"Brought to the Zenith of Civilization": Indians in England in the 1840s

The family of George Catlin experienced the realities behind the Wyoming Valley massacre at firsthand. His grandfather escaped being killed by swimming the Susquehanna; his grandmother and mother were held prisoner for several weeks. These events helped to determine the direction that the young Catlin was to take. In *Life amongst the Indians* (1861), he recalls how, in 1806, when he was ten years old, he encountered an Oneida man, On-o-gong-way, on the lands around his family's home in this same valley. Although initially terrified, he began to converse with On-o-gong-way and came to see things from a different perspective. The man told the boy tribal stories, taught him how to throw a tomahawk, and described what it was like for an Indian to travel in contemporary America, “some hundreds of miles over a country partly of forest, and partly inhabited by a desperate set of hunters whose rifles were unerring, and whose deep-rooted hostility to all savages induced them to shoot them down whenever they met them in their hunting grounds.” Shortly after this formative meeting, On-o-gong-way, presumably journeying home, was found murdered.

This episode not only laid the foundation for Catlin's interest in the specifics of Indian cultures but also informed his subsequent understanding of the threatened position of the Indian in modern America. During the 1830s, he traveled west five times, painting and recording the life of the Plains Indians on their own lands, as well as witnessing the forced migration of tribes after the passing of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, and seeing the terrible effects of diseases, such as smallpox, on the lives of indigenous peoples. His paintings, extensive collection of native artifacts, and ethnographic writings were all underpinned by the belief that the race was persecuted, facing inevitable extinction, and that the opportunity to commemorate it should not be lost. Although he exhibited, lectured, and demonstrated on the East Coast—sometimes accompanied by Indians, sometimes not—his antagonism toward the way in which the U.S. government was treating its native inhabitants was very likely a major factor in his being unable to persuade them to purchase or support his collection. Short of funds, and led to believe that he would find a sympathetic audience in England, Catlin sailed from New York to
London in late 1839 with his collection of Native American objects, costumes, and some six hundred portraits and other paintings.²

**Catlin’s British Show**

The artwork illustrated the appearance, habitat, and customs of various tribes; the items on show included men’s and women’s robes, “garnished and fringed with scalp-locks from their enemies’ heads,” bows, quivers, spears, shields, cradles, calumets, tomahawks, scalping knives, war clubs, eagle and raven headaddresses, wampum, whistles, rattles, drums, and masks. Catlin rented the Egyptian Hall, in Piccadilly, set up in the center a Crow tepee made of twenty or more ornamented buffalo skins, and proceeded to mount what was initially a highly popular exhibition. The ran for two years before going on tour to Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, York, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast, and Dublin. Catlin was on the point of returning to the United States when the opportunity arose to add some live Indians to his show: first 9 Ojibwa (in 1843–44), then 14 Iowa, who visited Britain and Paris (1844–55), and then 12 more Ojibwa (1845–46), who, already in London, then traveled to Paris to join with Catlin there and to visit Belgium with him.

In his account of these years, Catlin relates how he and his Irish assistant, Daniel Kavanaugh, found themselves continually answering the questions of an inquisitive audience. Possibly, Catlin exaggerated the naiveté of the inquiries in order to play up the pioneering, and highly necessary, nature of his own enterprise. But as he tells it, the explanations often addressed some rather basic questions. Indeed, Kavanaugh hit on a plan of having a table painted with the answers to the most frequently posed queries. Some of these are culturally specific: the “Indians” are “not cannibals.” They do not scalp the living; they never eat the scalps. “There are no tribes that go entirely naked; they are all very decent.” But some of the responses are more general and, at the very least, suggestive of the perceived harshness, in the popular culture of the early Victorian period, of the fundamentals of transatlantic social and physical geography. “The Rocky Mountains are in America, between New York and the Pacific Ocean, and not in the Indies at all.” “The Americans are white, the same colour exactly as the English, and speak the same language, only they speak it a great deal better, in general.” Perhaps most surprising of all among these commonly required responses is: “You can’t come overland from America” (1:48–49). If this represents a considerable degree of ignorance about Catlin’s homeland as a whole, it suggests yet more strongly the relatively blank canvas onto which he projected his information and interpretation concerning native peoples.

The one significant source of ideas about the Indian with which a number of his British audience would have been familiar was the fiction of James Fenimore Cooper. First published in London by J. Miller in 1826, Cooper’s 1831 edition of The Last of the Mohicans—with the author’s notes—was brought out the same year by Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, with new editions appearing in 1834 and 1836. In 1838 Edward Raven- scroft published the novel in parts, which were then brought together in single-volume format. Clearly, Catlin capitalized on Cooper’s popularity. The question of “whether Cooper’s descriptions of the Red Indians were true” figures in the list of common inquiries (1:148); when the Iowa camped outdoors, he “advertised that for one shilling, ‘the public will have an opportunity of witnessing for the first time in Europe illustrations of the stirring descriptions given by Cooper in his celebrated novels, The Last of the Mohicans, Prairie &c.’”³³

Cooper’s dominant elegiac theme built, in both sentiment and cadence, on those tropes of Romantic poetry that sought to commemorate a fast-disappearing race. Early in The Last of the Mohicans (1824), Chingachgook famously and formally laments: “Where are the Indians of those summers—fallen, one by one, so all of my family departed, each in his turn, to the land of the spirits. I am on the hill-top, and must go down into the valley, and when Uncas follows in my footsteps, there will no longer be any of the blood of the Ságamois, for my boy is the last of the Mohicans.”³³ Cooper added a footnote to the opening of the second chapter in 1831, establishing a historical context for his readers by informing them of the confirmation known as the Six Nations and concluding, “There are remnants of all these people still living on lands secured to them by the state, but they are daily disappearing, either by deaths or by removals to scenes more congenial to their habits. In a short time there will be no more of these extraordinary people, in those regions in which they dwelt for centuries, but their names” (13).

The material exhibits were complemented by the lectures Catlin gave and by the appearance, in 1841, of his Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians, describing his travels in the United States and his firsthand knowledge of tribal lives. This book, published in London (a decision based on the lack of an international copyright law), was received sympathetically by reviewers. Above all, what they picked up on was that Catlin sought to memorialize what he feared were a people on the edge of oblivion: “to use their own very beautiful figure,” he writes in Letter 1, “they are fast traveling towards the shades of their fathers, towards the setting sun.” Celebrated in such terms, the Native American was unmistakably invested with some of the Romantic fascination with the idea of the Last Man, the possessor of an acute sensibility and capacity to register the beauties
of the natural world, but with no fellow being left with whom these separations can be shared. In considering the idea of vanishing races, Catlin had, additionally, a political point to make, with implications that stretched far beyond his own country. In a fully attended lecture at the Royal Institution on 14 February 1841, he not only made the case for a preservationist Museum of Mankind but also tied in what he had observed in North America to the dangers that colonizing powers in general presented to the native inhabitants of the lands they sought to rule, whether humans were exterminated through the bayonet through smallpox, or through whiskey and rum. He directly addressed the land that he was visiting and its spirit of expansionist enterprise:

Great Britain has more than thirty colonies in different quarters of the globe, in which the numbers of civilized men are increasing, and the native tribes are wasting away—that the march of civilization is everywhere, as it is in America, a war of extermination, and that of our own species. For the occupation of a new country, the first enemy that must fall is man, and his like cannot be transplanted from any other quarter of the globe.

However, in proposing that artists and men of science should be sent off to make records of disappearing tribes around the world, he did not dissent from the dominant view of his time: that extinction was, in the long run, inevitable. His speech had, indeed, a good deal in common with the essay “On the Extinction of the Human Races,” which the influential British ethnologist James Cowles Prichard had published two years previously; his latest version of his much worked-over argument that while all of humanity was descended from the same stock, different races developed and degenerated according to different time scales. And while in his address to the Royal Institution, and in further versions of the speech that he gave to audiences drawn from a range of literary and scientific institutions, Catlin stressed material causes, his theories were underwritten by the primary assumptions of extinction discourse, one founded on the premise of a progressive history of racial development, “with the white European, Germanic, or Anglo-Saxon race at the pinnacle of progress and civilization, and the ‘dark races’ ranged beneath it in various degrees of inferiority.”

As Patrick Brantlinger writes at the opening of his valuable discussion of the dominance of extinction theory in the long nineteenth century, such discourse, like Orientalism and other versions of racism, does not respect the boundaries of disciplines or the cultural hierarchies of high and low; instead, it is found wherever and whenever Europeans and white Americans encountered indigenous peoples. A remarkable feature of extinction discourse is its uniformity over other ideological fault lines: whatever their disagreements, humanitarians, missionaries, scientists, government officials, explorers, colonists, soldiers, journalists, novelists, and poets were in basic agreement about the inevitable disappearance of some or all of the primitive races. (1)

For his Royal Institution lecture, Catlin dressed up a couple of English people in native costumes, weapons in hand, and by 1842 the exhibition was amplified by his decision to introduce a couple of Englishmen in tribal gear so that they might bring the costumes to life, sing an Indian song, and give “the frightful war-whoop” — a gesture straddling the line between educational innovation and publicity gimmick. Nor did Catlin have any qualms about appropriating Indian identity later the same year when attending the fashionable Caledonian Ball at Almack’s, together with his nephew Burr and Charles Murray. Murray, a great supporter and facilitator of Catlin’s, was a recognized British authority on Indian matters, having published his Travels in North America, Including a Summer Residence with the Pawnee Tribe of Indians in 1839. From 1838 to 1844 he was master of the household at Queen Victoria’s court, and his family and social connections undoubtedly facilitated Catlin’s stay in London. The men dressed in some of Catlin’s finest costumes painted themselves up in red and black and experienced the excited crowd pressing in upon them; their identities were revealed only when they were called upon to dance and their war paint started to run in sweaty streaks. This experience in “redlining” may have given Catlin some partial insight into what it felt to be the object of intense curiosity, to have one’s personal space disregarded, and to be subject to street taunts. But he and his companions could retreat from their masquerade “and deliberately and leisurely . . . scour ourselves back again to our original characters.”

At first sight, this was hardly an option available to real Indians, although, as we shall see, the potential for masquerade did in fact work in two directions.

The poignancy behind Catlin’s overall message was intensified by the arrival in England of actual Indians. When nine Ojibwa, from Canadian territory, arrived in Liverpool in November 1843, they were unquestionably objects of spectacle. They were visiting England under the custodianship of Arthur Rankin, a Canadian who had been brought up on the borders of their lands and had served for six years in the British army. In part they were looking to speak to the queen on a local land issue; more generally, they hoped to earn money to take back to their families. Rankin came to an arrangement with Catlin, and the Ojibwa stayed with him for around seven months, forming a compelling part of his exhibition. As a Canadian, moreover, Rankin could write with some
authority when he contextualized the Ojibwa in relation to the country they were visiting; they belong, he wrote, "to a numerous and powerful tribe, which has ever been devotedly attached to the British Government." He emphasized—thus implicitly flattering the nationality of potential spectators—how much more favored these First Nations people were than their counterparts in the United States: "Those Indians who are fortunate enough to be within the British territories receive much better treatment, and the paternal consideration of our Government has led to a strong feeling of attachment on the part of these primitive people towards their 'Great Mother,' as the Queen of England is called by them." Following a falling out with Catlin, which pivoted on the question of the motives that underpinned the public display of these people, Rankin resumed his role as their manager; shortly afterward, when the fourteen Iowa Indians, under the sponsorship of the impresario George H. C. Melody, joined Catlin, they took on much the same role as the Ojibwa had done.

Figure 4. "A Group of Iowa" Unattributed photograph, frontispiece to William Harvey Miner, The Iowas (Cedar Rapids, IA: Torch Press, 1911).

Both groups performed dances and uttered "the dreadful war whoop" in the same rooms that his canvases and objects were on show, and both groups were, effectively, live exhibits, introduced and explained in lectures and in the question-and-answer sessions Catlin held. Whatever his anthropological motives, they therefore could not escape being regarded by many of the public in the same light as other shows of supposed freaks and curiosities, from Tom Thumb to African Bushmen to the Norfolk giants, who themselves visited Catlin's show and called on the Iowa in their lodgings, where the Indians—anxious that their reports of these physical anomalies would not be believed on their return home—took the giants' measurements with lengths of string. Yet despite this table-turning moment, one cannot deny that many responders to Catlin's Indians reacted as though they were just one more example of "ethnological show business." Viewing Catlin retrospectively, Charles West, director of the National Museum of the American Indian, has written of how he represents an "easy and large target," an "emblematic exploiter of native peoples... Taking his canvases, artefacts, and live Indians on tour to a host of venues, including European cities where the show's 'red men' inspired a familiar combination of awe and condescension, Catlin can be seen today as a cultural P. T. Barnum, a grizzled huckster trading on other people's lives and lifeways." Such a comment underrepresents the degree to which Catlin, despite his faults, seems to have been motivated by genuine caring not only for the individuals with whom he toured but for their tribal lifestyles, anxious to achieve an understanding of their ways of life, and not just to present a flashy, superficial stereotype. Nonetheless, he cannot avoid his position in a long line of those who displayed the Indian before the British people as an object of curiosity, albeit often, as in the case of the 1710 Iroquois visit, in conjunction with political motives.

Richard Hakluyt, in his Divers Voyages (1582), quotes from Fabian's chronicle that told of three Newfoundland men brought to Henry VII's court by John Cabot; they were wearing skins, eating raw meat, and "spake such speech that not man could understand them"—yet a very early example of assimilation is then recorded, since the account goes on to note that "two yeeres after, I saw two apparelled after the manner of Englishmen in Westminster palace, which that time I could not discern from Englishmen." In 1609 Walter Cope took some "Virginia men" to England, where they gave a demonstration of canoe handling on the Thames. To be sure, many visits combined the functional or diplomatic with elements of display. Mantco and Wanchese, Carolinian Algonquians, were brought back to England in 1584 so that they could teach their language to Thomas Hariot and return with him to Roanoke the next year. When Pocahontas arrived in England in 1616, accompanied by Ultramormakin, a leading man and priest among the Powhatan of the Chesapeake, she functioned as a kind of living advertisement for the Virginia Company, being received and entertained both by Queen Anne and the bishop of
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London; to quote Frances Mosaicer, she was "on the payroll and on parade." But increasingly, as their political usefulness to the British declined, Indians were thought of as entertainers rather than as emissaries. At the same time, their travels became increasingly multifunctional, as often they looked to earn money as well as engage in land rights negotiations. Thus the Seneca chief and six braves who visited England in 1819 appeared in theaters in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and London.

So the Indians who appeared with Catlin's show both were and were not a novelty. Even at the moment of the Ojibwa's arrival, there was a Sac chief, Joe Kosot (Walking Bear), in London. Nor—although one might think so from Catlin's account—did they remain a singular attraction. In May 1845 Maungwudaus, a cousin of the missionary Peter Jones, brought a group of eleven Canadian Indians, from the Ojibwa, Odeauwai, and Mississagee tribes, to London, where they appeared at the Egyptian Hall, before joining Catlin in Europe. Yet both at the time and in his subsequent narrative, Catlin's combination of showmanship and urgent rhetoric led him to present his visitors as creating a startling impact: he played up their visual and aural strangeness, and—a theme that would be insisted upon again in the publicity surrounding Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows later in the century—their irrepressibly of witnessing at firsthand a people facing extinction. To be sure, their presence in urban centers away from London must have been astonishing, especially to working people who frequently, in the 1840s, had only a hazy sense of the world that lay outside their own environment and origins. As they toured Manchester, the Ojibwa were all clad in skins of their own dressing, their head-dresses of eagles' quills and wild turkeys' feathers; their faces daubed with vermillion and black and green paint. They were armed with their war-clubs, bows and quivers, and tomahawks and scalping knives, just as they roamed through the woods in their country; and their yells and war-whoops, which were occasionally sounded in the streets at some sudden occurrence that attracted their attention, gave a new excitement amid the smoke and din of Manchester.

It is impossible to gauge, of course, how far Catlin was encouraging his companions to perform "Indianness." But the Indians' visit was not entirely a matter of their being placed passively on display. Their presence afforded the opportunity for different types of ethnological observation; Mr. Bally, a phrenologist, took casts of their skulls, which were presented to Catlin for his collection, with Bally himself retaining a copy. They had their photographs taken (photographs that, if they surfaced, would probably be the earliest surviving photographs of Native Americans). "The Indians," reported the Manchester Guardian, "were greatly surprised at the 'mystery,' by which portraits were obtained in so very short a time. We understand that the portraits were very good ones, the proverbial immobility of the Indians making them admirable 'sitters.' What is more, the experience of being in a new country—a modern, industrializing country—was designed to be educational for the Indians. In and around Manchester, they visited cotton mills and wool mills, receiving rolls of flannel and woolen cloth as gifts. We shall return to the problems of assessing the nature of such visits and of interpreting the Indians' responses; what needs to be noted here is that the press continually drew attention to the sensational impact they made on those who encountered them. "Their singular appearance excited much curiosity," reported the Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, "and the assistance of the police was required to prevent their being obstructed by a crowd of people, who pressed about them to obtain a sight of them. . . . In one large room, where 1,300 power looms were attended by six hundred and fifty girls, the girls were so astonished or affrighted at the appearance of the Indians, that they lost the broken threads for some minutes."

Yet it is also apparent that Catlin's enterprise did not go unchallenged. "Philanthropos," who claimed some firsthand knowledge of Indian tribes in both the United States and Canada, wrote to the Courier that while he had been gratified to visit "Mr. Catlin's most picturesque and instructive gallery," he also felt "a painful pity, in witnessing human creatures, fellow-men of superior manly form and carriage, with intellect in their eye and feature, and yet behave and act parts that were not above the nudes of little children." He wondered aloud if they were Christians, believing that if they were, they "would better know the dignity of their regenerated nature than thus to exhibit" themselves; if they were not, the blame lay at the hands of those who advised and superintended them. Later, in London, on the second night of the Ojibwa's appearance at the Egyptian Hall, Catlin himself recorded the presence of two protestors, one asking whether he thinks it is right "to bring those poor ignorant people here to dance for money?" and one who claims that he thinks it is "it is degrading to those poor people to be brought here, Sir, to be shown like wild beasts, for the purpose of making money." Making his defense, Catlin pointed out his friendliness toward "these abused and dying people," that he had personally always been opposed to the kind of exhibition described, that these Indians were subjects of the queen who had voluntarily entered into a contractual engagement with the man who had brought them over, and that they were trying by honest means to earn a little money to take back to their children.

The existence of such protests indicates the sensitivity of certain members of the public to the Indians' human rights and to the possibility that
they were being exploited for financial ends. Such concerns about anthropological display were not new in England. They had been voiced when Saartjie Baartman, the San woman commonly known as the Hottentot Venus, was exhibited in London in 1810-11, and here not just the fact of display, but the fact that she appeared to be kept in a condition of servitude was directly linked to Britain’s recent abolitionism.\textsuperscript{36} It is significant that humanitarian concerns should again be raised when the relationship of the Indians to Catlin, and the conditions in which they lived and traveled, were manifestly not as extreme as those which Baartman suffered. In both cases, however, there is an explicit or implicit connection to the politics of slavery. Indeed, a Punch cartoon of October 1842 brings out well the complex resonances of slavery and Indians when it came to signaling American national identity. Ostensibly, this cartoon shows a reluctant, somewhat taken-aback Britannia accepting the cup of peace (while noting the imminent threat of the dagger labeled “War”). The occasion was the treaty established by American Secretary of State Daniel Webster and the British foreign minister, Alexander, first Baron Ashburton, which established a clear borderline between Maine and New Brunswick in the northeastern United States, as well as settling some uncertain lines of demarcation in the Great Lakes region; it was notable as a land dispute settled by diplomatic negotiation, not violence. The United States, represented as an arrogant aggressor by Punch’s artist, is once again figured as a feathered Indian, albeit one with “savage,” rather than classical, features. However, around his waist—above the skirt made from the American flag—is a belt of slavery. Slavery is thus openly equated with the United States, but the drawing simultaneously conveys, whether deliberately or not, the potential for reading its native inhabitants as also bound to its national repressive practices.\textsuperscript{37}

There was considerable overlap between those who were active in antislavery issues and those who protested against the American government’s treatment of the country’s native inhabitants. Catlin’s Indians—and indeed Catlin himself—were, as they toured Britain, greeted warmly by those who had been abolitionists and were sympathetically interested in the lives of indigenous peoples. Quakers, in particular, with their long history of amicable relations with and toward Indians, were very keen on meeting the Ojibwa and the Iowas. What concerns me in the next section, however, is not the responses of those who were relatively well informed and humanitarily sympathetic, toward the visiting Indians, but the perception of the general public, as far as this may be estimated from Catlin’s account and from press reports. Above all, this throws light not just on the ways in which Indians were regarded but on the popular consciousness of race in the 1840s and, in particular, on the question of mixed-race liaisons.\textsuperscript{38}

**INDIANS, SEX, AND INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE**

Indian men were seen as sexy. This, at any rate, is the message one receives from the account George Catlin gives. On just the second night of the Ojibwa’s first public appearance, in Manchester, the good-looking Sah-mah seems to have made a notably striking impression. One lady tried to kiss him, and then,

The excitement and screaming and laughing among the women in that part of the room made kissing fashionable, and every one who
laid her hand upon his arm or his naked shoulders (and those not a few) got a kiss, gave a scream, and presented him a brooch, a ring, or some other keepsake, and went home with a streak of red paint on her face, and perhaps with one or two of black or green upon her dress. (1:119)

Similarly, in London,

Many ladies were offering them their hands and trinkets some were kissing them, and every kiss called forth the war-whoop (as they called it, "a scalp"). The women commenced it as Sah-mah had dashed in the crowd; and as he was wending his way back, finding it had pleased so well, he took every lady's hand that was laid upon his naked arm or his shoulder as a challenge, and he said that he kissed every woman that he passed. This may or may not be true; but one thing is certain, that many there were in the room that evening who went home with their husbands and mothers with streaks of red and black paint upon their cheeks, which nothing short of soap and water could remove. (1:168-69)

Prominent among the London fans was a woman whom Catlin labels the "jolly fat dame." On her first visit to the Indians when they were appearing at the Egyptian Hall, she affected to be on the point of fainting, sat on the edge of the stage, and realized that she could not see the main attraction from her position (and that the crowd was also looking at her wedged in a state of semisuspension as she tried to descend back into the enaakin ("Strong Wind," more frequently called by his French Canadian performers, Cadotte, by Catlin), and seated in the shadow of the stage, no one was back the next night (in stays and in her best poplin and lace dress), admired the young man with every breath she inhaled, and end of before her (1:163), and returned evening after evening. Nor was she the only one, and amongst them were several little billets of the most sentimental nature, containing enclosures of beautiful little stanzas, and cards of address, containing enclosures of beautiful little stanzas, and cards of address, Cadotte—of whom more later—after the departure of the Ojibwa, and the arrival of the Iowas, she had no difficulty in transferring her affection to them. Some of the Iowas, in their turn—especially the Medicine Man Semontiah—evidently thoroughly enjoyed playing up to the women and amongst them.

Figure 6. "Catlin's Indians in Egyptian Hall," in Catlin's Notes of Eight Years' Travels and Residence in Europe, with His North American Indian Collection, 2 vols. (London: published by the author, 1848).

What might we make of these responses? First, they evince a perhaps surprisingly unabashed capacity for the public expression of sexual attraction on the part of these early Victorian women. It is not altogether easy to place the audiences for popular displays such as these in class terms. Certainly, the novelty of live Indians was sufficient to attract interest. Catlin's accounts suggest that many were not highly educated, yet clearly they not only had the financial resources to pay the entrance fee of a shilling, but were comfortable giving away money, as well as bangles, pins, and other trinkets. The "jolly fat dame" was accompanied on at least one occasion by two maids. Yet if their behavior could hardly be considered seemly by the increasingly conservative standards of bourgeois respectability, its public nature ensured that it partook of the carnivalesque; if this is to be seen as a transgressive expression of libido, it's arena is a highly artificial one. It has something in common with the twentieth-century phenomenon of the something in common with the twentieth-century phenomenon of the.

Interestingly, Catlin's Indians were not the first to excite the longings of British women—at least if one puts any credence in the bawdy ballad of that Harry Howard wrote in 1765. On the occasion of the visit of three Cherokee chiefs to London on a mission to complain about the English
Indian girl for having saved the germ of the Saxon race in America through her passionate intercession, and then concludes with stanzas that reinforce nearly Catlin's emphasis on a people in terminal decline while incorporating echoes of Gray's "Elegy," which suggest that the contribution of the "unhonored dead" to a country is perhaps nonetheless worthy of record.36

Forgotten race, farewell! Your haunts we tread,—
Our mighty rivers speak your words of yore,
Our mountains weep on their sunny head,
Our sounding cataracts hurl them to the shore;

But on the lake your flashing oar is still,
Hush'd is your hunter's cry on dale and hill,
Your arrow stays the eagle's flight no more;
And ye, like troubled shadows, sink to rest
In unremember'd tombs, unpitied and unblest.

The council-fires are quench'd, that erst so red
Their midnight volume 'mid the groves entwined;

King, stately chief, and warrior-host, are dead,—

Not remnant, nor memorial, left behind:
But thou, O forest princess, true of heart,
When o'er our fathers' grave thy pity's dart
Shall in their children's loving hearts be shrin'd;
Pure, lovely star, o'er dark oblivion's wave,
It ne'er must meet thy name should moulder in the grave.37

In each of these instances, the conventional gender hierarchy mirrors the racial hierarchy: the cultural valence of both whiteness and masculinity is consolidated in the same figure. What happens when the pattern is inverted, and white woman is the subject of the attentions of Indian man? The dominant model here, of course, is the captivity narrative, which commonly works in two directions: white woman as victim—taken away from her family, raped, tortured, even murdered (the paradigm case is Jane McCrea, in Linda Colley's terms "a captive and slaughtered virgin, a war propagandist's dream")—or white woman assimilated, as epitomized by the best-selling Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison (1824); Jemison, of Scottish Irish parents, freely chose to live as a Seneca and was happily married to two successive husbands, despite acknowledging, in her terms, "my reduction from a civilized to a savage state."

The Quaker Mary Howitt, who published a number of pro-Indian poems in the 1820 and 1830s, offers a version of this pattern in her poem "Elia Gray," in which an escaped British soldier is rescued by someone he takes to be an Indian woman, but as he hears her singing a ballad in her
wigwam, he realizes she is English. Yet, despite being happy to pray with him, she has no desire to return, to be "rescued"; she is not completely domiciled among the family who took her in when she was starving and is "an Indian wife" and mother. While neither she nor Howitt is exactly exuberant about her situation, the overall message of the poem is one of Indian kindness, which deserves to be repaid with loyalty, and of the validity and strength of new family bonds. There is no hint of any unease at cross-racial marriage or at miscegenation; on the other hand, nor is there any hint of physical or emotional attraction.

Yet if one moves away from literary representation, or from the sanctioned, artificial space for the carnivalesque that the public display of Native Americans provided, the ways in which sexual attraction between the races was perceived shift dramatically. The infatuation of the "fond fat dame" with Cadotte may have been serious to her, but the very fact of its seriousness—combined with her physical appearance—allows Catlin to turn the woman, without too much cruelty, into a figure of fun, indeed, to treat her in a similar register of condescension to that in which he periodically writes of the Indians. However, when Catlin falls in love with an English girl, Catlin is dismayed. Daniel Ka-yanaugh had to enlighten his employer as to the cause of the symptoms of sickness the interpreter had been manifesting. Next door to the most beautiful black-eyed little girls that I have seen since I have been in London, and, by putting her head out of the back window, and looking at her by playing in the back yard, she long since showed to kiss her and to him, and throw him bouquets of flowers, and, at last, letters (1:179). She and her sisters, and then her father, mother, and brother, come in the lodging houses to visit, and Catlin in turn becomes smitten. The "black-eyed maiden"—Catlin does not name Sarah Haynes (her name is found in newspaper reports)—but refers to her exclusively by a ballad-like epithet—to visit the show nightly and at her performance, Catlin—a notable somatic effect on her beloved's appearance, Catlin acknowledges, cooly and awkwardly—but is the dry realities of Indian life, stripped of the delicious admixture which is it) (1:175–76). Indeed, his registers start to slide around in a most unstable fashion. His embarrassment is signaled by the ways in which he deploys racial and gender stereotypes—of the noble Indian, untainted by the point of parody, as though he is uncertain whether to convey horror or patronizing amusement.

The whole soul of the "Strong Wind," which, until now, had been unchained and free as the mountain breeze, was completely enveloped in the soft and silken web which the languishing black eyes, the cherry and pulpy lips, and rosy checks of this devouring little maid had spun and entwined about it. He trembled when he straightened his tall and elegant figure above the platform, not that he was before the gazing world, but because her soft black eyes were upon him. His voice faltered and his throat was not clear when he brandished his glistening tomahawk and sounded the shrill war-whoop. This was not that the ears of hundreds, but that the ears of ONE, were open to catch the sound (1:181).

Yet Catlin's opinions are entirely clear when he is dealing not, as it were, with romance, but with what he sees as something quite different: the practical implications of the liaison. He discusses the situation with Arthur Rankin and is less than pleased to find that Catlin has already asked for, and received, Rankin's consent in the matter of marriage: "I told him I thought such a step should be taken with great caution, for the young lady was an exceedingly pretty and interesting girl, and, I had learned, of a respectable family, and certainly not, whatever should be taken in the affair by him or me without the strictest respect to their feelings and wishes." Learning that the father remained opposed to the marriage, Catlin thought it would be cruel to do anything to promote it and that, much as I thought of Cadotte, I did not feel authorized to countenance a union of that kind, which would result in his spending his life in London, where his caste and colour would always be against him, and defeat the happiness of his life; or she must follow him to the wilderness of America, to be totally lost to the society of her family, and to lead a life of semi-barbarism, which would in all probability be filled with excitement enough for a while, but must result in her distress and misery at last. (1:183–84).

At this point in the narrative, the focus shifts from the imminent marriage to Catlin's own wrangles with Rankin about who, effectively, had the stronger claim to exhibit the Indians: Rankin, who was, from Catlin's viewpoint, an out-and-out showman, or Catlin, who, despite the accusations that he was using these native peoples for his own financial ends, took pains to stress the prime motive of anthropological interest. What does become clear is that Rankin wanted to make capital out of the results, announcing the hour and the day at which the couple were to be married in Saint Martin's Church, sponsoring a wedding procession with four-in-hand coaches and bands and generally drumming up a
To the last, the rhetoric surrounding the romance determinedly expropriated what it wanted from this singular story in order to satisfy its own generalizing ends. Hancock naturalizes the exceptional, making it fit a familiar norm—in this case, one in which, seemingly, sexualized attraction is seen, predictably but disastrously, to be stronger than the conventional dictates of racial difference. The specter of woman’s desire is made manifest through her apparently irrational enthusiasm for the Indian; this willful emotion is seen as symptomatic of a gendered weakness.

Was Carlin correct? Would Cadotte’s “caste and colour” have been against him in London? How was this mixed-race marriage seen? As far as one can tell, popular opinion—apart from being fascinated by the sensational element—sat in these nuptials a form of amalgamation that denigrated the woman, reducing her, and her offspring, to the level of the presumed racial inferior. This was not necessarily a result of her supposed subordinate position in the hierarchy of gender; cross-racial marriage was generally thought of as having a lowering effect. This can be seen by considering something that was rarely picked up on at the time: Cadotte, as his name suggests, was not pure-blood Ojibwa but the son of an Indian mother and a Frenchman “who had long been an interpreter for the English factories in those regions.”

As H. L. Malchow has explained, “in most areas of Canada, ‘mixed-bloods were treated as Indians rather than being enculturated as whites,’ and this enculturation and consuming of Cadotte certainly led him to be treated by the London press as unequivocally Indian, even if some of the more serious papers, in passing, noted his family background accurately. An interesting parallel may be drawn with the case of Eliza Field, the South London, daughter of the owner of a soap and candle factory, who in September 1833 crossed the Atlantic to marry the Mississauga preacher Kahkewaquonaby. Also known as the Reverend Peter Jones, Kahkewaquonaby, whom she had met while he was on a fund-raising preaching tour of England, was, like Cadotte, the son of a white man and an Indian woman. But the Welsh side of his ancestry seems to have made no difference to the reactions on either side of the Atlantic to this marriage. Despite the fact that Eliza, who came from a devout background, would be working on an Indian mission, friends and relatives opposed the marriage—her brother-in-law looked upon it “in horror.”

The New York Commercial Advertiser emotively attacked the union: “Many people have denounced Shakespeare’s Othello, as too unnatural for probability. It can hardly be credited that such a fair, beautiful and accomplished woman, as Desdemona is represented to have been, could have deliberately wedded a black moor as Othello. But if we ever entertained any incredulity upon the subject, it has all been dissipated by the occurrence of which we speak.”
Chapter Three

This offensive racism, together with a collapsing of all non-Caucasians into a repellant racial Other, cannot be explained away by transatlantic differences. For even if the serious London press was somewhat more respectful in its terminology, taking pains to emphasize that Sarah Haynes was a woman from a respectable background, the event was seen as an occasion for humor, at the expense of both Indians and women. Pynchon’s sustained piece of sneering manages to incorporate a reference to a growing social concern:

We have a superabundant female population. This fact is on all hands allowed and deplored. We see an easy remedy for this. Let parties of Indians be imported. Let us have samples of the Chippewas, the Dog, the Sioux, the Chactaws—indeed, a company of every tribe of wild men, from Hottentots to Greenlanders—and let them be let loose in our various towns for the sole purpose of captivating the heart, and so carrying away in lawful wedlock, our superabundant females.10

The laborious humor continued in the next week’s number, which contained mock advertisements purporting to be from other Ojibwas looking for wives. The blatant racism of these pieces is the more notable in the light of Pynchon’s sustained opposition to slavery, suggesting that the periodical found something especially ridiculous in the Native American that was not present in the African American. Very probably the Indians themselves had become tainted in England through being seen as part of what was commonly perceived as a commercial enterprise (and Rankin’s attitudes here did not help), with the consequent suspicion that therefore there was something bogus about their ethnicity.

Popular print shared in Pynchon’s deliberately careless racial homogenization. Two contemporary broadsides, in particular, provide vivid evidence of 1840s racial thinking at the level of street culture. In these two ballads, “The Ojibbeway Indians and Love” and “The London Lass and the Ojibbeway Indian,” several things stand out. First, there is a complete lack of any concern with the specificity of Native American culture. Racial Others are interchangeable: “His name is Nowka, Jiglenni, Ching;/Busco, Bango, Shy, Strong Wind,/Smitheren, Diego, Jiggle, Jum, Jar/Indeed, the dominant racial characteristics that are called upon are unmistakable African stereotypes: “A nose just like an orange ounce;” “Mouths as big as turnpike gates;” “And a great bounding run through their snout.” The overall Africanization of the stock printer’s block showing a crude representation of a dancing black man.

The second notable characteristic of these ballads is their insistent emphasis on the sexual. This is both personal, in the way the verse leers at Miss Haynes (“married without delay,/Unlo the cozy black and brown,/With his jiggling jiggio hanging down,/And in 9 months time will bring to town,/A little ojibbeway Indian” [lines 84–88]), and implicates women more generally:

The lasses all I do declare,
Around the Hampstead Road and Easton Square
Wives and daughters gay and smart,
Deep and wounded to the heart
In love with those great Indian blacks”

(Lines 5–9)

“The London Lass” goes so far as to prophesy a dismal future for the nation if this tendency should take hold:

Toward the end of Colonial Desire, Robert Young’s considered analysis of nineteenth-century ideas concerning hybridity, the author writes that “nineteenth-century theories of race did not just consist of essentializing differentiation between self and Other; they were also about a fascination with people having sex—intratable, adulterating, aleatory, illicit, inter-racial sex.” This fascination passed far beyond the theorizations of such writers of racial science as James Cowles Prichard and Robert Knox. But when we witness it in England in its vernacular form, the disgust and hatred are leveled not so much against these racial Others (although that certainly underpins the stereotyping) as against the women who dare flirt with them, desire them, even marry them, in a way that bears no resemblance to the decorous versions of inter racial romance offered in polite literature. The inferiority—to put it mildly—of the Indian is taken for granted; what is truly shocking to many commentators (and Catlin is not immune from an embarrassed equivo- cation on this issue) is that the presence of the Ojibwa in London sparked not just public curiosity but public displays of libido on the part of women. The most widely expressed concern that the presence of Catlin’s Indians stirred up in London was, ultimately, one about domestic sexual politics.

Ojibwa and the Social Conditions of Britain

There is plenty of evidence in the British press about how Catlin’s show and the Indians who appeared in it were publicly received in the 1840s. But how did these Indians interpret England? Our evidence is somewhat limited, since we must come largely from Catlin’s words, in the book he published about his years in England and Europe. To this may be added Maungwuda’s brief but significant account, written “for the benefit of
his youngest son, called Noodinokway, whose mother died in England.\footnote{52} What we hear of Indian voices in Catlin may, of course, be termed an act of ventriloquism.\footnote{53} But Catlin spent a great deal of time with them; he talked with them at the end of each day about their impressions of what they had seen—admittedly often through an interpreter, although he had a good working knowledge of their languages—and he set down their views in a manner that one may assume is an approximation to authenticity. This may seem a bold statement, but elsewhere in his narrative Catlin is very careful to record localized speech forms—distinguishing between Manchester and London working-class accents, for example—and my case is strengthened by the fact that he is not a polished, literary writer; he repeats himself, he rambles, and he has little sense of molding his material into an aesthetic, or even a polemical whole. To be sure, a certain condescension creeps into his presentation—he refers to their "rudeness, uncultivated minds," for example, when describing the impression made on them when they watched the opening of Parliament (1:173). We should acknowledge, too, the factor of linguistic hierarchy that comes into play precisely because Catlin does not attempt to differentiate between Indian expression and standard English, in relation to Franz Boas's records of Indian narratives, Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman have recently called our attention to language's use in "legalizing hierarchical relations between 'modern' and 'backward' or 'traditional' groups, societies and nations and in naturalizing social inequality within nation-states through assertions of cultural difference.\footnote{54} In conveying Indian voices, Catlin invariably makes them sound as though they think and express themselves in a simpler, more "innocent" way than the—by implication—more sophisticated product of Western civilization. He thus completely obliterates any trace of the verbal subtleties and suppleness of the Ojibwa language, a tongue charged with energy (almost four-fifths of its words are verbs) and full of evocative nuances. In 1850 the Ojibwa speaker and writer George Copway wrote how much more could be conveyed in a verbally condensed form, in his language compared with English: "It would require an almost infintude of English words to describe a thunder-storm, and after all you would have but a feeble idea of it. In the Ojibway language, we say 'Bet-bah-sam-moog.' In this we convey the idea of a continual glare of lightning, noise, confusion—an awful whirl of clouds, and much more." Moreover, sometimes Catlin suppresses information that would have allowed his readers to see that the Indians had already had, in some cases, considerable exposure to cross-cultural contact. Trading patterns that had been long established between the French, the English, and the Ojibwa, and the tribe had given military support to the British. One of the parties

\footnote{55} Pat-a-quah-wa-be-he, had fought on British lines, and been wounded, in the 1812 war. Although Catlin was happy enough to suggest the Ojibwa's primitivism to the British public, he was quick to respond, when the Iowas took their places, that there was something more authentic about these second visitors—a perspective that the public was happy to take at face value.\footnote{56} At their first appearance, they were compared with the previous group, and it "was proclaimed in every part of the room, that they were altogether more primitive in their appearance and modes, and decidedly a finer body of men" (2:11). He explained to them "that the position of this tribe being upon the great plains between the Missouri and the Rocky Mountains, 1000 miles farther west than the country from which the Ojibeways came, their modes and personal appearance were very different, having as yet received no changes from the proximity of civilization" (2:12). Yet such an introduction ignores the fact that Nequ-mopuya, the chief of the Iowa, had visited Saint Louis and Washington, D.C., to negotiate over land rights, let alone the fact that this particular group had already performed together publicly in, among other locations, Hoboken, New Jersey.

In reading Catlin's account, one is led to believe that he is introducing both groups of Indians to all aspects of white society for the very first time, and that they translated their impressions directly into their own, undiluted terms. Thus to see the smoke of an industrial city is to think the prairies were "on fire" (1:113, 129); the tunnel that is being excavated under the Thames is "the Great Medicine Cave" (1:152). And we also hear of the enthusiasm of the Ojibwa at the prospect of meeting their "Great Mother," Queen Victoria, and their disappointment at her short stature and the general lack of flamboyance at Windsor; of the Iowas' breakfast with the politician Disraeli and of their responses to such diverse attractions as a fox hunt in Yorkshire; Truman and Hanson's London brewery (where, to the astonishment of the workforce, they performed a medical dance in an empty vat) and the Surrey Zoological Gardens. When the Iowas encountered "the poor distressed and ragged prisoner, the buffalo from their own wild and free prairies, their spirits were overshadowed with an instant gloom; forebodings, perhaps, of their own approaching destiny," he hypothesizes Catlin, milking the moment for all its rhetorical potential (2:88). The Iowas exercised on Lord's Cricket Ground and during the summer from the Egyptian Hall to camp in that long-standing entertainment venue, the Vauxhall Gardens. Both groups were skeptical toward many of the well-intentioned clergy who tried to convert them, recollecting the double standards of missionaries whom they had known back home. We can see how Indian views of English sexual conduct were heavily, and unfavorably, reflected by their
prior experience of missionaries. As the Ojibwa Gisheegosheegew said on the occasion of a visit from the well-intentioned Reverend Mr. S—
town where I live, and told us the same words as you have spoken this
ing. He said that the religion of the white man was the only good
religion; and some began to believe him, and after a while a great
many believed him; and then he wanted us to help build him a house;
and we did so. We lifted very hard at the logs to put up his house; and
when it was done many sent their children to him to learn to read, and
some girls got so as to read the "good book," and their fathers were
very proud of it; and at last one of these girls had a baby, and not long
after it another had a baby, and the black-coat then ran away, and we
have never seen him since. My friends, we don't think this is right.
I believe there is another black-coat now in the same house. Some of
the Indians send their boys there to learn to read, but they dare not let
their girls go. (2:1)

Both the Ojibwas and the Iowa were decidedly more sympathetic to
ward Quakers. The Iowa frequently met with Thomas Hodgkin in Lon-
don, and members of the Society of Friends, very visible in their audi-
ences in Birmingham and York, also invited them into their homes.
However tempting it is to recount these many examples of cultural colli-

response that Catlin records: one of silence, and the other—toward English
social conditions—seemingly exceeding the engagement with "civiliza-
tion" that he himself wished his Indians to experience. When the Ojibwa
arrived in Manchester in November 1843, they were taken, among other
country, on a visit to the cotton mill of Mr. Orel, in the nearby town of
Stockport. "With his customary politeness," writes Catlin,
he showed us through it, and explained it in all its parts, so that the
Indians, as well as myself, were able to appreciate its magnitude and
its ingenious construction.

Upon this giant machine the Indians looked in perfect amazement;
though it is a studied part of their earliest education not to exhibit
surprise or emotion at anything, however mysterious or incomprehensi-
ble it may be. There was enough, however, in the symmetry of this
wonderful construction, when in full operation, to overcome the rules
of any education that would subdue the natural impulses of astonish-
ment and admiration. They made no remarks, nor did they ask any
questions, but listened closely to all the explanations; and, in their
conversation for weeks afterwards, admitted their bewilderment aston-
sihment at so wonderful a work of human invention. (1:121)

But how far, we may ask, did the visitors relate the fact that the cotton
mill was not "in full operation" to the unemployed whom they also wit-
tnessed on the streets of Manchester? Anxiety about the incendiary pot
of public gatherings was a major reason, according to Catlin, for the
police's dispersal of the crowds who gathered to watch the Indians
taking the air on their lodging-house rooftop. How far might this si-
ence also conceal their responses to the fact that, as Friedrich Engels
puts it in his Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844, "Stock-
port is renowned throughout the entire district as one of the dustiest,
smokiest, stinkiest hotbeds of the United States. Despite the arguments that I am making both in this chapter and
in The Transatlantic Indian as a whole for the degree of Indian critical
generation with certain aspects of life in industrialized countries, I am
pointing as well, to the importance of the unrecoverability of some im-
portant areas of these encounters: this silence may be read not so much
cased, stunned expression, or along the lines of Jean-François Lyotard's

The sense of privilege experienced by both groups of Indians who
toured with Catlin comes out well in his account of the Ojibwa's first
outing in London, where they
"The poor Indians, women and all, looked upon this miserable shivering object of pity, in the midst of the wealth and luxuries of civilization, as a mystery they could not expound" (2:135–36). Once again, in suggesting wide-eyed wonder, Catlin is trying to present these native people as naïve primitives, distanced from modern society, but he underlines his own rhetoric through the evidence he provides of the Indians’ very shrewd social and economic awareness of the way in which they found themselves. Also in Birmingham, handing over £721.16s, Senoniyah, the Medicine Man, speaking publicly, addressed his audience in very direct terms:

“My Friends,—If we were rich, like many white men in this country, the poor people we see around the streets in this cold weather, with their little children barefooted and begging, would soon get enough to eat, and clothes to keep them warm.

“My Friends,—It has made us unhappy to see the poor people begging for something to eat since we came to this country. In our country we are all poor, but the poor all have enough to eat, and clothes to keep them warm. We have seen your poorhouses, and been in them, and we think them very good; but we think there should be more of them, and that the rich men should pay for them.

“My Friends,—It makes us unhappy in a country where there is so much wealth, to see so many poor and hungry, and so many as we see drunk.” (2:143)

The Indians were determined, too, that the British should recognize how the host country was implicated in the causes of the Indian poverty that underlay their reasons for crossing the Atlantic to raise money, including the introduction of smallpox, venereal disease, and the sale of fire-water.”

The urge to document and understand British society, with its hardships and inequalities, is particularly noticeable in the case of one of the women, Jim (Wash-kotom-ya), who, profoundly shocked by aspects of what she witnessed, set out to look into these conditions in his own right. He mirrored the techniques of nineteenth-century Anglo social investigators and travelers by donning, with the Medicine Man, Western clothing in order to go out into London unobserved. From Catlin’s perspective, this dress—beaver hats, frock-coats, woolen pantaloons, high-heeled boots, gloves, and canes or umbrellas—enabled them to profit “by gazing upon the wonders and glories of civilization, which we never otherwise could have beheld together” (2:65). But in fact, this sartorial disguise allowed its Indian wearers not so much to greet British civilization with awe as to “pass” in order, ultimately, to critique its practices. Jim began

One might usefully juxtapose these accounts with descriptions given by British travelers to Indian settlements on the edges of Canadian and American towns, and the revelation they expressed at the drunkenness and degradation that they witnessed: the Indians visiting England, and particularly those from the East Indies, called Lascars. They are naturally, most probably like yourselves, too proud to work or to beg; but they have been left by some cruel fate, to earn their living in the streets of London, or to starve to death. And, poor fellows, they have appeared to be starved to death.” The Indians seemed much affected by the degradation that these poor fellows were driven to, and resolved that they would carry some money with them when they went out, to throw to them. (1:129)
to learn to speak and write English so that he could better carry out his inquiries. He had Daniel Kavanagh, Carlin's assistant, help him make a record book of all he saw; he kept statistics on poornesses, prisons, and breweries. He counted gin shops, keeping the score by notching a tally stick. He noted the annual consumption of spirits in Great Britain, the estimation that 50,000 "drunksapers die yearly in England and Ireland," and the attribution of much insanity, pauperism, and crime to alcohol.

He visited Carlin's "black coats," or missioners, who were always talking about Indians getting drunk (2:188). He collected newspaper clippings on issues that interested him, such as the petition to the queen, signed by 100,000 women, against a white slave-trading; he started to enter into his notebook the number of murders and robberies recorded in the Times and took notice of accounts of death from starvation. Amused by Punch, he suggested that they take out a subscription and try to pay for it with the numerous Bibles they were given by well-meaning British Christians. He visited a coal mine in the north-east of England, where he saw "six or seven hundred men, women, and children, as black as negroes," living and working underground; he thought that being in the détrors' cells of a prison would be far preferable to the slavery there saw, of "hundreds of women and children drawing out ... from some narrow places where the horses could not go, little carriages loaded with coal; where the women had to go on their hands and knees through the mud and water, and almost entirely naked, drawing their loads by a strap that was buckled around their waists; their knees and their legs, and their feet, which were all naked, were bleeding with cuts from the stones, and their hands also; they drew these loads in the dark, and they had only a little candle to see the way." (2:160)

Jim noted the Crown's expenditure, seeing how the apparatus of the state functioned: soldiers and police alike being necessary "to keep people at work in the factories, and to make them pay their taxes" (2:186). He said he thought it was wrong to send missionaries from this country to the Indian country, when there were so many poor creatures here who want their help (2:71). This was hardly a unique perspective. But the point about missionary work is rather different when made by an author than when Dickens protested in Bleak House that missionary effort would be better directed domestically than overseas.

Jim's views were very close to those that Catlin privately held. He wrote at some length to his father on 3 March 1842, saying that he was sick of the insolence of wealth and the wretchedness of poverty which belongs to this great polished nation, with its boasted Institutions—its wealth, its refinements, its luxuries—with its vices, with its incongruous mass of loyalty & disloyalty, Republicanism and Despotism—mixed & patched up together, soon to fall & crumble to pieces into the levels of Agrarianism, or the hands of Nations which will stand ready to prey upon the riches of the ruined & falling edifice.62

But Catlin's publicly expressed responses to these social investigations were decidedly equivocal. While he started off encouraging Jim in his note-taking, pleased that he would be carrying a record of the advanced modern world back to his people, the reportage did not equate with what he originally anticipated.

They had been brought to the zenith of civilization that they might see and admire in its best form; but the world who read will see with me that they were close critics, and agree with me, I think, that it is almost a pity they should be the teachers of such statistics as they are to teach to tens of thousands yet to be taught in the wilderness... I have long since been opposed to parties of Indians being brought to this country, believing that civilization should be a gradual thing, rather than open the eyes of these ignorant people to all its mysteries at a glance, when the mass of its poverty and vices alarms them... (2:187–88)

Quite possibly, he included the Indians' perspectives on urban life because they matched his own, yet he was not running the risk of offending the British by letting the observations appear in his own voice. Rather than his ventriloquizing them, he was, when it suited his purpose, letting them speak for him.

But we might respond to Jim's investigations somewhat differently. First, we can see readily that Native Americans, viewing England from their cultural and social perspectives, were in a position to challenge its contemporary claims to greatness. More important for my argument, however, and more important for Native American history, is the fact that these peoples were quite definitely not allowing themselves to be consigned to oblivion, nor to the status of the ahistorical and timeless. Their presence affords what Gerald Vizenor has called "an aesthetic, ideological disanalog" with the idea of a vanishing race.63 Jim's activities not only contradict the view that Catlin was promulgating about native people's being on the edge of destruction, and the alternative possibility for assimilation that was also being rhetorically and politically allowed for, but also show his engagement, on the part of his people, with the values of various societies in the present and future.
A further native perspective on 1840s Britain is provided by the Ojibwa Maungwudaus (George Henry). After converting to Christianity around 1825, he attended the Methodist mission school at the Credit Mission in the late 1820s and went on to serve at several missions in the bush, before moving to Walpole Island in 1837. Speaking fluent English, in 1840, the year he resigned from the Methodist church, he organized a dance troupe of Ojibwa men to travel to England in 1844. Like other Indians in London in the early 1840s, he met with Queen Victoria. He was kindly greeted and entertained by members of the Society of Friends, visited a public execution and performed the rite of a literary tourist, going to Shakespeare's house and grave at Stratford, Byron's Newstead Abbey, and "Burn's cottage, small, with straw roof" (8). He suffered personal tragedy during his visit: three of his troupe members died from smallpox (they had refused white man's medicine; the Quakers had seen to it that everyone else was vaccinated). Two of his children, and then his wife, also passed away. Joining up with Catlin in France, the overall impressions of the American's venture that he took away with him were not happy ones, either. Frank Little, who met Maungwudaus when he was at his family's general store in 1850, recalled that the Ojibwa chief had told him: "The Indians under Catlin did not thrive. They pined for their wigwam homes and natural woods. The artificial mode of living, diet, clothing, sleep, etc., preyed upon their health. They sickened and many died.” Little introduced him to Taundoqua, who was to become his secretary's wife; re-forming a troupe, they performed at the Saint Lawrence Hall, Toronto, in 1851.

Maungwudaus is a clear example of a First Nations member preferring to act—and being prepared to act—as an impresario for performers who are his own people; what we know of his life bears witness to the weight he gave to personal, and tribal, autonomy. His capacity to speak on his own behalf is also evinced by the short pamphlet he produced for his European visit. His words, unlike those of the other Ojibwa visitors, are not selected and framed by a white man's account. But many of the rhetorical devices he employs are quite similar to the ways in which their views were reviewed, although in his case there is a much more conscious sense that he is translating the culturally unfamiliar into terms that would make his experiences vivid to an Indian audience. He writes of the crowds in London like muskrats in America in the summer season, so are the people in the city, in their numbers, and biting one another to get at living” (3); the guardsmen in Queen Victoria's entourage do not shave the upper part of their mouths, but let the beards grow long, and this makes them look fierce and savage like our American dogs when carrying black squirrels in their mouths” (4); He conveys the height of Canterbury Cathedral's spire by saying that it was too high for their arrows to reach; explains how women hold their knife and fork at the table, "with the two forefingers and the thumb of each hand; the two last ones are of no use to them, only sticking out like our fish-spears, while eating” (5); and describes his visit to the medical school in Edinburgh: "We went to see about seventy young men, who are to be medical men. They had thirty dead bodies, and they were skinning and cutting them same as we do with venison” (8). While he did not draw attention to questions of poverty in the same way that Catlin’s Indians did, Maungwudaus did note, apropos of his visit to Ireland, that “the country people make fire of turf; many of them are very poor; the British government is over them” (8). Nonetheless, he gives a lively account of what we may take as an encounter with modernity, showing, as it does, the domestication of science and the shifting perspectives on physical existence offered by optical technology. In Ipswich, dining with Quakers, one of their number placed a small cheese on the table at the end of the meal.

When our eating was over, a doctor, whose name is F. W. Johnson, placed over the table, what he calls microscope; it had three brass legs and a small glass to it, and when he had put a very small bit of the cheese we had to eat on a clean plate, he made us look at it through the little glass that was on the three legged brass, and we saw hundred of worms moving in it. This made all our friends laugh, and we tried to laugh too, but we were very much frightened at the same time knowing that we must have swallowed thousands of them. When our friends saw that we were frightened, the medicine man dropped one drop of rain water in a clear glass, and he made us look at it again through the little glass, and we saw hundred of living creatures swimming in it; some like beasts, some like snakes, some like fish, some had horns and some had no horns, some with legs and some had no legs; some had wheels on each side of their bodies, and with these these were moving about like steamboats, hooking, chasing, fighting, killing and eating one another. Then one of our oldest friends said to us, "Now, friends, you must not think that this is the first time you have been eating worms. We swallow thousands of them every day either with food or water. They are floating in the air, and we inhale them when we draw breath; thousands of them are also floating in our veins. The Great Spirit, who made us and all other beings is wonderful in power and wisdom. We sincerely hope that you will at all times love him, and obey what he tells you in your hearts.” We waited two or three days for the worms to bite. Sometimes we would be looking for
then, thinking that they might have grown larger while they were in our bodies, but we did not feel their bites nor saw any of them. We have oftentimes been thinking since, that our friends must be some thing like bears, who loves to eat living worms or maggots. (10-11)

Here, as throughout his account, individual experience gains its importance not through subjective response but as something that may be shared through terms designed to reach a specific readership or audience, with its own familiar frames of reference. Native peoples are not the Other against which modernity is being postulated; rather, the modern world is being presented for them.

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Maungwudaus, like the Indians who traveled alongside Catlin, had been affected by a number of the features that we have come to consider characteristic of modernity. These include demographic upheavals and the concomitant severance of people not just from their ancestral habitats but from a sense of their traditional connections to both space and time; the expansion of their relationship to capitalist world markets and industrialization, including the growing tourist industry; their role as subjects, rather than agents, in the formation and development of a huge nation-state and their subjection to externally imposed bureaucratic rule; their relationship to the growth of the rhetoric of individuality (frequently a bad fit with tribal identity) and to the articulation of various freedoms, whether these involved self-determination, the ownership of property, or freedom of speech; and their subjection into systems of mass communication—whether we think of accounts of tribal life or warfare in the press or the ways in which they became the subjects of photographic records. One might fairly argue that since colonization, an increasing number of Native Americans had engaged, voluntarily or otherwise, with these phenomena in a way that impacted their lives during the nineteenth century involved unprecedented physical and psychic violence. Nonetheless, Maungwudaus's pamphlet is indicative of one particular desire to regain some agency within this changing order of things, producing, as well as being present within, print culture. Moreover, it—like the words of Wash-Ka-Mom-Ya and other Ojibwe and Iowa visitors—shows him, in terms of his interest in the British, to be reframing what Johannes Fabian has famously termed the "denial of coevalness," that is, the systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of the anthropological discourse. This chapter indicates, this was hardly a role universally inhabited by Native Americans of this, or indeed previous, centuries. Despite the importance, then and today, of tradition as both concept and practice within Indian society, identity, and modes of thought, it stands not isolated from modernity but rather in mediation and dialogue with it—a dialogue that takes place both in relation to material practice and to such things as the role of spiritual life and the place of tribal as against the primacy of individual identity. The Other, as has already been noted, was undergoing a process of transformation.

Yet assertion of the validity, even superiority, of their own ways of life also strongly characterized the reactions of these visiting Indians. They both participated in and critiqued developing forms of modern life, not just within their own nations and in the superpower that surrounded these, but in a broader social and political circum-Atlantic context. The availability of Indian voices brings home the fact that analyzing British responses to Indians in the nineteenth century is not merely a matter of interacting with a set of images and icons. Such an analysis involves taking into account the British engagement with these individuals, who, for their part, had every intention not just of surviving but also of entering into debates about the directions in which various contemporary societies were developing.