe chief, the Pale-face,
With the cross upon his bosom,
Landed on the sandy margin.^{91}

The chief feeds his guests, shares the peace pipe, and accepts their message of the “Peace of prayer, and peace of pardon, Peace of Christ, and joy of Mary!”^{92} Inexplicably, Hiawatha then departs. As his guests sleep, the chief speaks to his people:

I am going, O my people,
On a long and distant journey;
Many moons and many winters
Will have come, and will have vanished,
Ere I come again to see you.
But my guests I leave behind me;
Listen to their words of wisdom,
Listen to the truth they tell you,

^{90}Ibid., 282-83.
^{91} Ibid., 287.
^{92} Ibid., 289.
For the Master of Life has sent them
From the land of light and morning.\textsuperscript{93}

“In the glory of the sunset,” Hiawatha waves a final farewell then paddles his birch-bark canoe westward “to the regions of the home-wind,” returning to his immortal origins.\textsuperscript{94} Just as his presence and guidance are needed most, Hiawatha is gone, foreshadowing the decline and fall of the once-great Indian nations.

*The Song of Hiawatha* made an immediate impression on the reading public, and became a literary sensation practically overnight. More than four thousand copies of the first edition were purchased on the day of its publication, and, by the end of the year, a total of thirty-eight thousand copies had been sold.\textsuperscript{95} The translator and poet Adolph Bötger (1815-1870) produced the first German translation of the poem in 1856. And in 1857, the German poet Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-1876) received glowing praise from Longfellow for his own translated edition.\textsuperscript{96} Dramatic readings of *Hiawatha* proliferated in the drawing rooms of the burgeoning American middle class, a phenomenon chided as “a public nuisance” by critics, and readers were known to have committed long sections of the poem to memory up into the first two decades of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{97} Longfellow’s *The Song of Hiawatha* is notable not only for its unprecedented success, but in the approach the author took to sustain the noble savage image.

At the time of the poem’s writing, the “Indian problem” was no longer a threat to American progress, yet removal in the 1830s and 1840s still weighed heavily on Americans’ conscious. In using legendary materials, as opposed to the historical or quasi-historical sources

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 294.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 295.
\textsuperscript{96} Keiser, *The Indian in American Literature*, 193.
of his predecessors, Longfellow subverted the savagery vs. civilization plot central to the noble savage convention while retaining its message. Additionally, by setting the legend before contact with whites, he could imagine them as the true “noble savages” from America’s dim pre-history. Longfellow reinforced the antiquity of Hiawatha’s time by selecting the meter and mood of an old legend – the non-rhyming, sing-song eight-syllable trochaic verse of the Finnish epic poem Kalevala. In effect, the author constructed an epic American antiquity – populated by mythological culture heroes and set in a primeval sylvan landscape that was modeled on the collective work of the romantic poets, novelists, historians, and folklorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Pisani explains, in a modern society that reflected the growing importance of commercialism and industry, “the renewed manifestation of a noble savage for modern readers reminded Americans of the simple, natural life that many cherished.” Due to its startling longevity among urban populations, Longfellow’s poem is the central document for understanding and interpreting the American view of the Indian in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Indian in Literature after Hiawatha

Though Longfellow’s Song of Hiawatha was immensely popular in both America and Europe, its publication occurred as the Indian was falling out of favor as a serious literary subject for American writers. Being the principle figure in American Romanticism, the Indian was constantly scrutinized by contemporary authors and critics, and, by the 1850s, the noble savage

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98 Pearce, Savagism and Civilization, 195.
99 Berkhofer, White Man’s Indian, 90; Pisani, Imagining Native America in Music, 137. Longfellow originally encountered the Kalevala in 1842 in the original German. It no doubt impressed upon the author, and in 1854, he wrote, “I have at length hit upon a plan for a poem on the American Indians, which seems to me the right one, and the only. It is to weave together the beautiful traditions into a whole. I have hit upon a measure, too, which I think the right and only one for such a theme,” referring to the trochaic verse of the original. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 273-74.
100 Pisani, Imagining Native America in Music, 137.
(and the Indian generally) began to bore the eastern reading public. Indian fiction posed a number of significant problems for writers. Frontier romances relied on the action of captivity episodes and chase scenes as their sole plotting device, making it difficult for authors to diversify the Indian’s treatment or impart any interest to the portrayal of Indian manners and customs. As early as 1826, one reviewer complained, “almost every production into which [the Indians] are introduced partakes more or less of the same character and abounds in incidents and sentiments that are similar, and evidently copiers of one common original.” Even after a substantial number of frontier romances had achieved literary success, critics continued denounce the limitations of the character. The poet and literary critic Grenville Mellen (1799-1841) summed up the “barrenness” of the Indian’s literary potential in a review of Cooper’s The Red Rover:

> It strikes us that there is not enough in the character of life of these poor natives to furnish the staple of a novel. The character of the Indian is a simple one, all around him is simple. But mere simplicity is not all that is needed […] He must be mentally engaged. The savage says but little; and after we have set him before our readers with his gorgeous crown of feathers, his wampum, and his hunting-bow, it would seem that we have done as well as we could for him. […] The Indians as a people offer little or nothing that can be reasonably expected to excite the novelist, formed as his taste must be on a foreign standard.

Ironically, attempts to humanize Indian characters through complex emotions were often chided by critics as unrealistic. “Mr. Cooper’s Indians are of a somewhat visionary order,” wrote W. H. Gardiner in a critique of The Last of the Mohicans. Dismissing Uncas and Chingachgook outright, the critic praised the villainous character of Magua, “one of those licensed instruments of romance,” as “a well conceived and well sustained […] somewhat exaggerated character.”

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102 Berkhofer, The White Man’s Indian, 95.
103 The American Athenæum 1 (February 16, 1826), 441, quoted in Orians, “The Romance Ferment after Waverly,” 425
Despite *Hiawatha*’s success, it was disparaged for its monotony and length, and its sing-song meter was ridiculed in countless satirical parodies. In 1855, the Irish actor John Brougham (1814-1880) staged a two-act musical burlesque *Po-ca-hon-tas, or The Gentle Savage* (subtitled, “An Original Aboriginal Erratic Operatic Semi-civilized and Demi-savage Extravaganza”), which became a hit with theater troupes and blackface minstrel companies lasting until the late nineteenth century.\(^{106}\) The introduction is characteristic of the general tone of the play:

> Ask you—How about these verses?  
> Whence this song of Pocahontas,  
> With its flavor of Tobacco,  
> And the Stincweed—the Mundungus  
> With its pipe of Old Virginny,  
> With the echo of the Breakdown,  
> With its smack of Bourbon whiskey,  
> With the twangle of the Banjo;  
> Of the Banjo—Goatskinnet,  
> And the Fiddle—the Catgutto.\(^{107}\)

Native eloquence, once a hallmark of Indian literature, was aped in Robert Montgomery Bird’s *Nick of the Woods; or, The Jibbenainosay* (1837). For example, when the protagonist of *Nick of the Woods*, the “Indian-hating” avenger Nathan Slaughter, is faced by the arch villain of the story, he is greeted with:

> “Me Injun-man!” said the chief, addressing his words to the prisoner, and therefore in the prisoner’s language,— “Me kill all white-man! Me Wenonga: me drink white man’s blood; me no heart!”\(^{108}\)

Following in Bird’s footsteps many authors adopted an “Indian pidgin” for their Native American characters, a trait that became closely associated with Native American representations

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in post-bellum dime novels, westerns, and wild-west shows of the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{109} When not portrayed as an anachronistic sage spewing endless metaphors, Native Americans were reduced to a dialect of “me’s” and “him’s,” “ughs” and “heap-bigs,” and verbs ending in “um.”\textsuperscript{110} By the 1850s, the use of the Indian as a subject for a serious American literature had run its course; authors searched elsewhere for inspiration, and the Indian became a literary staple of popular culture, particularly in the mass-produced paperback novels of the late-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{111}

The idealized “romantic savage” archetype represented in literature and poetry saw only limited engagement in art music before the mid-nineteenth century, appearing primarily through genres for domestic music-making. Art music’s delayed utilization of the Noble Savage theme was not related to the success of the literary archetype itself, however. Rather, it was a result of the slow development by American institutions of “cultivated” music in the early nineteenth century, owing to several important factors: the character and preferences of nineteenth-century audiences, the emerging disparity between the tastes of the public and musical “authority,” and a shift in musical idealism towards German romantic models between 1820 and the Civil War. Though these problems are emblematic of art music in the United States throughout the nineteenth century, their effect between the American Revolution and the 1860s prevented widespread or meaningful engagement with the Indian in music during the peak of its popularity as a literary topic between 1820 and 1860. Conversely, a market and demand for “vernacular” music was well developed by the nineteenth century and did not require campaigning or reform by a formal establishment to reach audiences across class lines. The market for vernacular music

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid.}, 68-9.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Berkhofer, \textit{The White Man’s Indian}, 95, 96-104
\end{itemize}
was a *democratic* enterprise, based on the publication and sale of sheet music, which allowed its consumers to buy music tailored to their skills and tastes. Devoted to entertainment and salability, vernacular music drew its subjects from romantic poetry and literature popular at the time and readily assumed the Indian trope for its connection to themes of nostalgia, loss, and connection with nature – all prevalent topics in American popular song. Though the discrepancy between cultivated and vernacular traditions continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century, the trajectory of each had a remarkable effect on the uses of the Indian as a musical subject in both genres.
Audiences for art music formed first in the older cities of the east and south, which retained cultural atmospheres closest to Europe and were affected most by the influx of immigrant professional musicians from Germany and other western European nations in the nineteenth century. Settlements and towns west of the coast rarely had the financial or intellectual support needed to encourage the growth of institutions for cultivated music, relegating the development of an American concert life to cultural centers – such as Boston, Philadelphia, Charleston, or New York – that could practicably allow them. Between the American Revolution and the 1830s, audiences for art music in these cities were typically educated, upper-class citizens whose involvement with the arts was seen as a privilege and a social responsibility. “Determined they should not revert to barbarism in the wilderness,” landowners and persons of class, particularly in larger cities and in the South, self-consciously cultivated their inherited traditions through home performance and by organizing concerts.  

Public performances of art music before the 1830s were given primarily in the form of benefit concerts, where an organizer paid all expenses, including performers’ salaries, and reaped any profits made. Another approach, the subscription concert, allowed organizers to propose a series of concerts funded by public subscriptions to defray expense and prevent financial loss from low attendance. The impromptu nature of these concerts provided local amateurs, travelling professionals, and newly arrived performers from Europe the opportunity of financial reward for their craft, but also carried a deal of risk. The existence and success of public performances

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depended on publicity given to concerts and programming that could appeal to the broadest paying audience possible.

Concerts typically consisted of one to three musical segments, or “Acts,” including chamber works, instrumental overtures, single movements from larger works (billed as a “Grand Symphony”), and liberally interspersed vocal selections ranging from popular songs to English translations of Italian arias.\(^2\) Eclecticism in programming was not specific to the United States in the nineteenth century; public concerts in both the Old World and New stressed diversity in genres, forces, and styles, featuring more short pieces than long to retain attention and appeal to the broadest public possible.\(^3\) Performances in America rarely focused merely on musical selections, however. Most were broken up by or concluded with a ball, pantomimes, or a variety of non-musical diversions. One announcement in the *Philadelphia Journal* from 1788 advertised, “a concert, between parts of which will be delivered (gratis). A comic lecture in five parts, on the disadvantage of Improper Education.”\(^4\) Perhaps even more telling is an advertisement from 1773 for a concert followed by a magic act: “Among a number of surprising performances, Mr. Saunders will let any number of ladies or gentleman think of as many cards as they please, and the same will be found in a roasted leg of mutton, hot from the fire.”\(^5\) Concerts could be rowdy and audiences expected *entertainment*, regardless of its aesthetic value.\(^6\) As the century progressed and public concerts became more “serious” and focused in Europe, concerts in America were shaped by economics and public demand. The patronage for cultivated music in

\(^3\) *Ibid.*, 87-88.
\(^6\) The “rowdiness” of concertgoers manifested in audience requests, socializing during performances, and even violence, usually at the expense of performers. See Michael Broyles, *“Music of the Highest Class”: Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston* (CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 105-106.
America, therefore, relied on these audiences, though their preferences became increasingly at-
odd with a growing musical “establishment” after 1820.

**Demands for an American Cultivated Tradition**

Around the 1820s, advocates for the cultivated tradition and a number of professional
musicians began to reject the recreational spirit of public concerts and the “unrefined” tastes of
concertgoers. As concerts became more frequent after the War of 1812, professional musicians
sought ever-larger audiences, raising performance standards and increasing the pressure on the
amateurs they worked alongside who lacked the technical facilities, or the impetus, to comply.7

Whereas “professors” of music strove to elevate the status of their profession through skilled
performance, an amateur could easily dismiss criticism of his playing, citing that music was a
hobby rather than a paying profession.8 The casual attitude towards music by amateurs and the
public contributed directly to the growing rift between proponents of the cultivated tradition,
devoted to the high-ideals of art and its benefits to society, and a public captivated with novelty
and skeptical of the music profession in general. Exponents of the cultivated tradition
campaigned for music of a higher aesthetic value and soon, public lectures, music journals, and
magazines advocating for such became increasingly common. It was through periodicals such as
Henry C. Lewis’s *Literary and Musical Magazine* (est. 1819) and John Rowe Parker’s
*Euterpeiad or Musical Intelligencer* (est. 1820) that “refined music” or “music of the highest
class,” was first pitted against “musical trash” and performances “deficient in solemnity, dignity,
and decency.”9 In direct opposition to the popular and genial character of the concert music in

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8 John Rowles Parker, ed., *The Euterpeiad, or Musical Intelligencer*, vol. 1 (Aug. 4 and 18, 1821), ed. Bea
9 *Euterpeiad* 1 (July 29, 1820), 70. Though New York City claimed the title of the concert capital of the United
States by mid-century, Boston was the preeminent city for defining American musical aesthetics. Fourteen of the
thirty journals on literature, music, and aesthetics were published in Boston alone between 1819 and 1844, including
vogue, only music of “science,” “progress,” and “refinement” was respectable (though these terms were never meaningfully defined) and admiration and understanding of high-art music came only through deliberate cultivation.

The position of proponents of cultivated music, however, should not be viewed as exclusionary. To reformers, music was a unifying social force, whose cultivation for the purposes of cultural and spiritual uplift could benefit all members of society, regardless of class. The civilizing effect of music on society as a whole was a credo for those advocating for the cultivated tradition. Much of what was written focused on the benefits inherent in music of a higher aesthetic value to the character of American citizens. Implicit to the rhetoric of those lobbying for “correct musical taste” was the Platonic ideal that the character of a populace could be shaped, for good or ill, through art. Parker, writing in the *Euterpeiad*, spoke of music as an artistic language, “felt by all mankind, and which possesses the power of moving the soul beyond what human genius, by any other means, is able to effect.”

Art music, particularly secular instrumental music, was universal in addressing the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of humankind, civilizing and unifying those citizens who cultivated it. As one reformer argued, “it would be a very discouraging and painful symptom of the character of our population […] if [orchestral music] were not highly appreciated and esteemed.”

Believing that education above all could improve the public’s acceptance of cultivated music, outspoken proponents such as Lowell Mason and Samuel Eliot formed the Boston Academy of Music to provide extracurricular vocal and instrumental instruction to amateurs and campaigned for the inclusion

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10 *Euterpeiad* 1 (June 10, 1820), 43.

of basic musical instruction in Boston’s common schools. Eliot, who took control of the Boston Academy in 1835, was particularly vocal in this respect, forwarding that the young would “mould the character of this democracy,” and thus with the introduction of music into public schools, “the tastes of all will likewise be cultivated.”

Music, Eliot argued, “soothes the ferocity in humans and excites ‘kind and gentle feelings’ without weakening strength or character. It promotes social interaction, encourages precise thinking, and teaches discipline and necessity of order and authority.” Eliot and other like-minded reformers championed the notion of a musical hierarchy, in which some music was superior to others in its ability to affect human nature. Through careful guidance, the populace would reach similar musical preferences.

**John Sullivan Dwight**

Perhaps the most outspoken advocate for the unifying and uplifting potential of high-art music was the Boston critic John Sullivan Dwight (1813-93). Like Eliot, Dwight believed that if properly appreciated high-art music would be “an important saving influence” in the democratic life of the expanding country and that “by familiarizing men with the beautiful and the infinite,” music could benefit the nation as a whole.

Dwight played clarinet in his youth but did not take an active interest in music until attending Harvard College in 1832, where he participated in the student-led Arionic and Pierian Sodalities. At Harvard Dwight became enamored with German

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12 Samuel Eliot, *Annual Reports of the Boston Academy of Music*, 332, 334, 337, quoted in Broyles, “Music of the Highest Class,” 208. Mason and Eliot ultimately succeeded in introducing vocal instruction into Boston’s public schools, though Eliot’s efforts are often ignored. Mason is typically credited as the founder of modern music education, but Eliot’s position as the Mayor of Boston, head of the Boston School Board, and leader of the Boston Academy of Music were paramount in implementing musical instruction, and his campaigning through lectures, reports, and articles influenced other cities to follow suit.


romantic poetry, particularly the works of Goethe and Schiller, and in the late 1830s published several translations of German authors. Dwight’s discovery of German literature at Harvard was a pivotal event in his life, and his essays on music reflect his absorption of the language and ideology of German Romanticism. In this respect, his brand of musical idealism differed from that of reformers in the 1820s and 30s, consisting of profoundly elitist rhetoric steeped with the language of romanticism, comparing the sublimity of musical art to that of religious experience. In an address to the Harvard Musical Association given in 1841, Dwight stated his sacralized vision of music:

I hazard the assertion, that music is all sacred; that music in its essence, in its purity, when it flows from the genuine fount of art in the composer’s soul… is a divine minister of the wants of the soul… To me music stands for the highest outward symbol of what is most deep and holy, and most remotely to be realized in the soul of man. It is a sort of Holy Writ; a prophecy of what life is to be; the language of our presentiments; the rainbow of promise translated out of seeing into hearing.

To Dwight, secular instrumental music represented the highest form of sacred music, uncorrupted by the vulgarity of language and closest to the transcendental notion of expressing the infinite through personal artistic expression. The elitist tone of Dwight’s statement is clear: If music was considered sacred, then tolerance for “frivolous” or entertaining music was heresy. Music that was not sacred was vulgar, and those who listened to it were, by implication, vulgar as well.

Throughout the 1840s, Dwight was active in forming the Harvard Musical Association and establishing series of chamber-music concerts, giving lectures on music, and publishing

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16 Ibid., 227.
18 Ora Frishberg Saloman, “Fink, Hach, and Dwight’s Beethoven in 1843-44,” Musical Quarterly 76, no.4 (1992). Frishberg Saloman traces the connection between Dwight’s philosophy on music and preference for the German repertoire to his familiarity with the writings of Gottfried Wilhelm Fink (1783-1846), the Leipzig music editor and critic, whose own writings were in turn influenced by the eminent German editor E.T.A. Hoffman.

**The Influence of the German Tradition**

Though many competing factors instigated the schism between public taste and the cultivated elite, the musical idealism promoted in the writings of Eliot and Dwight represented a staunch departure between those who championed the cultivated tradition and the public at large. The position taken by reformers and critics had its roots in the Romantic movement, which was reaching its peak in Europe at the time. Principally, critics hailed German music as the highest expression of Romantic thought and recognized the pervasive influence German composers exerted on the direction of symphonic music. Hymnodist Thomas Hastings was the earliest reformer to reveal the shifting allegiance to German models, writing in his *Dissertation on Musical Taste* (1822):

> We are decided admirers of German musick. We delight to study and to listen to it. The science, genius, the taste, that every where pervade it, are truly captivating to those who have learned to appreciate it: but such, we presume, are not yet the majority of American or English auditors or executants.²⁰

In this passage, Hastings discloses the same qualities of music espoused by reformers crusading for a new cultivated tradition. Here “science, genius, [and] taste” are all the best qualities

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inherent to German music altogether, indicating that nationality was the determining factor in what was “truly captivating” about the music rather than its individual quality. A similar claim found in an article published anonymously by Samuel Eliot in the *North American Review* traces the history of music to its pinnacle in the works of Handel, Haydn, and especially Mozart, who he viewed as “a striking climax to the musical history of the last century.”

Most outspoken of all was Dwight, whose proclivity for the German tradition had profound effects on musical culture as a whole. Dwight unwaveringly championed the German symphonic repertoire in his writings and lectures, and found especially in Beethoven, “that sublimest and most intimate language of the soul, the sound of which wakes chords within each one of us which are deeper than all difference, and make us feel a divine relationship.” In striving for a transatlantic musical culture centered on a predominantly German canon, the cultivated elite tended to reject the contributions of the few native-born American composers at the time. The monolithic presence of the German model paired with the lack of confidence in America’s own musical identity had far ranging effects on American composers well into the twentieth century. Even those composers who did manage to achieve international recognition for their symphonic music (for example, Edward MacDowell or John Knowles Paine,) did so by adhering to the Germanic idiom. In many ways, the elite’s fixation on the German canon provoked composers in the latter nineteenth century to react against the accepted norm and seek new and more exotic musical resources in developing their own musical vocabularies.

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21 Broyles, “*Music of the Highest Class,*” 205-207. Broyles notes a “timelessness” in the musical “establishments” preference for composers of the classical tradition from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, usually extending only as far as Beethoven and Mendelssohn. Eliot regarded Beethoven as somewhere below Rossini and on par with Weber.


Immigrant Professionals and American Concert Organizations

The hierarchical position of the German tradition in American art music was not exclusively due to the efforts of reformers, but also to the role of German immigrant professionals in shaping America’s first permanent performing organizations. With the European music of Romanticism as their desired model, and with German music held up as ideal, nineteenth-century orchestras and musical societies readily welcomed German musicians into their numbers. Coincidentally, the number of Germans who participated in musical organizations rose in the period between 1820 and 1860 due to an increase in the number of immigrants entering the U.S. from Europe, a majority of whom came from England and Germany.24 This growing presence of German-speaking musicians had an adverse effect on American performers, who could not match the professionalism and technical skill to compete with their European contemporaries. Consequently, performing organizations such as the Boston Handel and Haydn Society (est. 1815), The Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia (est. 1820), and New York’s Philharmonic Society (est. 1842) became disproportionately Teutonic in their membership. The Boston Handel and Haydn Society, formed for the purpose of “introducing into more general use the works of Handel and Haydn and other eminent composers,” was founded in part by German immigrant musicians.25 As one of Boston’s longest-running institutions, the Society was responsible for introducing audiences and amateur performers to the works of its namesakes, and was responsible for the first complete performances of Handel’s Messiah and Haydn’s Creation

24 Hitchcock, *Music in the United States*, 58-9. The number of German and other European immigrants that flooded into the United States in this period was truly staggering: by 1855, over 176,000 Irish, 98,000 German, and 37,000 British immigrants were living in New York City alone. It would not be a far step to attribute the effect of German musicians on U.S. musical culture to over-saturation, diluting Anglo-American musical elements through the shifting ethnic make-up in major cities that supported the first institutions for professional music-making. See Nancy B. Reich “Robert Schumann’s Music in New York City, 1848-1898” in *European Music and Musicians in New York City, 1840-1900*, ed. John Graziano (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester, 2006), 12.
Likewise, the Musical Fund Society in Philadelphia, formed to “cultivate and diffuse a musical taste,” included a number of German musicians among its charter members, including its first conductor, Charles Frederick Hupfeld.\textsuperscript{26} In the decades following, the Musical Fund Society performed symphonies by Beethoven, overtures by Mendelssohn and Weber, as well as works by lesser-known composers Sigismund Neukomm (1778-1858) and Bernhard Romberg (1767-1841).

The Philharmonic Society of New York was a landmark organization, bringing cultivated music to the public sphere. The Philharmonic Society’s opening concert, directed by the German-trained conductor and violinist Ureli Corelli Hill (1802-1875), featured a full performance of Beethoven’s Symphony no. 5, as well as the overture to Weber’s \textit{Oberon}, and several opera numbers. Subsequent performances offered similar, German-centric programs: the second and third concerts included Beethoven, Weber, and Hummel, as well as Romberg, Mendelssohn, and Louis Spohr.\textsuperscript{27} In a review of the first three programs of the Philharmonic’s first season from May of 1843, an anonymous author for New York’s \textit{The Pathfinder} lauded the society’s efforts, asserting that, “the music performed at the three Concerts given by the Society, has been of a character to elevate and improve the public taste.”\textsuperscript{28} From its beginnings until the 1860s, leadership in the organization was predominantly German. The society’s first conductors, Henry C. Timm, Louis Wiegers, Theodore Eisfeld, and Carl Bergman were all German-born or educated. Likewise, German representation in the orchestra rose during this period. Of the fifty-two members of the orchestra in the Society’s first year, twenty-two were German, thirteen native-born American, and seventeen from other Western European countries. By the

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, 206.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, 208.
Philharmonic’s thirteenth season, German personnel had risen to sixty-two musicians out of eighty-nine players, and by 1892, only three of the hundred odd performers were of non-Germanic heritage.29

**Audience Expectations and the Cultivated Tradition**

Groups such as these were successful in disseminating the works of German romantic composers to the public sphere; however, public concerts depended on the existence of large, heterogeneous audiences whose appreciation for cultivated music would translate to financial stability. Audiences in the United States, with ears less finely tuned to music of “science” and “taste” often rejected the complexity and innovation of the Romantic music offered by these groups, sometimes to disastrous effect. By mid-century, many of the performing organizations triumphed by reformers began to fail. The New York Philharmonic Society faced mounting criticism for its strict adherence to the German repertoire. For instance, Bohemian impresario Max Maretzek (1821-1897), who was hired to manage the New York opera company in 1848, complained, “Their [the society’s] repertoire consisted always of the same few Symphonies, works of the old composers in our Divine Science, which everybody has heard, although few have comprehended.”30

The American-born composer George Bristow (1825-1898) offered criticism of a different kind, faulting the Society for their failure to include works by American composers: “it is in very bad taste for men to bite the hand that feeds them. If all their artistic affections are unalterably German, let them pack up and go back to Germany […] What is the Philharmonic Society in this country? Is it to play exclusively the works of German masters, especially if they

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30 Max Maretzek, *Crochets and Quavers: or, Revelations of an Opera Manager in America* (New York: S. French, 1855), 13.
be dead?” Similarly, the Boston Handel and Haydn Society, a middle class performing organization, saw a fall in ticket receipts by the 1840s, “partly owing to the want of special vocal attraction, and partly to the inability of the public to appreciate music so lofty in its strain and inspiration and so scientific in its character.” For New York’s Sacred Music Society, the same pattern prevailed. Reflecting on the performance of Mendelssohn’s oratorio, Elijah, in October of 1847, Walt Whitman wrote:

Although the music, judged by the rules of the art, is of the highest order, it is too elaborately scientific for the popular ear. It is, besides, too heavy in its general character, and wants the relief of a proper proportion of lightness and melody. There is scarcely a striking or pleasing air in it […] the audience, which was large, sat out the performance, it was evident that no great degree of pleasure was derived from it.

Even the Boston Academy of Music, a watershed institution lionized by advocates for its role in elevating public taste, struggled to fill seats against the success of the amateur Boston Philharmonic Society (est.1843). Boston’s Philharmonic Society resembled a band more so than an orchestra, but its lighter, popular-oriented programs were accessible to audiences and drew considerable crowds. Unhampered by musical idealism, the Philharmonic Society’s purpose was simply to provide Boston audiences, “good musical entertainments.” It seems that regardless of the efforts of the cultivated elite or the ensembles they praised, audiences in the U.S. were disillusioned with homogenous, instrumental-oriented programs, and preferred the traditional, eclectic programs of early-century concerts.

European Virtuosos and Music as Entertainment

Along with ensembles like the Boston’s Philharmonic Society, the public’s preexisting musical preferences were reinforced through another source by way of Europe. European virtuosos, recognizing the economic potential of packaged spectacle in America, were far more successful in reaching the public than concert organizations and critics. From 1810 on, developments in travel, commerce, and communication facilitated an emerging “concert circuit” that encompassed major cities and extended west to settlements with denser populations. From 1810 on, developments in travel, commerce, and communication facilitated an emerging “concert circuit” that encompassed major cities and extended west to settlements with denser populations. Conflating technical bravura with artistry and talent, audiences around the country welcomed virtuoso performers such as the Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull (1843-45, 1852-57); pianist Leopold de Meyer (1845-47); the Swedish vocalist Jenny Lind (1850-52). These performers and others achieved wide popular success and even received praise from critics for contributing to the public’s growing interest in art music and raising standards of musical discernment nationwide. In a review of the pianist Leopold de Meyer (1816-83), a critic and personal friend of Dwight, George William Curtis, praised foreign artists for awakening a more general interest in music:

Foremost among the causes of this growing love of Music, are the visits with which we have been favored by distinguished artists of the old world, and which have already exerted a great and beneficial influence upon the public taste; awakening a love of music where it had lain dormant, and giving, to those who were already alive to its pleasures,

35 See Broyles, “Music of the Highest Class,” 15-16, 20-22 and Crawford, America’s Musical Life, 281. Several developments were key in increasing opportunities for performers to reach audiences nationwide. For instance, the boom in turnpike building between 1810 and 1820, a rush to build inland waterways spurred on by the steamboat, the completion of the Erie canal linking New York to the midwest in 1825, and the implementation of telegraphs and railways in the 1830s, which facilitated bookings and cancellations.

36 Another prominent “virtuoso” group was the Germania Society (1848-54), a touring orchestra of professional instrumentalists from Berlin. The group was widely praised by both the public and critics for their entertaining programs and unwavering commitment to “further in the hearts of this politically free people the love of the fine art of music through performance of the masterpieces of the greatest German composers.” Unlike other virtuosos at mid-century, the Germanians had permanent “headquarters” in Boston and gave regularly scheduled concerts there as well as on the road. See Lawrence W. Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1988.)
higher and wider views of the beauty, significance, and world-wide relations of this
divine art.\textsuperscript{37}

Though critics like Curtis and even Dwight commended virtuosos, still others saw their performances as damaging to the development of musical culture in the U.S.

One anonymous St. Louis writer criticized concertgoers’ lavish spending on foreign artists. “The sums wasted upon musical prodigies,” he argued, “would be sufficient to establish permanent operas and academies of music, which would do more to elevate the public taste, in one year, than those meteoric visitations would in ten.”\textsuperscript{38} Regardless of protestations over the potential benefits or detriments of virtuosi, their purpose and very reason for coming to the United States was ultimately financial gain. By the 1840s, impresarios like P.T. Barnum and Bernard Ullman had seized power in the entertainment circuit and, unlike the cultivated elite, were unmoved by the high ideals of “divine Art.” The concert circuit was controlled by economics, not idealism, and popular acclaim could be garnered through adherence to standardized performance routines, formulated by what audiences seemed to like about concerts.\textsuperscript{39} Unconcerned with cultural edification, impresarios and performers on the concert circuit operated on a hierarchy ruled by economic muscle, tailoring their programs to audience expectations. Along with standards from the classical and operatic repertory, musicians on the concert circuit played into audience’s desire for spectacle and variety through technical bravura, diverse programming, compositions based on familiar or patriotic tunes, descriptive program music, and dances currently in vogue.\textsuperscript{40} These very qualities directly conflicted with the model of


\textsuperscript{38} \textit{The Musical World and New York Musical Times} 6 (18 June, 1853): 107, quoted in \textit{Ibid.}, 106.

\textsuperscript{39} Crawford, \textit{America’s Musical Life}, 282.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, 282.
concert activity reformers championed, as these concerts instead resembled the musical pastiches of the Revolutionary period.

**American Composers and the Indian in Art Music**

With the slow and complicated development of an art music culture in the United States, it is unsurprising that American composers had little impact in the realm of art music composition in the first half of the nineteenth century, let alone opportunities to engage with Native American topics. Until mid-century native composers of art music were few and usually ill-trained, lacking encouragement and approval from the cultural establishment or financial patronage from a disinterested public. The few exceptions are notable, particularly the composer-performer Louis Marie Gottschalk (1829-1869), whose main career centered on international performance tours, and the Bohemian-born composer, Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781-1861). Though Gottschalk’s contributions to American music are overshadowed by his role as a performer, Heinrich composed actively throughout his life and is remarkable for his use of Native American imagery, history, and legends as a subject for a number of his compositions.

When cataloguing Heinrich’s works into the Library of Congress in 1917, Oscar Sonneck noted that Heinrich was likely the first symphonic composer to utilize Indian themes in their music. Over the course of his career, the composer wrote a staggering nine large symphonic works on Indian subjects, a record unsurpassed until the turn of the century, as well as a number of instrumental and vocal works dealing with related topics. Much like authors during the

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42 Editor’s note to César Saerchinger, “Musical Landmarks in New York,” in *Musical Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (April, 1920), 249.
43 Wilbur Maust has identified three central themes in Heinrich’s Indian works: 1) historical events based on early contact between Indians and whites, 2) portraits of Indian leaders, usually those typically characterized as noble savages (e.g. Pushmataha, Logan, and Shenandoah,) and 3) Indian customs and religions. See Wilbur R. Maust,
nineteenth century, the composer’s use of “Indian themes” was an attempt to produce a national “American” music. Heinrich never utilized actual Native American musical material and no clear evidence suggests that Heinrich ever had direct contact with Native Americans or with the obscure travelogues that mentioned their musical customs. As many artists and authors of the period, the “Indian subjects” of Heinrich’s works centered on the idealized image of the Indian, not to actual Native Americans. A more appropriate characterization made by Michael Pisani related Heinrich’s Indian compositions to the Indian panoramas of the artist and proto-ethnologist, George Catlin, or the illustrations in Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s *Historical and Statistical Information* (1847).\(^{44}\) One contemporary writer even likened Heinrich to, “a species of musical Catlin, painting his dusky friends on the music-staff instead of the canvas, composing laments, symphonies, dirges, and war songs, on the most intensely Indian subjects.”\(^{45}\)

It is evident from the lengthy, descriptive programs that accompanied his works that Heinrich was strongly attracted to Indian lore, and had some familiarity with Native American history and customs. Heinrich often drew on literary sources for inspiration, regularly appending his scores with descriptive data found in sources such as John McIntosh’s *The Origin of the American Indians* (1841).\(^{46}\) For example, Heinrich’s first major symphonic composition,


\[^{46}\] Gilbert Chase, *America’s Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1992), 268. Chase notes that with little proof of real contact with Native Americans and Heinrich’s apparent knowledge of McIntosh’s work, it is likely he was familiar with other sources on Native Americans, such as George Catlin’s, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (New York, 1841) or Henry R. Schoolcraft’s, *The Indian in His Wigwam; or, Characteristics of the Red Race of America* (New York, 1848).
Pushmataha, a Venerable Chief of a Western Tribe of Indians (1831), included a “program”
taken from McIntosh’s work:

Not less felicitous was the close of a speech made by Pushmataha, a venerable chief of a
Western Tribe…many years ago. In attending to his extreme age, and to the probability
that he might not even survive the journey back to his tribe, he said: “My children will
walk through the forests, and the Great Spirit will whistle in the treetops, and the flowers
will spring up in the trails, but Pushmataha will hear not – he will see the flowers no
more. He will be gone. His people will know, that he is dead. The news will come to their
ears, as the sound of the fall of a mighty oak in the stillness of the woods.”

Heinrich’s preoccupation with the death (i.e., vanishing) of Pushmataha exemplified in this
passage is not altogether surprising for an artist at a time when the “Vanishing Indian” theme
was so prevalent in American poetry and literature.

Heinrich arrived in the United States in the years preceding the War of 1812 and by 1817,
he had relocated to the western frontier, setting up residence in a log cabin near the pioneer town
of Bardstown, Kentucky. Consequently, he experienced first-hand the post-war surge
westward, saw the increasing conflicts between white settlers and Native Americans, and
witnessed the results of Jackson’s Indian removal policy in the 1830s and 40s. Like many
Romantic artists and poets, Heinrich was sympathetic towards the plight of the Indian and his
treatment of Native American subjects is not unlike the more benevolent and heroic renderings
of the Indian in poetry and literature. For example, Heinrich’s unpublished composition, The
Indian War Council. Gran Concerto Bellico. A Grand Divertissement for 41 Instrumental Parts
– his only “Indian” piece performed in his lifetime – focused on the legacy of the Shawnee
leader Tecumseh. Though no reference to Tecumseh can be found in the Library of Congress
score, the composer provided a brief “program” for its first performance in Boston on June 13,

47 John McIntosh, History of the North American Indians: Their Origin, with a Faithful Description of their
Manners and Customs, Both Civil and Military…(New Haven, CT: H. Mansfield, 1859), quoted in Maust, “The
American Indian in the Orchestral Music of Anthony Philip Heinrich”; 316.
48 Chase, America’s Music, 269-70.
1846, that separates the work’s seven movements into a musical biography of the late Shawnee Chief.⁴⁹

Tecumseh – or the Battle of the Thames – a Martial Overture–
for full Orchestra
  Introduction – The Indian War Council
  Allegro Eroico – The Indian War Dance –
  Advance of the Americans – Skirmishing –
  Battle and Fall of Tecumseh⁵⁰

That the work revolves around Tecumseh, the British Ally and leader of the loathsome Tecumseh Confederacy, demonstrates the importance of the noble savage image (rather than the historical one) in Heinrich’s musical renderings. The parallels with the noble savage in literature are clear – all of Heinrich’s works on Native Americans focus on Indian subjects rooted in America’s past and the intrinsic nobility and unspoiled resolve of the Indian is elevated and romanticized proportionally to the chronological distancing of the subject.⁵¹

**Critical Protest to the Indian in Cultivated Music**

Though Heinrich may be an interesting figure in early-nineteenth century music, he was a liminal one at best and was unable to have much of his work published or performed during his life. Heinrich’s Indian compositions were written at a time when Native American subjects dominated other American arts; however, his “Indian” musical portraits did not elicit sympathy (or patronage) from the public and failed to impress America’s decidedly German-centric,

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⁵⁰ Ibid., 317.

⁵¹ Like Heinrich’s subjects, his musical style is equally incongruous with the reality of Native American life. Lacking accurate musical sources to base his compositions on, Heinrich drew on a blend of his own “eccentric” style and evocative, programmatic devices including passages of bel canto lyricism to represent anguish and melodramatic chromatic piano figurations to suggest “savagism” or war. See: Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 109-10, and Maust, “The American Indian in the Orchestral Music of Anthony Philip Heinrich,” 317-18.
conservative musical establishment. A young John S. Dwight criticized the 1846 premiere of The Indian War Council, writing:

Mr. Heinrich belongs to the romantic class, who wish to attach a story to every thing they do. Mere outward scenes and histories seem to have disturbed the pure spontaneous inspiration of his melodies. We are sorry to see such circumstances dragged into music as the ‘Indian War Council,’ the ‘Advance of the Americans,’ the ‘Skirmish,’ and ‘Fall of Tecumseh.’

Dwight’s criticism seems leveled at the programmatic aspects of the work rather than the subject itself, but later reviews suggest that Dwight thought very little of Native Americans as a musical topic entirely. Dwight’s tepid critique from January 15, 1859 of Hiawatha: A Romantic Symphony, by the German-born musician Robert Stoepel (1821-1887) affirms this:

We never could admire the “Song of Hiawatha” so much as some other poems of [Longfellow]. Perhaps our difficulty is with Indian subjects altogether. In spite of their picturesque life, and their romantic legends, there is a certain monotony, a certain faded, superannuated sort of feeling, that comes over us in reading them [poems on Native Americans]. This savage, dying out life lacks just that germinal vitality out of which poetry, and certainly all music springs.

Many critics stood with Dwight, believing that the Indian was a poor source of musical inspiration for serious art music. A writer in the Boston Courier admitted that, “the little Indian music that we know of furnishes a very slight foundation for the composer to work upon, [it being a] vague, rude, destitute of form or expression, and significant only of savage wildness.”

It seems that the Indian, noble or otherwise, was an unfit theme for composers of serious art music in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially for American composers already regarded as inferior to their foreign contemporaries. Instead, the sympathetic “Noble Savage” was accepted more readily by publishers of parlor music, who recognized early on the economic

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54 Unsigned review in the Boston Courier (13 Jan. 1859), repr. in Dwight’s Journal of Music 14 (January 22, 1859), 338.
viability of distinctly “American” themes in music for home performance. Though the Indian may have been absent from the concert hall, he could be found in the parlors and drawing rooms of the middle-class musical consumer.

As opposed to the gradual and reluctant acceptance of “cultivated” music by U.S. audiences, the enjoyment and performance of “vernacular” music formed an integral part of American musical life well before the nineteenth century. However, popular music’s engagement with the Indian was no less problematic. For many of the same reasons, songwriters and publishers were reluctant to engage with a subject as alien and “barbarous” as the Indian, and their appearance in song literature did not begin in earnest until the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. The Indian’s absence from song literature at a time when their memory was freshest in the minds of Americans may seem curious, but it was related to the history of vernacular music more than a disapproval of their “suitability” as a musical subject. Though a small number of early examples of song on Indian subjects do exist, for instance “The Death Song of an Indian Chief” (1791) by Sarah Wentworth Morton and Hans Gram, it was only after the market for sheet music had been established that the home-music industry could employ Native American subjects in earnest.

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Chapter Four

The Indian in American Popular Song

For the majority of Americans, participatory ensembles and private music making comprised the principal forms of their musical activity and was much more important than formal concerts in defining the country’s musical taste. In fact, many of the organizations responsible for introducing cultivated music to the general public, for example the Boston Handel and Haydn Society or the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia, were at one time amateur organizations founded to improve amateur singing. Other amateur music making activities, such as singing schools, shared dual social and musical roles. In existence since the 1720s, these traveling schools provided instruction in reading music and congregational singing, but also served as an important social gathering for those that participated.¹ More than any other type of music, psalmody fulfilled both public and private functions. More people participated in church choirs than in any other organized music activity, and devotional music was often performed in the home as a popular form of secular entertainment. As the author and diplomat Arthur Rhodes recognized in his 1872 comparison between America and England, Americans, he noted, were far more inclined to make music than to listen to it.² The reasons for American preferences are related in part to the economics, accessibility, and social function of music in nineteenth century America.


Accessibility of Music in the United States

In Europe, where the conviction of the artistic importance and enriching effects of art music were strong, cultivated music flourished. The oldest and most powerful institutions of patronage – the church, the court, and the state – each required music for their own purposes, and supported musicians and organizations to supply it. America had no such cultural infrastructure and without a national church or aristocratic community, the financial burden of sustaining cultivated music lay in a performing organization’s ability to draw substantial audiences. Additionally, concerts required adequate performing forces, time for rehearsal, and repertoire that was within the technical abilities of the performers on hand. Concerts were therefore infrequent and often required higher ticket prices to meet expenses, limiting accessibility to the concert-going public. Home music making, by contrast, was a market open to anyone with the interest and minimal skill required to participate. Unlike concerts with limited repertoires – appealing to some, but not all – music for home performance allowed customers to become consumers of music with the ability to choose works based on appeal and their own technical abilities. Even the price of admission to a concert may have been prohibitive to many, but sheet music was relatively inexpensive and only became more affordable as the century continued.\(^3\) Whereas a typical concert ticket sold for a dollar or more and only became more expensive over time, the retail price of a single two-page piece of sheet music (e.g. *The Star-Spangled Banner*) was roughly 25 cents and remained largely unchanged throughout the nineteenth century.\(^4\) The

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3 Richard Crawford, *America’s Musical Life: A History* (NY: W.W. Norton, 2001), 230-32. Crawford notes that the price of sheet music before 1825, along with the additional costs for music lessons, leisure time to take them, and accompanying instruments made sheet music a costly luxury. However, earlier types of printed music such as broadsides, songsters, and anthologies were much more affordable and less costly to produce and thus more accessible to the populace.

precipitous growth of the new country’s economy greatly increased consumer’s access to goods between 1820 and 1860 and the relative cost of music lessons and accompanying instruments dropped, owing to the profusion of foreign “professors” of music and the growth of indigenous keyboard manufacturing. As standards of living and musical literacy rose among the middle class, the amount of leisure time that could be spent participating in music-making activities increased and songwriters took advantage of the expanding market for songs that could be performed in the home. In the half-century before 1820, only an estimated 15,000 separate works had been published as sheet music for commercial sale, but by the late 1820s, the music publishing industry was producing some 600 titles per year, growing to 1,600 annually in the early 1840s and tripling to nearly 5,000 titles in the early 1850s. What was once a costly enterprise supported by the few who could afford music, became by mid-century a burgeoning trade dictated by broad consumer demand.

The accessibility of music for home performance was another important element that factored into its popularity over cultivated works. A point that reformers frequently failed to consider when championing “high art” music was the sophistication and training necessary for enjoying long expanses of complicated music, either in foreign languages or without the guidance of text at all. Regardless of the impassioned arguments for the moralizing benefits of the European canon, many average Americans could make little of the cultivated works, which they heard only infrequently, and often by inadequately rehearsed musicians. Conversely, parlor

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5 Ibid., 232, 234; Tawa, Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans, 20-22.
songs, or “ballads” as they are commonly identified, were far shorter than cultivated works and were more immediately approachable for concertgoers and amateur performers alike. Ballads—identified by their attractive and graspable melodies, simplistic accompaniments, and brevity—appealed to a broad base of listeners and could fulfill the immediate musical needs of a performing consumer. The successful American songwriter, George Root (1820-95) spoke for the industry as a whole when expressing his desire to touch the feelings of the “tens of thousands of people whose wants would not be supplied at all if there were in the world only such music as [critics] would have.”

Though these songs may seem aesthetically plain, their melodies and sentiments were composed of shared elements, and with minimal technical ability and perseverance, anyone could learn to perform these works for personal enjoyment or the entertainment of friends and family. Music that was immediately accessible to the performer, united with verse that asserted and confirmed values shared by a majority of Americans, resulted in a “people’s song” that could be enjoyed by all.

The Parlor Song

Parlor ballads published between 1800 and 1860 are characteristically strophic—consisting two to three strains of text set to an easily sung diatonic melody—undemanding on the performer, and issued with a bare keyboard accompaniment that could be reproduced without difficulty by the singer. The parlor song was ultimately text-driven, given that the primary aim for a performer was to accurately and clearly reproduce “the expression and sentiment” of the lyric.

Evidence indicates that considerations of a song’s key or even the written melody were secondary to the comprehensibility and nuance of the lyrics. One editor in the New York Musical

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10 Tawa, *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans*, 166.
*Magazine* even remarked that, “It is not sufficient to sing the notes of the song correctly… nor even to preserve the general style of the song […] but that the text should be studied, and each single sentence receives its appropriate expression.”¹² In order for each word to receive its “appropriate expression,” composers set the text syllabically in regular four-bar phrases, treated as antecedent-consequent pairs in eight-measure strains, with verbal stress and musical accents coinciding.¹³ As the carrier of verse, melodies were intentionally simple both to aid the amateur performer and to facilitate an inexperienced listener’s understanding of the text. Written for a limited range (rarely over an octave), songs proceeded diatonically by conjunct motion, by note repetition, or through easily sung intervals ranging from a third to no wider than a sixth, as can be seen in example 4.1, *Home! Sweet Home!* by Henry Bishop (1786-1855).¹⁴

Unifying rhythmic patterns and regularly repeating melodic phrases, such as those in example 4.1, were commonplace in ballads. Nicholas Tawa notes that these simple songs rarely failed to establish a unifying rhythm at their outset – nearly two-thirds of the songs he studied began with an immediate repetition of the initial four-measure melodic-rhythmic phrase and maintained the unifying rhythm throughout the piece.¹⁵ Melodic reoccurrence was also a valued characteristic of parlor songs, as can be inferred from contemporary accounts. In an article titled, “Song Writing,” in the New York *Euterpeiad*, the writer emphasizes that, “The most passionate of all music is where a beautiful passage is repeated, and where the first subject is judiciously

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¹³ Tawa, *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans*, 175. In most instances, only the words of the first stanza underlie the melody, and remaining stanzas, if any, were printed following the music.


returned to, while it still vibrates on the ear, and is recent in the memory.”

Thus, a regularly recurring melody provided heightened eloquence and clarity, as well as structural unity through repetition. Technical considerations also illustrate the value of reoccurrence – similar melodic phrases allowed a singer to anticipate the curve of the phrase structure and the sequences of tones.

Accordingly, chromatically altered notes were scarce in vocal melodies, and usually confined to the keyboard accompaniment’s prelude and postlude. A rather short introduction, the prelude either replicated or provided variations on the first phrase of the vocal melody. The postlude was often an even shorter conclusion to the song, consisting of the last half of the prelude’s music. Repetitive melodies and prevailing diatonicism required a firm harmonic design that was immediately recognizable by the performer to guide the singer and listener both through the work. The usual harmonic passage begins on the tonic and closes either on the dominant, or, following the punctuation of a strain, on the tonic triad as a full cadence.

Likewise, the written accompaniment reinforced a work’s tonality by limiting harmonic variety to the most basic chords – tonic, dominant, and subdominant – with only rare exceptions such as secondary dominants or sevenths. Aside from what little solo material was included in the keyboard prelude and postlude, the accompaniment was strictly subordinate to the voice,

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17 Tawa, Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans, 160.
18 Ibid., 170, 176-77. According to Tawa, “Approximately one fifth of the parlor songs are completely or almost completely diatonic. One half have no chromatic changes in the vocal melody, even while they are introduced into the keyboard part below.”
19 Ibid., 9, 170-72.
functioning mostly as a means of support rather than adding anything to the composition musically.  

Accompaniments for parlor songs were typically thin-textured, consisting block or arpeggiated chords and a treble part that either mirrored the vocal melody or that contained a repeating melodic figure, written such that the player’s hand position remained unchanged, making it manageable for performers who often accompanied themselves (see example 4.1). Even as the number of Americans who had access to keyboard instruments and music lessons grew, accompaniments that proved too complex or obtrusive were criticized by contemporary writers, who felt that amateurs would be off-put by their difficulty. The simplicity of these songs should not, however, be understood as a lack of creativity or general incapability of parlor song composers. Rather, limitations in harmonic variety, strict diatonicism, and melodic repetition allowed a composer to set forth a musical idea in the plainest means possible to achieve the broadest recognition and immediate understanding from their audience. Americans who enjoyed parlor songs related to the poetic themes of love, loss, or separation, sentiments shared by many in the country’s infancy. A great number of Americans in the nineteenth century had first-hand experiences of friends or family who had traveled across oceans or to the American West, sometimes never to return, and even greater numbers suffered familial losses through disease or childbirth. The true appeal of these songs were their ability to touch a listener’s emotions through familiar melodies and sentimental verse, presenting a tempered image of the harsh realities of nineteenth-century life.

21 Tawa, *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans*, 176.
**American Gentility and the Rise of Home Performance**

The spread of home music making in America during the first half of the 1800s also belonged to a larger trend of social aspiration, when the growing urban middle class began to embrace ideals of refinement and gentility as an extension of their new economic station. In his book, *The Refinement of America*, cultural historian Richard Bushman explains that between 1790 and 1850, a diluted form of “vernacular gentility” spread widely through the middle levels of society, and an increasing number of “middling” professionals – smaller merchants, well-off farmers, clerks, and managers – adopted genteel standards of behavior in an effort conform to a developing middle-class social identity.24 “Gentility” offered the hope that anyone, regardless of their occupation, could attain respectability and worldly advancement by adopting outward forms of discipline and conduct. However, ascending to gentility required effort. Elevated social standing came with expectations of acceptable manners, education, dress, and leisurely pastimes, all of which required intentional cultivation and a heightened sense of self-consciousness.25 The study of music was thought a particularly essential part of genteel education.

Before sheet music was widely available to all levels of society, home music-making was accessible only to those with the expendable income and time for leisure to cultivate it, thus, the study and consumption of music in the home affirmed a family’s claim to the virtues and “tastes” of gentility, as well as their economic station. Bound collections of parlor music from this time, often bearing the names of the young women and occasionally men who owned them, indicate that even if only for several years, many Americans between the ages 10 and 20 are known to

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25 Bushman remarks that self-consciousness, in this case, was literal. In assimilating genteel modes of conduct, the middle class was aware of their own actions and how they were perceived by others, making gentility as much a performative act as it was a code of conduct. Bushman writes that, “While improved taste and sensibility led to a more satisfying life…gentility always aimed to form brilliant and harmonious societies where people came together to perform for one another.” Naturally, with performance came criticism, so that the “performance” and criticism of gentility became a way of separating the lower classes from those who had gained respectability. See Ibid., xiv.
have studied voice, with the singing of parlor songs their principal objective.\textsuperscript{26} As an economically “non-productive” form of leisure, music making in the home – as well as the purchase of sheet music, lessons, and instruments – was a gesture of a family’s prosperity and refinement, a means of securing their identity as members of a higher social and economic class. Basic instruction in music was especially important for young, unwed women, whose ability to sing and play on the keyboard was considered a desirable skill to would-be suitors.\textsuperscript{27}

Along with assimilating new modes of education and manners, the transition to gentility also required significant changes in material environment – to elevate life to a higher level of beauty and grace required support from an environment that exuded “well-bred” refinement. People justified the purchase of luxury items – silver spoons, sets of teacups, and musical instruments – as a means of raising themselves in the eyes of their peers, and special importance was placed on the parlor, a beautified space set aside in the home in imitation of the aristocratic drawing rooms of the Old World. Parlor rooms became a necessity for a genteel household and were built and furnished to attest to a family’s social standing and ability to appear as polished beings capable of grace, dignity, and propriety.\textsuperscript{28} Cleared of beds and work paraphernalia, these rooms were dedicated to formal entertainment and the presentation of the family’s most decorative items – a physical space, separated from the workaday world, which stood for repose,

\textsuperscript{26} Tawa, “The Performance of Parlor Songs in America, 1790-1860,” 72; and Tawa, \textit{Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans}, 34.
\textsuperscript{27} “The Ladies’ Friend,” Boston \textit{Minerviad}, (30 March 1822), 22, quoted in Tawa, \textit{Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans}, 34-5. A particularly telling comment on the importance of music as a quality for genteel women is found in the Boston \textit{Minerviad}, where one unnamed writer detailed the qualities of a “fine wife.” After mentioning elegance, taste, gentle manners, and a cultivated mind, he continues: “She must love and cherish \textit{Music} above all other arts and sciences; she must have an ear attuned in a particular manner… [and] must have a voice which will charm the moon and stars, and when she sings her music must be such as will excite joy or grief, give pleasure and pain, and compose my disturbed thoughts after being out all night.” See also, Arthur Loesser, \textit{Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History} (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 137-138.
\textsuperscript{28} Bushman, \textit{The Refinement of America}, 251.
polish, and economically useless endeavors seemingly alien to an American culture centered on
industry and efficiency.

Recognizing the profitability of the middle-class desire for all things polished and
refined, the sheet music and piano trades scrambled to fulfill the demand for parlor music and
elegant instruments to play it. One might conjecture that the beginning of domestic American
piano manufacturing was a direct consequence of the new demand for musical instruments to
furnish parlor rooms.29 In the first two decades after the Revolution, nearly all pianos purchased
in the United States were imported from England or Germany. However, beginning in 1830,
piano manufacturers in Boston and New York adopted a durable, one-piece metal piano frame,
allowing firms to mass-produce and sell pianos more affordably in the United States, a trend that
continued throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.30 The profusion of new
pianos in the first decades of the nineteenth century should not be conflated with some great
artistic awakening among the middle levels of American society. One article titled “Piano
Fortes” in the Boston Euterpeiad from 1823 illustrates that owning a piano was often more
important than acquiring any particular musical skill:

Piano-Fortes are become so fashionable a piece of furniture, that no house is considered
properly furnished…unless one of these instruments, polished and gilded in the most
extravagant manner occupies a conspicuous place in the principle apartment [i.e. the
parlor]. In fact, from the numerous purposes to which they are appropriated, and the
innumerable uses to which they may be applied, they are now justly considered to be a
most important, if not indispensable article, to every family that makes any pretension
either to taste or fashion.31

Though the article was intended as a criticism of amateur musicianship, it clearly illustrates the
material function pianos served. Like mahogany tables, silver, and fine china, pianos were

29 Crawford, America’s Musical Life, 234.
31 John Rowe Parker, Boston Euterpeiad, 3 (February, 1823), 179.
expensive luxury items, purchased and displayed as proof of a family’s claim to “taste” or “fashion.” Gentility drew its strength from the stark difference between the “vulgar” and “refined,” affording a convenient identity and definition of social position to middling professionals struggling with the fluidity of nineteenth-century democratic society.

To become genteel was to separate oneself from the lower orders of society both socially through one’s behavior and materially through one’s surroundings. The widespread acquisition of luxury furnishings and other expensive ornaments, including instruments, reflects the middle-class preoccupation with appearing refined in the eyes of their peers and community. In this way, the piano served as much an immaterial, symbolic function as it did a practical one for those aspiring to a higher class. The author continues:

The Piano-forte is a badge of gentility, being the only thing that distinguishes “Decent People” from the lower and less distinguished kind of folks, known by the name of “middling kind of folks.” […] so those ambitious spirits that aspire to the elevated rank and imposing title of “Quite decent People,” place a piano-forte in their parlors, to give notice that they belong to this useful class of society, as well as to beautify the room by so superb an ornament.  

The statement exposes a dominant motive behind the purchase and use of pianos: the concrete social benefits of refinement. Bushman emphasizes that, “[gentility] was a resource for impressing and influencing powerful people,” and, “all who sought worldly advancement were tempted to use refinement as a bargaining chip in social negotiations.”  

As a “badge of gentility” the piano and, by association, household music were physical and symbolic means to distinguish the upper class from the lower orders of the “less distinguished.”

To attribute the rise in amateur music making purely to social advancement would be a misleading oversimplification. Many did believe that there were moral and societal benefits to

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32 Ibid., 179.
33 Bushman, The Refinement of America, xviii-xix.
parlor ballads. The editor of the Boston *Euterpeiad*, John Rowe Parker, voiced his approval of parlor songs regardless of their musical merit, asserting that listeners were “strongly impressed with the ideas of love, fear, pity, or some other natural affection” by such songs. 34 Other contemporary writers agreed that simple songs with their “pure and moral sentiments” could be a driving force in the American democracy as a “means of informing and enlarging the mighty hearts of a free people.”35 Even Thomas Hastings, the New York musician whose early advocacy on behalf of cultivated music was a model for later reformers, concluded that parlor music promoted “moral principles, refined sentiments, and sympathetic emotions,” and that parlor songs, “humble as [they] seem, should not be neglected in a republican country.”36 Accordingly, publishers and composers of parlor songs seized on the growing demand for “genteel” music and began producing pieces that reflected and reinforced the principles and values shared by the majority of middle-class consumers – values centered on propriety, morality, and the idealization of emotion.37

**Parlor Song Themes**

Though the parlor ballad repertory only became more diverse towards mid-century, specific sentiments and themes predominate in music throughout the antebellum period, particularly themes of love and affection, estrangement or lamentation over death, and occasionally social criticism. By far the most popular theme in parlor ballads was affection, either between men and women, as devotion to parents and family, or as attachment to an inanimate object associated with a loved person. In his study on parlor songs, Tawa notes that

37 Tawa, *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans*, 38.
themes of love songs reflected the attitudes most Americans held towards marriage and love, which were thought of as “the bond which created enduring personal, family and societal relationships.” “With [marriage],” Tawa explains, “came the emotional security and feeling of permanency [the middle class] craved” in the tumult of nineteenth century America. Songs of affection in the period between 1790 and 1810 were typically pragmatic or light, touching on the gentler aspects of love. Works such as the anonymously written, “The Day of Marriage,” from 1803 revolve around the practical, rather than idealized, purposes of marriage. Recounting the events leading to matrimony, the song’s third stanza reveals the moral:

Three years have pass’d in mutual bliss,
So maidens do not tarry,
As single life is sure amiss,
So I advise to marry.
For was the time to come again,
To Church I wou’d be carried,
And truly bless the happy day,
The Day that we were married.

Beginning in 1810, songs of affection changed character and the sadder aspects of love came to replace the light-hearted themes presented in earlier song literature. As the separation between the roles of men and women became increasingly pronounced over the course of the nineteenth century, the focus of love songs shifted from “lovers united” to “lovers separated.” Governance and commerce, once centered in the home, were being concentrated elsewhere in the early 1800s and men spent more and more time outside the domestic sphere, leaving women to govern the home, manage household affairs, and raise children by setting examples of goodness and purity. The growing separation of sexes manifested in love songs on themes of leave-taking,

40 Bushman, The Refinement of America, 440-46.
rejection, or estrangement through distance or death. In songs of these types, lovers may say farewell, possibly with no expectation of meeting again, or have already been separated and a single lover remains to lament the loss of their beloved, as in songs such as “Remember Me” (1804) by James Hewitt (1770-1827) and Samuel Priestly Taylor’s (1779-1875) “Adieu Sweet Girl” (ca. 1806).

The theme of estrangement, dealing with alienation or physical separation of loved ones, formed another important category of songs after 1820. Tawa notes that estrangement from home or loved ones was especially appropriate a subject “in the decades of long and dangerous sea voyages, constant western movement, and young men striking off to seek their fortunes,” and that the romantic image of the “lonely wanderer,” full of anguish and self-pity, was a frequent subject.41 The themes of absence or separation from a beloved in these songs were especially pathetic in that they upset the important permanency associated with nineteenth-century personal relationships, robbing the song’s subject of the security and bonds found in their object of affection. Consequently, the popularity of elegiac songs or works on eternal separation and its miseries rose tremendously in the period before mid-century, becoming one of the most ubiquitous of all parlor song subjects.42 Much rarer than songs of any other type are those critical of contemporary society or politics. Though examples do exist, they are from a limited number of American composers and performers between 1830 and the Civil War, and deal with subjects such as temperance, the cruelties of slavery, women’s rights, or society’s mistreatment of American Indians.

41 Tawa, *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans*, 131-32.
42 *Ibid*, 133.
Irish Melodies (1808) and the English Origins of American Popular Song

As with virtually all other musical traditions in the United States, the genre of parlor ballad had its roots in England. An astounding majority of the sheet music published in America in the first four decades of the nineteenth century originated in England, and what few composers were active in the United States between 1790 and 1810 were trained there and composed music concurrent with British tastes. In the successive decades, between 1811 and 1840, composers residing in America first emulated the musical and poetic language of British solo song, then appropriated these elements into a uniquely Anglo-American style. This period also saw the rise of the sheet music industry, a time when composers began translating the themes and imagery of European song to suit the tastes of their democratic customers. By mid-century, American singers and composers were traveling to Europe to perform their own works, and European songwriters were adopting the stylistic elements of Anglo-American music into their compositions.

The first parlor songs to gain major popularity in the United States at the turn of the century were the Scottish and Irish airs of the poet-composer, Thomas Moore (1779-1852). Moore’s first collection of Irish Melodies (1808) – the first of ten volumes published between 1808 and 1834 – became immensely popular on both sides of the Atlantic within a year of its printing. Unhindered by international copyright restrictions, American publishers on the east coast duplicated the first volume within a year and twelve of Moore’s songs appeared in the

43 Before 1825, when more Americans began buying sheet music in larger quantities and publishing became less expensive, publishing foreign music was more economical. Reengraving works and selling them without paying royalties was common practice for American music publishers until the passing of the Chance Act in 1891, a law that established limited international copyright protections to foreign artists. See Jon W. Finson, The Voices That Are Gone: Themes in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Song (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 12; Tawa, Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans, 110-12; Charles Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song in America. (NY: W.W. Norton, 1983), 23.
44 Hamm, Music in the New World, 173.
Boston Musical Miscellany by 1811. Ballads such as “Auld Lang Syne” and “Tis the Last Rose of Summer” rose to a level of popularity – the latter song selling over 1,500,000 copies by the end of the nineteenth century – that their language and character were instrumental in shaping the style and themes of American popular music for the next century. The popularity of the Irish Melodies was in part due to their musical character; Moore set his own poetic material to “traditional” Irish melodies, only making minor alterations when necessary to accommodate the new poetic material. The rustic and direct quality of the traditional melodies bridged the gap between the oral-tradition songs and ballads known by many Americans and the more “refined” genre of parlor song at a time when the sheet music trade, and the middle class, were in their infancy.

Though some found the “ancient” or “traditional” melodies familiar, many others considered them novel – contemporary accounts characterize the songs as “wild,” “irregular,” and even “barbaric” – however, Moore’s poetry resonated deeply with Americans across class lines. The dominant theme in Moore’s poems (as well as his letters, essays, and prefaces) was nostalgia – the romantic literary trend that suffused so much of nineteenth century American literature. In the Irish Melodies, nostalgia manifests itself through a contrast between the

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45 Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song in America, 46; and Broyles, “Music of the Highest Class,” 18.
46 Hamm notes that, “The Complete Catalogue of Sheet Music and Musical Works of 1870, a union catalogue of twenty large music publishers making up the Board of Music Trade of the United States, lists some thirty-three of the Irish Melodies still in print, some by as many as fifteen different publishers.” See: Hamm, Yesterdays, 46, 57-8.
47 Today, Moore is typically credited only as the author of the songs’ poetry – the “symphonies and accompaniments” are attributed to his collaborator, Sir John Stevenson (1761-1833) – but Moore thought of himself as a musician more so than a poet, a notion he defended in a letter to his publisher in England from 1824. Moore writes, “The choice of Air, the alterations in it (often so great as to make the Air almost my own), suggestions of the Harmony and accompaniments and, in short, all that gives character and originality to the music proceeds from me.” Thomas Moore, Thomas Moore to His Music Publisher, James Power, (the Publication of which were Suppressed in London), with an Introductory Letter from Thomas Croft Croker (New York: Redfield, 1854), 111, quoted in Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song in America, 47.
49 Unlike his English contemporaries, whose poetry focused objectively on people, events, and even emotions, Moore’s poems are written mostly in the first person (a romantic necessity) focusing on the subject’s internal emotional reactions to external situations. See Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song in America, 51.
subject’s idealized past and their dismal present. The anteriority of the happier past was reinforced in Moore’s songs through a folkish musical style, characterized by gapped or pentatonic scales (associated with primitive music) and folk-like melodic figures found in traditional Irish music. For instance, many Irish songs based on or suggesting a pentatonic scale include a leap to the octave at the beginning of a phrase, descend gradually to the dominant, and come to rest on the lower tonic at the end of the phrase, such as in “‘Tis the Last Rose of Summer” (see example 4.2). Other songs include continual leaps on specific words to convey emphasis, “Scotch snap” rhythms and drone basses (associated with folk or ancient cultures), or cadenzas on the penultimate line of each stanza.50

Moore’s songs achieved such wide and enduring popularity in the nineteenth century that the “Irish style” became closely associated with the nostalgic themes of the unobtainable, idealized past. Jon Finson notes in his study on nineteenth century popular song texts that even later composers such as Stephen Foster (1826-1864) drew on the folkish melodic shapes and ornaments of the Irish style to convey nostalgia for the unobtainable in songs like “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair” (1854) or “Ah! May the Red Rose Live Alway” (1850).51 One may question why themes of nostalgia were so eagerly embraced in a young, expanding nation

Example 4.2: Thomas Moore, “‘Tis the Last Rose of Summer,” (1808, rev. ed., Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1893), mms. 9–16.

50 Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America*, 55-6; Finson, *The Voices that are Gone*, 37.
with little in the way of a shared past; however, songs on the theme were at the center of American song literature up through the Civil War. One possible answer is that Americans, while sharing little of a collective history, all shared a sense of rootlessness, having left homes, friends, or families for a life in the New World.  

**The Influence of Sir Walter Scott and Italian Opera**

In the second and third decades of the 1800s, poets and composers in Britain turned to increasingly distant literary and musical resources to furnish their songs, and Americans naturally followed suit. The earthy and direct quality of earlier song literature gave way to a loftier, mock-aristocratic tone, utilizing an elevated poetic language and an Anglo-Italian style derived from English translations of Italian opera. Most of these songs revolved around the imagery and language of medieval chivalry, particularly in regards to courtship. The persistence of chivalric love songs was largely due to the popularity of the medieval romances and narrative ballads of British authors like Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. Scott’s epic poems and historical romances inspired an increasing number of musical adaptations on both sides of the Atlantic, and his texts were set as songs and librettos in both Europe and the United States. American composers addressed Scott’s works in both dramatic adaptations and in their original form. Hardly a year after their publication, adaptations of *Lady of the Lake* (1810), *Guy Mannering* (1815), and *Rob Roy* (1817) premiered on stage in New York and Philadelphia. Settings of Scott’s texts were even more common in parlor-song form, the heightened language and romantic imagery of gallant knights and beautiful

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52 Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America*, 54.  
53 Finson, *The Voices that are Gone*, 13.  
54 Ibid., 12-9. Scott’s works were especially important to the development of Italian romantic opera. Examples of continental operas based on the work of Scott include Rossini’s *La Donna del Lago* (1819) based on the narrative poem *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), Bellini’s *I Puritani* (1835), and Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) from the historical novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819).  
55 Ibid., 13.
maidens was a natural fit for songs on the popular themes of affection and love. Though songs on affection and courtship at the turn of the nineteenth century often employed pseudo-pastoral elements – a ubiquitous trope in the works of “pleasure garden” composers of the English tradition – Scott’s texts provided a more romantic image of courtship and equally high-flown language to express it.  

Although much of Scott’s work takes place in well-defined historical periods, parlor songs based on chivalric themes often referred to a fictional medieval England populated by minstrels, errant knights, and fair maidens. These songs depicted courtship in an elevated, mock-aristocratic manner, utilizing generic medieval imagery and archaic linguistic forms or “high speech.” Within the chivalric love song’s idyllic realm, men acted as crusaders of the outside world and women were passive objects of affection, separated from their beloved through distance or by physical means and rarely playing any active role in courtship. The elegance and heightened poetics of such lyrics demanded an equally refined musical style, which lay conveniently at hand in the form of Italian opera. As with the work of Scott, Italian opera came to the United States by way of England, which, in the 1820s, was experiencing yet another surge in popularity following the first English productions of Rossini in 1818. The first production of Rossini in America was mounted in 1825 by an English troupe led by the Spanish baritone Manuel Garcia, and was met wildly enthusiastic public and critical response.

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56 For a comprehensive survey of the music and composers of British “pleasure gardens”, see Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song in America, 1-25.
57 Finson, The Voices That Are Gone, 23. See also John F. Kasson, Rudeness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America (New York, 1990), 34-69. Though songs detailing the aristocratic rituals of medieval courtship seem incongruous with America’s democratic society, chivalric love songs came into vogue at a time when business was disengaging from domestic life and the separation of gender roles in middle-class urban homes became more pronounced. The distancing of public and domestic spheres brought about new expectations of conduct for middling men and women, and the concept of ennobled courtship invoked through the lyrics and music of these songs coincided with the idealized language and decorum of genteel romance.
58 Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song in America, 62-3.
59 Ibid., 64-5.
was never a broad base of support for foreign-language operas in the United States and only scattered performances of opera in Italian were given following Garcia’s group’s long season, but the allure of Italian melody was undeniable.60

Publishers recognized the wide market for songs based on operatic airs in the Anglo-Italian style and English editions of Rossini and Mozart, and later Donizetti, Bellini, and even Verdi, appeared in multi-volume collections and as individual numbers in numbers “equal to and even greater than earlier successful songs.”61 Though English adaptations were often shortened into more symmetrical song forms in line with Anglo-American taste, evidence insists that amateurs embraced the graceful curves of bel canto melody as well as the demanding vocal embellishment and florid passagework inherent to Rossinian opera.62 Translations of Italian opera brought to the parlor song a new source of grace and accessible elevation, and the elegance of bel canto melody, paired with opera’s aristocratic associations, made the Italian style an obvious choice for composers setting chivalric songs.

The Chivalric Love Song and the Anglo-Italian Style

The combination of medieval imagery and Anglo-Italian style spread widely in songs of courtship throughout the 1820s and 30s, and is exemplified in ballads like Charles H. Purday’s “Lay of the Minstrel Knight” (ca. 1832) and James Hewitt’s “The Knight of the Raven Black Plume” (1844) (Example 4.3). The lyrics to Hewitt’s “Knight of the Raven Black Plume” may allude to the “The Crusader’s Return,” sung by the Black Knight in Chapter 17 of Scott’s narrative poem, Ivanhoe (1820). However, the musical style emulates the operatic genre of the

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60 A discussion on the unfavorable attitudes towards foreign-language opera in the United States and England is found in Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song in America, 62-72; and Lawrence W. Levine, Highbrown/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1988), 85-104.
61 Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song in America, 76-77.
62 Ibid, 76. Hamm finds that in private collections, singers would occasionally add additional embellishments.
romanza, an aria in 6/8 compound meter typically employed when recounting tales of "olden times." The elevated poetics of Hewitt’s lyrics are ennobled further by the song’s melody, which neatly conforms to the arched shape of bel canto, beginning with a graceful stepwise ascent to the upper range in the first two bars of each sub-phrase followed by a graceful descent to the point of origin in the last. It would be an exaggeration, however, to suggest that all songs on courtship from the 1820s on appropriated mock-medieval themes; in fact, songs on the works Scott and his contemporaries represent only a fraction of the expansive repertory of parlor songs on courtship.


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63 Finson, The Voices that are Gone, 14, 21.
As early as 1820, songwriters began adapting the imagery of chivalric songs to better suit the tastes of the expanding urban market, taking the conceit of separation, not medieval romance, as their subject. The process of translating chivalric themes into “modern” terms represents the next phase of American song, when composers emulated familiar musical styles, but sought subjects that better reflected America’s developing culture. The lexical features of elevated speech, Italianate melody, and separation became standard ways to express yearning for the beloved, but the imagery of knights, ramparts, and damsels were replaced with more familiar topics – lovers were separated through social code, shyness (love unexpressed), physical distance, or death.64 It was at this junction in American musical history when lyricists and composers first turned to the Indian for their subjects.

**The Noble Savage in Parlor Songs**

The persistence of English musical and literary traditions in the first thirty years of American music history helps explain the belated engagement with the Indian as a subject of popular songs. However, Finson suggests that another reason for their absence was due to “the lack of a pervasive, coherent view of [Native American] culture (either positive or negative) [which] paralleled a lack of a consistent government policy towards them” during the first decades of nineteenth century.65 Michael Pisani reached a related conclusion, noting that Indian subjects only began generating interest during the Jackson administration in the 1820s, and songs on Indian themes may have come about as a reaction to the disastrous effects of Jackson’s removal policy.66 Though both of these hypotheses are important in explaining the emergence of “Indian” subjects in parlor songs in the 20s and 30s, they ignore the importance of the musical

65 Finson, *The Voices that are Gone*, 241-2.
public’s preferences in shaping the content of song literature. The tastes of consumers directed the sheet-music trade more reliably than any political or social cause, and song composers and publishers historically exploited fads, current events, or any other topic of current interest to boost sales. Motivated by a new concern for things “American” in the 1830s, songwriters began to draw on native subjects in much the same way as American authors and artists, appropriating themes that coincided with America’s emerging national identity – patriotic themes, romantic depictions of nature, technological progress, and America’s “folk” cultures.

As an identifiably “American” subject, the Indian seemed a natural fit for parlor songs. Additionally, the success of Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* in 1826 and the outpouring of Indian fiction that followed generated enough interest in Indian subjects to warrant their inclusion into the popular song repertory.

As with contemporary literature, these songs had little to do with the culture and history of the peoples they strove to represent, rather, representations of Native Americans in song conformed to the standard literary image of the “noble savage,” and fit comfortably within the musical idioms familiar to Anglo-American consumers. As opposed to the pluralistic image of Native Americans in Cooper’s works, lyricists and composers tended towards the primitivistic noble savage archetype, rarely focusing on the ignoble or war-like characterizations that

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67 Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 114. Pisani notes that and most of these songs were written and performed well after the period of eastern removal, an observation that lends more viability to the economic motive behind Indian subjects.


69 This was also the period which saw the rise of blackface minstrelsy, a countercultural movement which developed in the 1830s as a challenge to the aristocratic tone of chivalric “genteel” songs. See: Finson, *The Voices that are Gone*, 159-99.

70 Finson, *The Voices that are Gone*, 240, 252.

71 The lack of any “exotic” musical figures to denote the “otherness” of Indian subjects in music before 1850 may seem at-odds with the classical-era obsession with musical “topics” discussed in the work of Leonard Ratner, but the use of strictly defined “topics” fell out of vogue in the nineteenth century and were never used to great effect by American composers. See Michael Pisani, “Exotic Sounds in the Native Land,” 116.
occurred in poetry or literature. Indians never posed any threat in sheet music, the poetic texts favored more delicate and refined imagery, carefully muting the actualities of Native American life to appeal to “genteel” sensibilities. Indians became romanticized symbols of idealized love, nostalgic loss, or examples of society’s injustice, and lyricists tended to endow their subjects with the “red virtues” of beauty, courage, steadfastness, and fidelity. The strangely incongruous musical and rhetorical language that persisted in these songs also betrays an economic motivation for including Indians as a subject. Accompanying the superficial noble savage imagery was a seemingly incongruous, high-flown poetic language that simultaneously ennobled the Indian subjects while depicting them as historically distant through their rhetoric and grammatical construction. Though the figurative style of Indian speech was commonplace in literature, the texts of these songs share a closer relationship to the chivalric poetry of Scott, even as the style of courtly love songs fell out of vogue. Additionally, the music of these songs seems equally incongruous with their subject. In lieu of any distinct musical traits suggesting Native American subjects, composers conformed to musical traditions that had proved successful with musical consumers, particularly the Anglo-Italian style that pervaded songs from this period.\textsuperscript{72}

The adoption and persistence of this particular imagery, rhetoric, and musical language reveals the detachment nineteenth century audiences felt towards actual Indians, and reinforced the distance between the popular conception of Native Americans (engendered by literature) and their actual place in history during the first half of the 1800s.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 115. Pisani notes that before the 1850s, when American composers adopted European notions of nationalism and exoticism, composers did not sharply define the Indian as musically different from European society.

\textsuperscript{73} Finson, \textit{The Voices that are Gone}, 240-41.
Representations of the Indian in Popular Song

The texts of antebellum parlor ballads on Native American subjects evidence sympathy on the part of the songwriters; many authors seemed to disapprove of the injustices enacted by European and American civilization, though few had any meaningful contact with Native peoples or saw first-hand the effects of westward expansion. Rather than any outright protest, however, their songs focused on the emotional toll of expansion and resettlement through the eyes of the Native subject. Lyrics expose contemporary situations in which noble savages cannot adapt to western civilization, or they place Indians in a fabled, vanished land, a notion which coincides with the “historical anteriority” of the Indian archetype in literature and art.74 Lyrics are almost expressly from the Indian’s point of view and center around feelings of loss (for loved ones, their tribe, or their homeland), nostalgia for an unpolluted pre-colonial America, or indignation at the hands of white cruelty. In a significant majority of these songs, the noble savage is defined by a common set of traits: the subject is usually identified by title (e.g., Indian maiden, hunter, chief, etc.), he is defined in terms of place (e.g. “children of the forest”), and is identified by his skin tone (“dusky” or “dark” when compared to “the white man”). Additionally, the subject is typically associated with nature or described in analogous terms (another close parallel with literature) and is “innocent” or naive in their outlook and actions (devoid, here, of any war-like or “heathen” associations).75 As in Freneau’s poems or Cooper’s novels, Native Americans in music were likewise shown “benighted in the vale of ignorance” and positioned appropriately in relation to the dominating white civilization.

In one of the first Indian parlor ballads, “The American Indian Girl” (1835) with words by J. M. Smith and music by Charles Edward Horn (1786-1849), the contrast between the native subject and white civilization is expressed in a nostalgic lament. In a short epigraph preceding the song – a trait Finson refers to as a “minor cliché” of the Indian parlor song – the subject (in this instance, a young Indian woman) is asked if her “present situation and prospects” in a western settlement were better than her ignorant wandering “among the woods.” In an appropriate “strain of feeling and pathos,” the Indian girl responds with a plaint for the loss of her friends, family, and homeland. The lyrics, sung “with simplicity,” articulate her feelings:

O give me back my forest shade,
Where once I roam’d so blithe and gay,
Where with my dusky mates I stray’d,
In childhood’s blest and happy day.
They told me in the white man’s home,
I’d soon forget my woodlands wild;
And never wish again to roam,
The simple native forest child.

The song’s text casts the Indian maiden in elevated terms – she is not “red” or even referred to as Indian, but as a “dusky” and simple “native forest child.” The heightened poetics of the song’s text grant the Indian maiden an elevated nobility, but the she still appears as a “wild” other, meant to “roam” or “stray” in the “forest shade” of her “woodlands wild.” In contrast, Charles E. Horn suggests nothing musically wild about the subject whatsoever. In lieu of a musical language suggesting folk cultures or other “wild” subjects (for example, the “Irish” style), Horn instead creates a graceful Anglo-Italian melody supported by a delicate accompaniment in the genteel tradition (see example 4.4).76 The gently sloped vocal melody contains Italianate flourishes in profusion: appoggiaturas on the words “white” and “soon,” fermatas encouraging cadenzas at the end of phrases, and simple arpeggiated chords with hints of chromaticism at the

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76 Finson, *The Voices that are Gone*, 242.
juncture of poetic lines. Horn’s melody is carried along by a delicate accompaniment in 3/4, suggesting a courtly minuet.

In the second verse, the subject is assured by her supposed guardians that white civilization is better and that she would be happier without wandering in ignorance, but the woman takes no solace in their message:

They told me of a happier sphere,
Where, when the dream of life was o’er,
The cherished friends that I’d known here
Would meet me there to part no more!
I list’ned fondly to their theme,
As bright they painted scenes of bliss,
But vanish’d now is that sweet dream
And sadness broods o’er hours like this.

Though not stated directly, the “education” mentioned in the epigraph suggests conversion to Christianity – the “civilizing influence” that had formed the core of white policy towards Native Americans since colonization. However, when “the dream of life was o’er”, the “scenes of bliss” found in the white man’s “happier sphere” (i.e. heaven), holds no comfort for the Indian woman. The “cherished friends” of her happier childhood are lost, and even in death they are separated by the conditions of white religion. As the maiden contemplates her unhappy circumstances in the second verse, another incongruity emerges – there is nothing that suggests musically that “sadness broods” for the Indian maiden. The work is written in the F major mode throughout and, as was typical of a majority of parlor ballads, is strophic (the second and concluding verses are printed below the music). This absence of any affectual shift in the music to parallel the poetry seems like a missed opportunity on Horn’s part; however, Michael Pisani notes, “of the fifty-nine parlor ‘Indian songs’ and instrumentals published between 1835 and 1860 [in the major centers of sheet music publication […] only two songs and two instrumentals were

77 Ibid., 243.
composed specifically in the minor mode. The rest were all consistently in the major modes throughout."\textsuperscript{78} This figure would seem remarkable were it not a ubiquitous trait of a majority antebellum parlor songs; rather, it reveals that Indian subjects were treated no differently than any other topic. Indians were simply another figure, albeit a minor one, in the cast of “characters” that comprised the subjects of parlor song – an exotic stand-in for chivalrous knights or parted lovers.

In the third stanza, the audience hears both the maiden’s reply and what Pearce has called the “eternal truth” of the noble savage archetype:

Each rustling of the forest tree,
That’s wak’d by gentle zephyrs bland,
Bears in its murm’ring sound to me,
Some vision of my native land!
Then give me back my forest shade,
Where once I roam’d so blithe and gay,
Where with my dusky mates I stray’d
In childhood’s blest and happy day.

As a wild creature, the Indian woman prefers the “natural” climes of her forest home to the artificiality of white civilization. The delicate imagery of “gentle zephyrs bland” and the “murm’ring” of the forest trees reawaken her love for her homeland, and, when given the choice between assimilating into white society and meeting the same fate as her “dusky mates,” she chooses the latter.\textsuperscript{79} As in the work of Cooper and his contemporaries, the Indian was doomed when faced with the inexorable progress of white civilization, and though the Indian could be pitied, their fate was ultimately sealed.

The theme of Indians made unhappy by removal from their natural surroundings surfaces in a number of songs in the subsequent years – a fitting topic for the period that saw the

\textsuperscript{78} Pisani, \textit{Imagining Native America in Music}, 114.
\textsuperscript{79} Finson, \textit{The Voices that are Gone}, 212-13.
wholesale removal of Indian tribes east of the Mississippi. This theme reverberates in Isaac B. Woodbury’s (1819-58) “The Indian’s Prayer” (1846), which begins revealingly, “Let me go to my home in the far distant west/ To the scenes of my childhood in innocence blest.” Woodbury draws on similar natural imagery in his lament as J. M. Smith in his lyrics to “The American Indian Girl” (e.g., “tall cedars,” “bright waters flow,” “green willow’s shade,” etc.), and appropriates the stereotyped depictions of Native American life in describing his Indian subject. The most explicit portrayal of this theme is found in “The Indian Student” (1851), by the anonymous, “Mrs. L.L.D.J.”. In the song, the Native student rejects western learning as foreign to his nature (“I hate the antiquated halls;/ I hate the Grecian poet’s song”). Rather, he is formed for “nobler deeds” and in an elevated tone of proud defiance states, “your bell of call no more I heed, I long to see my native home.” These songs rely on the popular assumption that Indians were wild by disposition, not choice, and that their nobility was in fact a condition of their savage nature, the same assumptions that justified the removal policy.

The Vanishing American in Music

As Native Americans were forced west of the Mississippi during removal in the 1830s, “Indian songs” began to reflect on the romantic “vanishing Indian” trope that prevailed in American arts and letters. These songs typically took the form of laments written from the Indian’s viewpoint, a trait that often betrays the disparity between the lyricists’ and the supposed subjects’ perspectives. Though these authors are critical of the injustice of ejecting American Indians from their land, they still display Indians as essentially different from Western culture and destined to succumb under the advance of civilization. Some laments record the Indian’s progress towards extinction in a sympathetic light, for example James G. Clark’s “The Indian

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80 Finson, The Voices that are Gone, 245.
81 Ibid., 245-6.
Mother’s Lullaby” (1855). Written in the generic style of a European lullaby, the song first sets a scene in the wilderness where an Indian mother comforts her child. In the remaining verses, we learn of the tribe’s defeat in a heightened poetic tone:

Sleep, while gleams the council fire  
Kindled by they hunted sire;  
Guarded by thy God above,  
Sleep and dream of Peace and love.

Dream not of the band that perished  
From the sacred soil they cherished,  
Or the ruthless race that roams  
O’er our ancient shrines and homes.

Lyrics such as “the band that perished” and “the ruthless race that roams/O’er our ancient shrines and homes.” allude to the violence enacted on Natives by whites; however, the unalterable course of westward expansion is revealed in the concluding verses, leaving the mother only to grieve:

Could thy tender fancy feel  
All that manhood will reveal,  
Couldst thou dream thy soul would share  
All the ills thy father bears….

Though the Indian woman is portrayed sympathetically, there was no solution to her plight.

Other songs, such as “The Indian Warrior’s Grave” (1850) by Marshall S. Pike (1818-1901) reflect only on the final stages of extinction, a theme familiar to nineteenth century audiences from the multitude of songs on the subject of death or the departed. Though Pike avoids an outright operatic idiom in favor of a less adorned, American sentimental style (see example 4.5), he still elevates his subject in the song’s poetic imagery:

In the lone dell,  
While his wigwam defending,  
Nobly he fell

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82 Ibid., 249-51.  
83 Ibid., 251-2.
‘Neath the Hazel boughs bending;
Where the pale foe and him
Struggled together,
Who from his bow
Tore his swift arrow’d feather

The warrior falls and is buried, ironically, under a European-style grave:

Ere the next moon,
The bold warrior was buried;
And ere a moon,
His tribe westward had hurried;
But a rude cross,
With its rough chisel’d numbers,
Half hid with moss,
Tells, “the red warrior slumbers.”

The most succinct representation of the vanishing Indian trope in music is also one of the earliest, “The Indian Hunter” (c.a. 1837) by Henry Russell (1812-1901) with words by the young English poet, Eliza Cook (1818-1889).

Russell is viewed as a major figure in the development of the distinctly American sentimental style and is considered by many the most successful and influential American songwriter before Stephen Foster.84 Parlor favorites such as Russell’s setting of George Pope Morris’s “Woodman, Spare That Tree” (1837), or Eliza Cooke’s “The Old Arm Chair” (1840), exemplified the nostalgic themes and distinct musical language that defined American popular song after 1830.85 Born in England and trained in Italy, Russell immigrated to the New World in the early 1830s, where he garnered fame as a prolific songwriter as well as talented performer.86 The turning point in Russell’s career occurred in 1835 at an oration given by the politician, and

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84 Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song in America, 176-84. Hamm provides a brief but inclusive survey of Russell’s life, career, and influence on American music.
85 Ibid., 179-82.
86 Ibid., 176-7. Russell claims in his autobiography, Cheer! Boys, Cheer! (1895) that he befriended and trained with Rossini and Bellini sometime around 1825, and was acquainted with Donizetti and Michael Balfe (1808-1870). Whether this is accurate is questionable, however it was in Italy that Russell mastered the bel canto style that would be the hallmark of his personal compositional idiom. See Henry Russell, Cheer! Boys, Cheer!: Memories of Men and Music (London: John Macqueen, 1895).
rival of Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay. After hearing Clay’s fiery oration, Russell attempted to capture the electrifying passion and charm of the politician’s speech in song. Armed with some seventy-five odd works, including vivid melodramatic ballads such as “The Maniac” (1840) and mawkish sentimental songs, Russell toured widely throughout the 1830s and 1840s performing his own compositions in one man “olios,” or solo performances where he accompanied himself at the piano. Russell wrote five songs on Indian subjects over the course of his career (all between 1837 and 1846), and was one of few songwriters that could claim to have actual experience with Native Americans.

Sometime in the mid-1830s, perhaps inspired by Cooper’s thrilling depictions of the frontier, Russell wrote to the artist and proto-ethnologist George Catlin asking if he could accompany him West on a trip to Indian territory in hope of hearing “some charming specimens of original [Indian] melody.” Catlin agreed and the two journeyed to Cincinnati, where they formed a small party with some servants, then set out on foot towards the frontier state of Missouri. After six days travel, the group met a band of Missouri Indians, who welcomed them to their camp and performed several traditional songs at Catlin’s request. At the chief’s signal, Russell recalled, “the surrounding braves started to their feet and burst out with what I suppose they called song.” What hopes Russell had of hearing any “charming” melody were soon “dashed.” He was instead “disgusted” with “the uproar,” finding the Indian’s song “truly fearful” and dismissing it as “hideous noises.” Though the journey was certainly an adventure for

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87 Russell, *Cheer! Boys, Cheer!: Memories of Men and Music*, 54. Russell later wrote in his autobiography that the speech of Henry Clay, “affected me to a singular extent… I don’t think I should be talking extravagantly, if I declare that the orator Henry Clay was the direct cause of my taking to the composition of descriptive songs.”

88 *Ibid.*, 136-7, 150, 164. Russell was a fan of Cooper’s work, believing him a “distinguished novelist.” Russell makes several references to “[his] friend Fenimore Cooper’s delightful books” throughout his biography, and even stayed with Cooper at the author’s residence in Owego, New York (purportedly along with Longfellow, Cullen Bryant, and Epps Sargent) around 1838.

Russell, he later expressed that he regretted making the trip and tried to end it prematurely. Despite Russell’s discomfort among the Natives, the team remained several weeks while Catlin continued to make sketches. Admitting his disappointment to Catlin, the artist replied, “I am here to sketch Indians, […] I could have told you that none of the tribes have any idea of music, or have any melody.” Like many Americans living in the east, Russell’s conceptions of Native life (and music) were based on their depictions in popular literature, not reality. Disenchanted by his experience with actual Indians, Russell deferred to the popular image in his music – these were to be the Indians found in parlor song.

Upon returning from his journey, Russell came across a book of poems by the nineteen-year-old Eliza Cooke, where he found the text for “The Indian Hunter.” Russell setting of Cooke’s poem is exemplary in that it embodies the literary archetype composers relied on when writing “Indian songs” and connotes the degree of separation from actual Native Americans that musical consumers must have felt after 1830. Cooke’s poem is cast as a lament from the perspective of an Indian Hunter, a favored image in literature and poetry. In generations past, the Indian hunter figure represented courage and stubborn defiance in the face of adversity or death. For example, in Anne Home Hunter’s “The Death Song of the Cherokee Indians” (ca. 1780) – a Revolutionary era “classic” that held wide circulation in the United States up until the mid-nineteenth century. Hunter’s Indian subject (the “son of Alknomook”) is burned at the stake by his enemies, but demonstrates extraordinary courage in refusing to “complain” in the face of extreme pain. Later depictions like Cooke’s, however, take on a more pernicious tone, the Indian of Cooke and Russell’s song is not identified as a proud and stoic warrior, but as a homeless wanderer removed from his “habitat,” reliant upon natural resources he no longer has.

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91 Pisani, Imagining Native America in Music, 53-59.

freedom over and pursued by the white man (i.e., civilized progress). Musical manifestations of the “Indian hunter” trope in music began to represent a subset of the larger “Vanishing Indian” trope in American literature before the Civil War.

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92 Ibid., 95.
93 Ibid., 95.
The cover engraving of Russell’s song bears an image of the noble savage figure from Cooke’s poem, overlooking a Romantic panorama of the American wilderness with bow and arrow at his back.\(^{94}\) The first verse offers Cooke’s commentary on the injustice of Indian removal:

Why does the white man follow my path,
Like the hound on the tiger’s track,
Does the flush on my dark cheek waken his wrath.
Does he covet the bow at my back.
He has rivers and seas where the billows and breeze,
Rear riches for him alone;
And the sons of the wood never plunge in the flood,
Which the white man calls his own.
Yha—then why should he come to the streams where none,
But the red skin dare to swim;
Why should he wrong the hunter one,
Who never did harm to him. Yha—

Russell’s melody and accompaniment demonstrate his unique compositional style, blending Anglicized Italian operatic elements and the sentimental trappings of genteel song. As with Charles Horn’s setting of “The American Indian Girl,” Russell’s melody for “The Indian Hunter” is written in the graceful bel canto style, with conjunct and arpeggiated lines marked with a slight hint of chromaticism at the end of phrases (see example 4.56a).

Russell writes ornately for the piano with florid passage work in the piano prelude, postlude, and the brief interlude between the first and second vocal phrases (see example 4.6b). The song’s meter is a compound 6/8, with dotted rhythms suggesting the narrative romanza aria, reserved for fanciful or nostalgic tales.\(^{95}\) Russell’s effortless command of the operatic style is exhibited further in his use of Italianate ornamentation for the nonsense syllable “Yha—” in the last quatrain of the verse. The first is given a chromatic trill with a dramatic fermata on the

\(^{94}\) Finson, *The Voices that are Gone*, 246. Finson regards this image as “an iconic cliché.”
\(^{95}\) *Ibid.*, 247.
Prelude, mm. 1–8.

Interlude, mm. 9–12

Postlude, mm. 40–45.

penultimate note (see example 4.6c), while the last extends over a series of wide, rollicking leaps like a Swiss-style *ranz des vaches*, ending with an optional cadenza, “ad lib” (example. 4.5d).96


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Ibid., 247; Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 111. A *ranz des vaches* is a type of traditional Swiss folk melody, made up of continuous intervallic leaps. A characteristic example in art music appears as a flute and English horn duet in Rossini’s overture for *Guillaume Tell*. Other composers of “Indian songs” adopted Russell’s mimicking of Indian vocables, for example William Dempster (1809-1871) in his “Song of the Indian Woman” (1848).
Choosing the operatic style over an “Irish” or other folkish idiom was a deliberate choice by Russell, offering no hint that their “Indian” subjects were anything other than imaginary – a decision that demonstrates the incongruity between subject and style often made by “Indian song” composers. The text further reveals this disparity between the Indian persona and Cooke’s estimation of Indian character. In the second verse, Cooke expresses outrage about the hunter’s plight but insists on showing the two cultures as essentially opposite:

The Father above thought fit to give
The white man corn and wine;
There are golden fields where they may live,
But the Forest shades are mine.
The Eagle hath its place of rest,
The wild horse where to dwell;
And the spirit that gave the bird its nest,
Made me a home as well.
Then go back from the red man’s track,
For the hunter’s eyes grow dim.
To find the white man wrongs the one
Who never did harm to him.

Cooke’s lyrics are congruent with the general understanding of the differences between Indians and whites. The “white man” of Cooke's poem participate in husbandry while the Indian is confined to hunting. Along with farming, whites are associated with the “riches” of the “rivers and seas,” (i.e. fishing and conquest), whereas the Indians are wanderers who roam “the Forest shades” or daringly swim perilous streams. Cooke even makes several allegorical associations between the Indian and nature, a stereotyped trope used by American poets and authors (for example, “the Eagle,” “the bird,” and the “wild horse”). Cooke’s lofty poetics (“The Eagle hath its place of rest”) and Russell’s elegant Italian melody emphasize the subject’s nobility, yet he remains in arrested development and is thus “hunted” (i.e., conquered) by the “white man” (or western civilization).
This notion runs closely to the historical image of Native Americans that had developed over the first half of the nineteenth century. This school of thought held that the history of humankind could be divided into successive stages, epochs, or periods of human development, with Western society as its benchmark and all other societies ranked by their “stage” of development in relation to Europeans. The theory of human progress as it pertained to American Indians was treated extensively in William Robertson’s History of America, published in 1777, an influential source in shaping the comprehension of Native societies in the period of newly-won American independence. According to Robertson’s estimation (and seemingly Cooke’s), Indian societies occupied the bottom of the progressive scale and would inevitably succumb to the superiority of European civilization. Scholars studying Indians in the United States retained this view of progress until mid-century, when new intellectual currents like Darwinism and the social progress theory provided new support for the old ideas.

The Hutchinson Family Singers

The message that underscored Cooke’ and Russell’s song, that of progressive stages, found voice in other depictions of the Indian after 1830. As opposed to earlier “Indian songs,” the inevitability of civilization’s triumph over savagery became more and more explicit towards mid-century. For instance, John Wallace Hutchinson’s (1821-1908) “The Indian’s Lament” (1846), with “symphonies and accompaniment” by E. L. White, acknowledges the succession of civilization over savagery directly by addressing white industrial and military dominance. After hearing a performance by the prominent Swiss singing troupe, the Rainer Family, in 1842, John Hutchinson, the eldest son of the New Hampshire family of twelve, formed The Hutchinson

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98 Ibid., 33-61.
Family Singers with brothers Asa and Judson, and his younger sister, Abby. Billing themselves as *American* singers (as opposed to the multitudes of foreign virtuosos popular at the time), the group toured widely in the United States in 1843 and 1844, and had modest success in England in 1845.\(^9\) The Hutchinsons were strong advocates of social and political reform movements, often performing at anti-slavery and temperance rallies and donating their proceeds (which were substantial) to various reform groups.\(^10\)

As self-proclaimed “abolitionist entertainers,” the quartet performed original four-part harmonizations of hymns and glees as well as solo parlor songs on themes of temperance, anti-slavery, and other social causes like women’s suffrage. Several of the family’s works even made it into published sheet-music form, bringing the message of reform to middle-class parlors throughout the Northeast. For instance, Oliver Ditson, the most successful music publisher in New England in the nineteenth century, published “The Snow Storm” (1842) and “King Alcohol” (1841) in 1843.\(^10\) Though the family sang their own pieces, the Hutchinsons were particularly fond of the work of Henry Russell, whose oeuvre consisted of exceedingly sympathetic and sentimental tunes meant to pull at the heartstrings of his audiences.\(^10\) A number of songs in the Hutchinson’s repertoire, such as “The Maniac” (1840), on the abuses of insane asylums, and “The Gambler’s Wife” (1841), were by Russell and proved particularly successful.

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\(^10\) See Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America*, 147-61; Scott Gac, *Singing for Freedom: The Hutchinson Family Singers and the Nineteenth-Century Culture of Reform* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 9-10. The Hutchinsons were not the only “musical reformers” during the nineteenth century. Other groups like the Harmoneon Singers, the Bohannans, and the Orphean Family all performed temperance songs and other works on social reform, but never with the level of success as the Hutchinson Family. See: Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America*, 145-6; Gac, *Singing For Freedom*, 5; 149-64; Crawford, *Music in the New World*, 191-2.

\(^10\) After establishing their own reputation as performers in the United States, the family was able to meet with Russell in May of 1843 during his return from an English tour, where he praised the family for their ability and originality. See: Gac, *Singing For Freedom*, 149-64; Crawford, *America’s Musical Life*, 257.
with the liberal-minded genteel concertgoers of the Northeast, who enjoyed the message of moral uplift and edification.

“The Indian Hunter” was among the many works by Russell the Family performed – the unjust treatment of Native Americans being one of the Hutchinson’s many social callings – and in 1846, Brother John composed “The Indian’s Lament”, a musical response seemingly expanding on Cooke’s theme.\textsuperscript{103} Hutchinson’s lyrics are more exhaustive than Cooke’s, however, focusing less on the feelings of injustice over Indian removal (e.g., “Why must the white man follow my track”) and more on detailing the decline and eventual extinction of the Indian subject as a result of white expansion. Hutchinson first sets the scene in the Indian’s forested habitat, which is “swept away” by the “steel of the white man”:

\begin{quote}
Alas, alas, said the Indian I once had a home,
And a fair forest too, where the wild deer could roam,
Where the Sachem could feast on the festival day,
But the steel of the white man has swept them away
\end{quote}

Like the forest and game that succumb to “the steel of the white man” (referencing the unprecedented ecological changes that accompanied white expansion), so, too, do the Indian’s kindred fall under “steel” of white military force in verses two and three.\textsuperscript{104}

\begin{quote}
I once, I once has a father who watched o’er my youth,
And a mother who taught me the precepts of truth,
But their spirits have vanished, and cold is their clay,
For the steel of the white man has swept them away.

I once, I once had a sister, the pride of the vale,
And a brother whose features were ruddy and hale,
Who often would join in innocent play,
But the steel of the white has driven them away.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{103} Cockrell, \textit{Excelsior}, 137, 228; Finson, \textit{The Voices that are Gone}, 248.
\textsuperscript{104} It is interesting to note that the Indian subject’s loved-ones are described according to the typical stereotypes of the noble savage, for example depictions of the Indian maiden, “pride of the vale,” and the stoic father (perhaps an Indian hunter) “who watched o’er” the subject’s youth. Additionally, the subject’s brother “whose features were ruddy and hale” is identified by skin color, another identifying marker.
The loss of the subject’s loved ones is made all the more sympathetic by their characterization as “innocent,” a staple of the noble savage archetype that found resonance in nearly all representations of Native Americans in the “Indian songs” leading up to the Civil War. In this context, the “vanishing Indian” hunter in Russell’s song (representing Indians collectively) translates to the “wronged Indian” in Hutchinson’s and other Indian laments from the 1850s on. Edward L. White’s musical setting, written in seeming imitation of Russell, complements Hutchinson’s elevated poetic language but does little to forward the moralistic message of the song (example 4.7a). Like Russell, White casts his song in the compound rhythm of the romanza, and though the vocal melody is far less elegant than in “The Indian Hunter,” it nevertheless maintains the pretensions of the operatic style with opportunities for improvised cadenzas at the ends of vocal phrases.

White’s “symphonies” draw on some of the Italianate conventions found in Russell’s writing, for instance pianistic flourishes and hints of chromaticism, and, as in “The Indian Hunter,” there is little to suggest musically that the work is a lament. Set to White’s cheery accompaniment, the subject’s brothers in arms fall to white military superiority while defending their ancestral home in the fourth verse (example 4.7b):

And now, and now, where’s each warrior, each chieftain, and brave,
Who fought with such valor, their country to save
Why! the last dying echo was heard in dismay
For the steel of the white man has swept them away.

Each successive strain gradually drives to the inevitable conclusion and moral of the work in the verses five and six:

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105 Pisani, Imagining Native America in Music, 112.
106 Finson, The Voices That Are Gone, 249.
And I, and I stand alone as the last of my race
Upon this earth I feel I no more have a place
Since my home, friends, and kindred are driven away
For the steel of the white man, has swept them away.

And I, and I must soon follow, the Great Spirit calls
Me away to the land where the brave never falls,
To the bright blissful shores, and the fair forest shade,
Where the steel of the white man, will never invade.

With the loss of “home, friends, and kindred,” the Indian subject stands as the last of his kind, living an outdated cultural existence and doomed to extinction, like those before him, in the face of white progress. The conflict in Hutchinson’s lyrics does not generate from a literal battle between two civilizations (though verse five may suggest so) but as a conflict between white civilization and progressively stagnant native society. The Indian’s cultural backwardness, though ennobled by the poetry and music, was still “savage.” By nature Indians were an inferior race and, like wild animals that cannot adapt to changes in their environment would cease to exist. Hutchinson offers no solution to the plight of Indians, however. From the safety of the concert hall and middle-class parlor, songs like Russell’s “The Indian Hunter” and Hutchinson’s “Indian Lament” elicited the sympathy of genteel audiences, but also their resignation. The death of the Indian was a natural result of the progress of their own society and could only be accepted as such.

**The Decline of Native American Subjects in Vernacular Music**

What nineteenth century Americans saw as the tragic unavoidable demise of Native Americans is likely what led to the Indian’s most prominent role in popular song – as symbols of loss and nostalgia.\(^{107}\) As Native Americans were pushed from the margins of American society in the 1830s and 1840s into American history, lyricists appropriated the “vanished” status of the

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\(^{107}\) Finson, *The Voices that are Gone*, 255-56.
Indian, and musical representations of the Indian became more and more abstract. The remarkable success of the frontier romance genre likely gave some impetus to this trend, as examples from this tradition tend to emphasize the “legendary” element of the song in their customary introductions. As in the historical fiction from the time, the texts of these songs take place in a romanticized past, and unfold as a legend or fable on the particular subject. Thus in the preface to T. Ellwood and Francis Woolcott’s “Wenona of the Wave” (1855):

The daughter of a Dacota [sic] or Soux [sic] Chief named Wenona was betrothed to a young warrior of her tribe whom she did not love, but whom her parents would force her to marry. She fled from her home—followed by her lover, and reached [the precipice called “Wenona’s Bluff”]—telling him, that if he did not cease his pursuit she would leap over, which she accordingly did—he not willing to relinquish his bride—and met her death. The young brave wept, and as the Legend goes, the tears he shed on that occasion, made Lake Pepin.108

Not all of the symbolic uses of Native Americans were as expressly negative, however. For instance, “The Blue Juniata” (1844) by Marion Dix Sullivan (1802-1860).

Sullivan’s song concerns the love between the “bright” Indian maiden Alfarata and an unnamed warrior.109 The details of the lyrics are vague. Alfarata is a beautiful maiden, shown to live in the primeval forests along the beautiful waters of the “blue Juniata,” though otherwise there is little in the text but allusions to stereotyped “savage” imagery:

Gay was the mountain song
Of bright Alfarata,
Where sweep the waters
Of the blue Juniata.
“Strong and true my arrows are,
In my painted quiver,
Swift goes my light canoe
Adown the rapid river.

In the third verse, she describes her lover in a parade of natural allusions:

109 Finson, The Voices that are Gone, 261-62.
Bold is my warrior good,  
The love of Alfarata,  
Proud waves his snowy plume  
Along the Juniata.  
Soft and low he speaks to me,  
And then his war-cry sounding  
Rings his voice in thunder loud  
From height to height resounding.

But Sullivan cannot avoid the theme of loss – it was central to the historical and literary image of the Indian – and in the last verse, Alfarata is gone:

So sang the Indian girl,  
Bright Alfarata,  
Where sweep the waters  
Of the blue Juniata.  
Fleeting years have borne away  
The voice of Alfarata,  
Still sweeps the river on,  
Blue Juniata.

Finson writes that “‘Juniata’ became one of the most popular parlor songs of the nineteenth century, appearing in widely published anthologies as late as the beginning of the twentieth century.”

As the Indian’s popularity in literature waned, Native Americans likewise diminished in importance as musical subjects. The reprinting *The Last of the Mohicans* in 1851, the publication of *The Song of Hiawatha* in 1855, and the emerging dime-novel western kept the public engaged with Indian fiction, but their literary merit as a high-art form had been exhausted and composers and lyricists looked to other native subjects in their quest for profit. Additionally, the anachronistic musical style and archaic language characteristic of “Indian songs” was long been out of style in the parlor song repertory by mid-century, replaced by the lively syncopated melodies and dance-like rhythms found in the minstrel songs and sentimental ballads by Stephen

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111 Ibid., 221.
Foster. When Native Americans were evoked in music, their representations in song towards the end of the nineteenth century increasingly relied on stereotypes, cliché and superficial “Indian” imagery. The use of the Indian maiden as a symbol of beauty and fidelity lingered on in American popular song, but the character was reduced by the late-nineteenth century to an exotic and hyper-sexualized character in the overtly racist vaudeville theater tradition.\textsuperscript{112} Some music publishers appropriated “Indian” themes in dozens of musical parodies, such as Allen Dodworth’s “Black Hawk Quick Step” and “Indian Hunter Quickstep.”\textsuperscript{113} It is important to note that at the time that these songs were written and performed, thousands of Native Americans had already been ejected from the eastern half of the country. Written about eastern Indians, these songs could have easily applied to the tribes struggling to retain their autonomy in the rapidly-filling west. That they did not is characteristic of the genre of parlor song as a whole; vernacular music, though occasionally used as such, was not a vehicle for social change. Native Americans were a choice subject for their association with themes already popular with musical consumers. As the century wore on, Native Americans’ value as symbols became their only value.

\textsuperscript{112} Finson, \textit{The Voices that are Gone}, 266; Pisani, “Exotic Sounds in the Native Land,” 385-86.
\textsuperscript{113} Pisani, \textit{Imaging Native America}, 115.
EPILOGUE

Near the end of his life, Henry Russell penned in his autobiography:

The noble red man that one reads of in my friend [James] Fenimore Cooper’s delightful books, is fast becoming a thing of the past, and soon will be but a mere memory and a name. Even in my day the baleful influences of civilization were beginning to tell upon these wild children of the forest and prairie. [...] Thus is that, in the present year of grace, the noble red man has ceased to exist. In his stead, there still lives the degenerated, half-civilized Indian, whose days, like those of his erstwhile companion of the parries, the buffalo, are numbered.¹

Though written in 1895, Russell’s claim could easily be a summary of Americans’ fundamental misconception of American Indians in the first half of the nineteenth century. There never truly was a “noble savage.” The “noble red [men]” in Cooper’s books were literally a “mere memory and a name;” idealizations of Native Americans based on primitivistic accounts from the eighteenth century and crafted at a time when they were largely absent from the eastern half of the country. The “degenerated, half-civilized Indian” was perhaps more accurate, but only because that was the dominant perception of actual Native Americans in the nineteenth century – even the civilized Cherokees were described as such. Looking back at the historical and literary images of the Indian, we can see that this misconception of Native American life (and their “vanishing” status) emerged as a rationale for the decline in the American Indian populations in the years after the War of 1812. The Native Americans’ days were not “numbered” due to some fatalistic destiny or an inability to be “civilized,” but from the violence and destructive influences of whites.

With this mind, we can surmise why Native Americans made successful literary topics, as well as the role Indian literature played in white Americans’ understanding of the society they were creating. Several factors are notable: First, in the campaign over the materials for a national

literature, even the stingiest critics agreed that Native American subjects outmatched most
domestic materials in terms of substance, intrigue, and variety. This factor was especially
important when American writers shifted to Romantic models after the debut of Sir Walter Scott
in North America. Next, the outpouring of literature sentimentalizing the fate of the “vanishing
Indian” occurred during the 1820s and 1830s – when the policy of Indian removal was a subject
of intense and highly publicized debate in the newspapers and magazines available to the eastern
reading public. As a writer from the *American Quarterly Review* aptly put in 1832, “Since the
organization of our government, few subjects have arisen which have agitated the public mind
more violently or generally, than the controversy between the state of Georgia and the Cherokee
Indians.”\(^2\) It seems natural that the middle-class reader would take interest in thrilling tales of
noble red warriors and frontier adventure at a time when Native Americans weighed so heavily
on the public conscious. Most important, however, was that Indian fiction – with its pervasive
theme of savagery versus civilization – was a comfort for white Americans trying to make
intelligible their relationship to the Native American communities that were ejected from their
homes and forced west. In these tales, “bad Indians” were always defeated so that the white hero
and heroine could be reunited; “good Indians” either demonstrated their savage heroism and died
helping the whites, or lived on as the last of their noble kind. Whether good or bad, the Indian
characters (savagism) must die so that the white protagonists (civilization) may thrive in the
future. Filtered through a sentimental, romantic medium this plot affirmed the superiority of
civilization while suggesting that the death of Native Americans was inevitable, even desirable.

Though there were a handful of examples of art music inspired by Native American
subjects by Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781-1861), the Indian was more or less consigned to

\(^2\) *American Quarterly Review* 21 (March, 1832), 1, quoted in Lucy Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century
popular music. The debate over “musical taste” occupied the proponents of cultivated tradition for most of the nineteenth century, and there was little room to entertain a “barbarous” subject like Native Americans anyway. The sole aim of the sheet music industry was to reach the largest audiences possible, and composers and lyricists of popular songs took no issue in exploiting a subject already familiar to the middle-class parlor through literature and poetry. Even the way Native Americans were represented in parlor songs was familiar, evidenced by shared imagery (e.g. Indian maidens, woodland scenes, and Indian graves), rhetoric, and themes like the “vanishing Indian.” Though it is impossible to know the motivations of every songwriter, it is worth noting that a majority of these “Indian songs” were written and published at the height of the character’s popularity as a literary subject between 1835 and 1855 – indicating that even the sheet music industry (devoted to salability, not high artistic ideals) participated in the formation of America’s national culture during the first half of the nineteenth century.
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Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board

January 28, 2015

Jacob Somers
620 15th Street, Apt. #21
Huntington, WV 25701

Dear Mr. Somers:

This letter is in response to the submitted thesis abstract entitled "Representations of Native Americans in American Art and Popular Music, 1890-1920." After assessing the abstract it has been deemed not to be human subject research and therefore exempt from oversight of the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Code of Federal Regulations (45CFR46) has set forth the criteria utilized in making this determination. Since the information in this study does not involve human subjects as defined in the above referenced instruction it is not considered human subject research. If there are any changes to the abstract you provided then you would need to resubmit that information to the Office of Research Integrity for review and a determination.

I appreciate your willingness to submit the abstract for determination. Please feel free to contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding future protocols that may require IRB review.

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Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP
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