

**Safe Distance:**  
**U.S. Slavery, Latin America, and American Culture, 1826-1861**

by

Paul D. Naish

A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2011

© 2011

Paul D. Naish

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the  
Dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

James Oakes

---

Date

---

Chair of Examining Committee

Steven Remy

---

Date

---

Acting Executive Officer

Herman Bennett  
Gregory Downs  
Andrew Robertson  
Jonathan Sassi

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

**Safe Distance:**

**U.S. Slavery, Latin America, and American Culture, 1826-1861**

by

Paul D. Naish

Advisor: Professor James Oakes

This dissertation argues that in the thirty-five years before the Civil War, people in the United States used discourse about Latin America as a way to discuss slavery in the U.S. Through outright comparisons or implicit metaphors, they employed the Latin American context to say what was literally unspeakable when talking about slavery at home. Politicians stifled by Congress's gag rule, Northerners wary of offending their Southern neighbors, even proslavery partisans who countenanced no whisper of criticism of their own peculiar institution, all analyzed slavery south of the border without fear of censure.

At the time of Spanish-American independence, achieved just as the U.S. celebrated its fiftieth jubilee in 1826, many Americans looked forward to a future of shared republicanism and beneficial commercial relations. But during the widely-publicized Panama Congress debates of that year, Southern politicians insisted on the racial difference that characterized their neighbors to the south. By the 1830s, '40s, and 50s, U.S. citizens saw Latin America, however much it shared a history of European colonization and a population that included whites, blacks, and native peoples, as unquestionably the Other.

With chapters considering the work of early U.S. archaeologists, the fiction and drama of the antebellum period, William Hickling Prescott's *The Conquest of Mexico* and *The Conquest of Peru*, and proslavery analyses of Cuba and Brazil, this dissertation explores the purpose served by the perception of Latin American otherness during a period when open discussion of U.S. slavery was highly charged and polarized. Though proximate in geography, Latin America was remote in culture, language, and customs—a combination that allowed people in the U.S. to comment on conditions in their own country without appearing to do so.

At the same time, the disparagement of Latin America proved to be something about which everyone—Northerners and Southerners, Whigs and Democrats, scholars secure in their libraries and settlers vulnerable on the Mexican frontier—could agree. By creating a safe space onto which to displace anxieties about racial tensions, servile rebellion, miscegenation, and emancipation, discourse about Latin America helped to unify and reassure a nation whose sectional fissures were growing deeper.

## Acknowledgements

It is a humbling experience to try to make an account of the people who have helped me in this project, whether through their generous encouragement, challenging questions, or reassuring interest.

I have been very fortunate indeed in my advisor, James Oakes in the CUNY Graduate Center History Department, who can convey more substance in a few well-considered words than generally can be communicated with whole disquisitions. It was he who taught me what it is to be a historian and made me believe I might be one. When once I had the nerve to challenge him on a point, I looked up to see, instead of the scowl I expected, a smile spreading across his face. I realized, “Ah, this is what we’re supposed to do: historians make arguments, and defend them with evidence.” This project grew out of a wonderful comparative slavery class he taught in the spring of 2005 that led me to study the antebellum period.

The members of my dissertation defense committee—Herman Bennett, Gregory Downs, Andrew Robertson, and Jonathan Sassi—were generous with time and suggestions. Martin Burke and Dagmar Herzog presided over excellent seminars in which I developed early drafts of this project. The inestimable assistance of Betty Einerman in the history office smoothed many potential rough spots of my GC career.

I am very grateful to CUNY for the support I received from the Graduate Center in the form of University Fellowships that gave me the opportunity to work with Joshua Freeman and Thomas Kessner. The Benjamin Altman Fellowship provided most welcome assistance and a dose of encouragement as I finished the dissertation in the midst of a recessionary economy.

My parents, Paul William and Mary Reed Naish, instilled an interest in the past early. One of the great blessings of having older parents is that the past always seems remarkably proximate. My parents' recollections—repeated with new details and new emphases as I grew up—taught me about how the telling of history can change depending on its audience and the circumstances in which it is told.

Studying with an enthusiastic group of colleagues at the Graduate Center has been a particular joy. My U.S. history cohort—Jeannette Gabriel, Tom Harbison, Keisuke Jinno, Geoff Johnson, Carl Lindskoog, Vernon Lucas, Kate Mazza, Jim McGrath, and David Parsons—helped me get through a challenging first year with a camaraderie I had never before experienced in the academy. In the succeeding years, Tom and Carl and I helped each other over the hurdles of oral exams, proposal defenses, and numerous drafts of our dissertations. From the cohort a year after mine, Evan Friss and Gwynneth Malin provided invaluable feedback over a series of pizza dinners and turned the defense of this dissertation into a real celebration. David Gary, who keeps up with the current literature with a formidable zeal, sent me numerous citations for new books I needed to read.

While completing my degree I worked at Hines, a real estate development and management company with high standards of quality. My coworkers there were especially accommodating in allowing me a schedule flexible enough to take classes and teach. I am grateful to them all, but must particularly acknowledge Jenny Dharamsey, Ken Hubbard, and Jerry Watson.

I am blessed with wonderful friends who have enriched my life in ways they cannot imagine. From my years in Cincinnati I thank Jim Downie, Greg Fedroff, Dick and Janet Neidhard, Michael Schmidt and Laurie Hoppenjans, Kevin Shoemaker and Bill

Harris, and Sister Mary Timothea, R.S.M. Through my undergraduate years at Yale I am fortunate to count as friends Betta and Tom Fisher-York, Lenny Picker and Chana Thompson Shor, Arnie Sheetz and Jessica Bienstock, Jane and Cary Siegel, and Lengko Valsamis. From my years in New York I appreciate the friendship of Dorothy Chansky and Terry Bennett, Katrina Jeffries, Dan Opler and Yamuna Bhaskaran, Stacey Pramer, Eileen Lally Ross, and Ilyse Shechtel. That there are many others—in fact, more friends than I can count—is truly a source of wonder to me. I am sure I am neglecting many who should be included here.

When I was halfway through the third chapter, my brother, Matthew John Naish, died unexpectedly. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Kelli Adamczak, who took upon herself the task of settling his affairs, allowing me to proceed with this project.

The opportunity to teach at Lehman College enriched my graduate school experience—and this project—immeasurably. Timothy Alborn, the head of the history department and now the dean, was a source of constant support and good ideas. My students read some of the primary sources considered here (even acting out scenes from some of American literature's most obscure plays). Their sharp responses helped me see things I would otherwise have missed. Their perspectives—often so different from mine, but tenaciously held and vigorously defended—helped me to recognize assumptions and prejudices in myself of which I had not been aware. As historians, we work with the materials of the past—but my students taught me that history belongs to the present, and the future.

## Contents

Introduction  
**Surrounded by Mirrors**  
**1**

Chapter 1  
**Never So Drunk with New-Born Liberty**  
The United States and the Panama Congress of 1826  
**21**

Chapter 2  
**“Our” Aborigines**  
Making the Toltecs White, 1829-1848  
**82**

Chapter 3  
**What Happens in Latin America . . .**  
Literature, Latin America, and the Problem of Slavery, 1830-1852  
**150**

Chapter 4  
**Re: Conquest**  
William Hickling Prescott’s *History of the Conquest of Mexico* and  
*History of the Conquest of Peru*, 1843-1848  
**218**

Chapter 5  
**An Even More Peculiar Institution**  
Expressions of Southern Exceptionalism in a Hemispheric Context,  
1848-1861  
**284**

Epilogue  
**1861 and After**  
**341**

Bibliography  
**345**

## Introduction: Surrounded by Mirrors

In early 1830s, the issue of slavery in the United States became the subject of very vocal and very public contention. Uncompromising abolitionism and fervid proslavery rhetoric moved from nonexistence, or from occasional articulation on the fringes of public opinion, to open conflict. After a period of relative calm (which, as historians have recently pointed out, was not as quiet as is often portrayed), a series of events in rapid succession sharpened the debate. William Lloyd Garrison began publishing his virulent antislavery *Liberator* in January 1831. Nat Turner's rebellion roiled the South in August that same year. Abolition in the British colonies in the early '30s convinced many Southerners that their peculiar institution was besieged from without as well as within. For the next thirty years, with increasing vehemence, the United States rang with voices decrying and defending slavery.<sup>1</sup>

And yet during this period the opposing positions were so polarized that there was little room for casual inquiry or unheated debate. On the vast middle ground between the two extremes, many Americans kept quiet. Some preferred to avoid starting arguments

---

<sup>1</sup> These themes suggest the career of the historiography of the post-1831 period in a nutshell. Alice Dana Adams's *The Neglected Period of Anti-Slavery in America* (Boston and London: Ginn and Company, 1908) attributes to the charged rhetoric of William Lloyd Garrison the galvanizing of abolitionist thought and the provocation of the proslavery response. Later historians more attuned to issues of slave agency like Drew Gilpin Faust in *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981) have suggested the primacy of the Nat Turner revolt and subsequent Virginia debates that led to the hardening of proslavery attitudes. The recent transnational turn exemplified by Edward Bartlett Rugemer in *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008) demonstrates the U.S. did not exist in a vacuum; Americans watched and reacted to events in Haiti and the British colonies of the West Indies. In *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), Richard S. Newman cites the Second Great Awakening, "egalitarian rhetoric," and the redefining of women's roles in the public sphere as some of the causes of this newly vocal phase of post-1831 abolitionism (14). Finally, Robert Pierce Forbes in *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) argues convincingly that Adams's "neglected period" was a time of vigorous debate.

or giving offense. Some harbored doubts they would have considered it disloyal or even treasonous to raise. Some felt guilty or anxious about profiting from human bondage, or brooded uneasily about the expected results of emancipation.

In the thirty-five years before the Civil War, many Americans found an outlet for their doubts and concerns, fears and fascinations about slavery in the United States by talking about slavery in Latin America. Politicians in the United States discussed Latin American slavery even as implicit and formal constraints limited debates about U.S. slavery in Congress. Under a cloak of scholarly rigor, archaeologists posited theories about the origins of America's aborigines that helped justify the expansion of slavery into Texas and Mexico. U.S. novelists and playwrights—many of them publicly proslavery Southerners—presented fictional treatments of Latin American bondsmen suffering under tyrannical masters and planning rebellion when slave characters on fictional U.S. plantations joked and danced (when they appeared at all). The celebrated historian William Hickling Prescott maintained a reputation for rising above politics even as he inserted pointed critiques of slavery in his histories of Mexico and Peru. Proslavery analysts of Cuba and Brazil insisted on the superiority of U.S. slavery, fearful of the weaknesses they detected in Latin American systems of bondage. When they talked about Latin America, cautious and circumspect Americans of the 1830's, '40s, and '50s let down their guard and discussed slavery with candor.

In certain respects, Latin America served as the perfect metaphorical surrogate for its northern neighbor. Latin American republics shared many things with the United States: a colonial past, a heritage of relations with native peoples and African slaves, a hemisphere. With an emulation that could not fail to flatter the new U.S. republic, the

emerging Latin American nations had followed the example of their republican predecessor, fought for their independence, and copied their constitutions from that of the United States. Besides these similarities, the United States and Latin America had other points in common. Europeans and creoles of European descent shared territory with indigenous people, with black slaves and free people, and with admixtures of these races. Native-born Protestant Americans uneasy about the rapid influx of immigrant Papists shuddered at Cuba and Brazil as models of societies with Catholic majorities. Haiti and Jamaica offered some observers a preview of post-emancipation South Carolina or Mississippi.

On the other hand, Latin America seemed so different to many people in the United States that they could discuss aspects of slavery and race relations there without risking offense. The Spanish and Portuguese, with their long subjugation to the dark-skinned Moors, with their brutal Inquisition, with a system of slavery considered uniquely barbarous by those who subscribed to the Black Legend of Iberian cruelty, appeared very different from the European ancestors claimed by many white U.S. citizens. Latin America's casual race relations, unstable governments, and exotic Catholicism kept it at a secure remove from the U.S. A safe distance separated the United States from its neighbors, even, ironically, as the imperatives of Manifest Destiny compelled the United States to absorb more and more territory to the south.

The irony of geographical and historical proximity coexisting with cultural difference served the needs of Americans skittish about finding fault with their own country. By hiding behind a veil of discourse about Latin America, Northerners could criticize slavery without hazarding party divisiveness or even disunion. Meanwhile

Southerners could publicly express doubts about Cuban and Brazilian slavery that they would have considered disloyal to rehearse when talking about domestic bondage. Latin America, though geographically contiguous, was remote in culture, language, and customs—a combination that allowed Americans to comment on conditions in their own country without appearing to do so.

Through comparisons with other countries, the young United States defined itself. “Few things are more characteristic of the eighteen twenties, thirties and forties than the absorption with what was called the national character,” wrote William Taylor in his classic 1957 study *Cavalier and Yankee*. “Everywhere, but especially in states with a long colonial history, Americans exhibited an intense curiosity about themselves—what they had become and how they appeared to others.”<sup>2</sup> The concern about what other nations might say or think about the new republic led to inevitable comparisons to foreign cultures. England, the mother country of the colonies that ultimately became the United States, from which its inhabitants drew their language, their conception of freedom, and the basis of their law, was the major touchstone. France, England’s age-old enemy, which had followed the United States into the republican experiment, with less happy consequences as it lapsed into violent revolution, dictatorship, empire, and finally a re-established monarchy, provided a powerful but very different kind of comparison. Federalists admired England while Republicans—notably Thomas Jefferson—chose France as their *beau ideal*. The early parties slandered one another by applying the most reviled characteristics of these respective countries to their opponents—thus Federalists

---

<sup>2</sup> William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and the American National Character* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963 [1957]), xix.

reviled Republicans as dangerous Jacobins and Republicans condemned Federalists as would-be aristocrats.<sup>3</sup>

Just as they did with England and France, U.S. nationalists tried to understand their identity and national character by considering themselves in relation to Latin America, a region with which they had essential commercial and diplomatic ties, whose territory they traversed in order to reach the Pacific, in which they fought a major war. During the thirty-five years before the Civil War, between the jubilee celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of U.S. independence in 1826 and the year the Union broke into pieces, people in the U.S. cast the nations of Latin America in a variety of roles. The countries to the south were promising disciples following in the footsteps of the superior United States; a tarnished mirror reflecting clumsy attempts to imitate a superior U.S.; the lurid reality of nations in the thrall of Roman Catholicism; a cautionary example of democracy subject to foreign domination; a fertile field for mining, discovery, and conquest; “room upon the earth for honest men to live in;”<sup>4</sup> a safety valve, a refuse dump for the castoffs, usually human, that the U.S. did not care to house.

Americans talked about this area a great deal, and for many different purposes. A glance at a typical antebellum periodical—*Putnam’s Monthly*, *Graham’s Magazine*, or *The Southern Quarterly Review*—provides evidence of the frequency with which Americans referred to Latin America and the many situations in which they made these

---

<sup>3</sup> Andrew W. Robertson, “‘Look on this Picture . . . And on This!’ Nationalism, Localism, and Partisan Images of Otherness in the United States, 1787-1820,” *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (October 2001): 1263-80, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> A misquotation of Thomas Paine, this justification for the U.S. War with Mexico appears on the cover of George Lippard’s *Legends of Mexico* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1847). See Shelley Streeby, “American Sensations: Empire, Amnesia, and the US-Mexican War,” *American Literary History* 2001, 14.

references.<sup>5</sup> The century and a half since the early days of Spanish-American independence has obscured the unique, and pivotal, position occupied by this region in the antebellum imagination.

Considering the ways Americans discussed their southern neighbors illuminates and complicates many frameworks for understanding the early republic with which historians would do well to engage. Although slavery is the primary concern here, this project necessarily has implications for other historical perspectives of the U.S. in this period. Because slavery was so integral to the economy, diplomacy, and reform efforts of the first half of the nineteenth century, recognizing the role played by Latin America in the national imaginary raises new questions and suggests new approaches toward our understanding of the period. Thinking about how Americans displaced their anxieties and speculations upon Latin America clarifies some of the paradoxes of the Jacksonian era, reveals neglected aspects of the politics of Manifest Destiny, and enriches the modern picture of antebellum nationalism and transnationalism.

Latin America provided a staging area for dramas that people of the U.S. preferred to rehearse out of town. Here they tried out the 1820s the racial attitudes usually associated with Democratic politics of the 1830s. The Panama Congress debates of 1826, for example, included articulations of white arrogance and black unworthiness heard more loudly in the strident 1830s and '40s. Within this context, the challenges of absorbing a free black population became possible to imagine.

---

<sup>5</sup> The October 1851 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, for example, included a travel feature called "Lima and the Limanians," Herman Melville's "The Town-Ho's Story" from *Moby-Dick*, a review of Lieutenant Raphael Semmes's *Service Afloat and Ashore, during the Mexican War*, and political and commercial news from Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, New Grenada, Haiti, and Brazil. (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 3, no. 17 [October 1851]: 598-610; 658-665; 711; 696-7.)

Similarly, acknowledging that Manifest Destiny pushed south as well as west, absorbing the property of a fellow sovereign republic as well as the territory occupied by Indian tribes, necessitates a reinterpretation of antebellum expansionism. From this perspective the Texas land grab anticipates the imperialist ambition the U.S. would demonstrate in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the chauvinistic confidence in the rightness of U.S. approaches expressed by the rejection of foreign models is much more characteristic of twentieth and twenty-first century America than the apologetic inferiority complex the U.S. assumed in its comparisons with Europe in the early national period.

The most enduring and useful purpose to which Latin America was put during this time was indeed as a context for the open discussion of the subject that was often painful to talk about and sometimes literally unspeakable in mainstream discourse in the antebellum United States. There were many reasons for silencing conversation about slavery during a period usually understood as one of raucous debate. When the population of the South declined in relation to that of the North and its power in Congress seemed threatened, white Southerners understood the threat of allowing slavery to become the subject of discussion by the federal legislature: it had to be an issue for state control. “Congress *must not* be permitted to *express any opinion*, that slavery (which is the fundamental policy of this State) is an EVIL,” warned Robert J. Turnbull in the *Charleston Mercury* in 1827.<sup>6</sup> As Robert Pierce Forbes and Matthew Mason have recently shown, in the post-Missouri Compromise period, questions about human bondage were largely banished from the halls of Congress, or at least contained within

---

<sup>6</sup> “Brutus” [Robert J. Turnbull], *The Crisis; or, Essays on the Usurpations of the Federal Government* (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1827), 130. Quoted in Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise*, 224. Italics original.

tight limits.<sup>7</sup> Congressional discussion of slavery was further silenced when the topic was effectively “gagged” between 1836 and 1844.<sup>8</sup> But representatives and senators talked openly about slavery and abolition in Latin America.

Slavery was a volatile subject outside political discourse as well. Indeed, as Frederick Douglass noted, by 1830 “Speaking and writing on the subject of slavery became dangerous.”<sup>9</sup> Fears of another Nat Turner revolt made a crime of the mailing of materials deemed “incendiary” or “seditious.” Admitting the possibility of slave insurrection quickly struck at the foundation of many slaveholders’ insistence that bondage was beneficial to the slaves and, apart from a few troublemakers, they appreciated the security it provided. The dominant proslavery stance, insisting that the slaves were not merely patrolled but so content that they would not rebel, left little room for the articulation of doubts about white safety. Too much public airing of rebellion fears might lead Southerners to question whether the benefits of slavery were worth the eternal anxiety.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Southerners worried that too-frequent mention of slave revolts might somehow conjure these horrors into existence, presumably by awakening slaves to the possibility of their success.

---

<sup>7</sup> Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise*; Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> In Daniel Wirls, “‘The Only Mode of Avoiding Everlasting Debate:’ The Overlooked Senate Gag Rule for Antislavery Petitions,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 115-138, Wirls points out that although the House of Representatives’ prohibitions on the discussion of slavery was eroded by 1844, in the Senate the “gag rule” only met its demise in 1850.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Douglass at the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society in 1855, quoted in Amy Reynolds, “The Impact of *Walker’s Appeal* on Northern and Southern Conceptions of Free Speech in the Nineteenth Century,” *Communication Law and Policy* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 76.

<sup>10</sup> Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 357.

The issue of slavery tore at the unity of churches, dividing American Protestant denominations.<sup>11</sup> By 1857 the Baptists, Methodists, and New School Presbyterians had split into northern and southern branches.<sup>12</sup> It is no wonder that Christians interested in ecumenism chose to avoid the subject. When the so-called Businessmen's Revival, characterized by lunchtime prayer meetings held in urban settings, began in the wake of the 1857 economic depression, there were neither prayers for the conversion of merchants of human flesh, the success of colonization, nor the relief of bondsmen. One of its guiding spirits, Jeremiah Lanphier at the North Dutch Reformed Church on Fulton Street in New York City, was fabulously successful at attracting converts. He posted simple rules to facilitate the saving of souls: public prayer, interdenominationalism, and no discussion of slavery.<sup>13</sup>

For many in the North, slavery was a blot on the national honor to which it was impolitic to call attention; it was so unpleasant to think about that many people in the United States consciously avoided doing so. Harriet Beecher Stowe, of all people (referring to herself in the third person), was later to recall, "It was a sort of general impression upon her mind, as upon that of many humane people in those days, that the subject was so dark and painful a one, so involved in difficulty and obscurity, so utterly beyond human hope or help, that it was of no use to read, or think, or distress oneself

---

<sup>11</sup> In *A Republic of Righteousness*, Jonathan Sassi states, "No issue proved more divisive to the clergy's public Christianity than that of slavery." (Jonathan D. Sassi, *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001], 199.)

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 114.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Draper, "The 1857-58 Businessmen's Revival and Slavery, the Elephant in the Room," Paper delivered at the American Historical Association Conference, Boston, 7 January 2011; Kathryn Long, "The Power of Interpretation: The Revival of 1857-58 and the Historiography of Revivalism in America," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 77-105.

about it.”<sup>14</sup> Stowe would almost singlehandedly pilot the subject of U.S. slavery to the foreground of mainstream fiction in 1852 with the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. But before she put slavery front and center in her fiction, most American literature aiming at a mainstream audience kept slave characters on the periphery in the “plantation novel” tradition, where they bowed to their masters and joked merrily with each other. In stark contrast, plays and stories of the 1830s and ‘40s that depicted miscegenation and featured slaves pining for freedom, or taking measures to secure it, were generally set in Cuba or Peru.

Geography alone did not determine views about slavery. Southerners doing business, making purchases, attending school, and escaping sultry summers thronged northern cities and vacation spots.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, many Northerners knowingly or unwittingly profited from the dominance of cotton in the U.S. economy. Northern ships insured by northern firms bore cotton to northern factories capitalized by northern banks. Cotton had become the most important U.S. export by 1820, and accounted for half of all exports on the eve of the Civil War.<sup>16</sup> “Cotton thread holds the Union together,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson in his journal in 1846.<sup>17</sup>

Some of the most uncompromising opponents of slavery harbored guilty or simply unconscious doubts about black capability. A trip to the West Indies brought Julia Ward Howe, author of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” face to face with free

---

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Constance Mayfield Rourke, *Trumpets of Jubilee* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927), 101.

<sup>15</sup> See Michael O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 27 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank, *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005), 4, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, with Annotations*, Volume VII, edited by Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 201.

people of color whom she could not bring herself to consider her equals. “[Y]ou must allow us one heretical whisper, —very small and low,” Howe confided as she looked upon what she identified as the indolence and idleness of the population. The results of emancipation raised for her “the unwelcome question whether compulsory labor be not better than none.”<sup>18</sup>

A code of silence constrained the South as well.<sup>19</sup> “I wonder if it be a sin to think slavery a curse to any land,” plantation mistress Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut brooded in her diary just before the start of the Civil War. “[Abolitionist Charles] Sumner said not one word of this hated institution which is not true.” She went on to describe the humiliation of living “surrounded by prostitutes.” The paternity of every half-white child on a plantation was perfectly obvious to every female neighbor; only the wife of the master pretended blissful ignorance. “Who thinks any worse of a Negro or Mulatto woman for being *a thing we can’t name*.” (The editor notes that these words were written over an “unrecoverable erasure.” Apparently Chesnut could not name the thing even in the privacy of her diary.)<sup>20</sup>

Indiscreet visitors to the South were warned about the inadvisability of asking too many questions about the conditions they observed. Jane Cazneau, a fierce advocate of expansionism and a journalist who had worked as a war correspondent during the U.S.

---

<sup>18</sup> Julia Ward Howe, *A Trip to Cuba* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1860), 12; 13.

<sup>19</sup> William Freehling includes a particularly resonant discussion of the private hypocrisies—and torments—of Southerners who were unwavering proslavery advocates in public. See William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 27-58.

<sup>20</sup> Entry for 18 March 1861, Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut, *The Private Mary Chesnut: The Unpublished Civil War Diaries*, edited by C. Vann Woodward and Elisabeth Muhlenfeld (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 42. Italics mine.

War with Mexico,<sup>21</sup> met a British abolitionist aboard a steamboat bound for Texas in 1850. She found him a little too eager to point out that “[p]olitical equality and social amalgamation are twin sisters.”

I cautioned the stalwart *negrophilo*,—to borrow a word the Cubans have lately coined,—not to be rash in his arguments, for they might be misunderstood at the south, where it was a stringent necessity of self-preservation to suppress all discussions that could tend to unbridle the tiger that sleeps by their hearths.<sup>22</sup>

If Americans approached the subject of slavery with caution, foreign visitors to the antebellum U.S. extensively analyzed the peculiar institution—increasingly peculiar as slavery was increasingly shunned by the rest of the world. Many European travelers were particularly quick to point out the hypocrisy Samuel Johnson had so memorably characterized as the “yelps for liberty” emitted by “the drivers of negroes.”<sup>23</sup> The English actress Fanny Kemble, whose marriage to a Georgia plantation owner brought her face-to-face with the reality of slavery, in 1838 reproached an American friend that “this system exists here in this country of yours, which boasts itself the asylum of the oppressed, the home of freedom, the one place in all the world where all men may find enfranchisement from all thralldoms of mind, soul, and body—the land elect of liberty.”<sup>24</sup> Northerners suffered torments in the face of European excoriations.

---

<sup>21</sup> Linda S. Hudson, *Mistress of Manifest Destiny: A Biography of Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, 1807-1878* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2001), 6. Cazneau wrote many essays for the *Democratic Review*, and Amy Greenberg says it was actually she who coined the phrase “Manifest Destiny.” (Amy S. Greenberg, [Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paulo: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 225.

<sup>22</sup> “Cora Montgomery” (Jane Cazneau), *The Eagle Pass; or, Life on the Border* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Company, 1852), 26.

<sup>23</sup> Samuel Johnson, “Taxation No Tyranny” [1775], *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, Volume VIII (London: Printed by Thomas Davison, Whitefriars, 1824), 204.

<sup>24</sup> Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*, edited, with an introduction by John A. Scott (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 6.

Southerners found themselves called upon to apologize for an institution branded backward and barbaric.

European travelers not infrequently observed that the self-proclaimed free society maintained a tight-lipped reserve about topics that might provoke controversy or depict the nation in a less-than-flattering light. “I do not know any country where, in general, less independence of mind and genuine freedom of discussion reign than in America,” proclaimed Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835. Similarly, Charles Dickens’s 1844 novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*, written after the author’s American tour, includes among its pompous, self-absorbed American characters only one, Mr. Bevan, who is capable of honest analysis. “I believe no satirist could breathe this air,” he says, in words that echo de Tocqueville. “If another Juvenal or Swift could rise up among us to-morrow, he would be hunted down. If you have any knowledge of our literature, and can give me the name of any man, American born and bred, who has anatomized our follies as a people, and not as this or that party; and who has escaped the foulest and most brutal slander, the most inveterate hatred and intolerant pursuit; it would be a strange name in my ears, believe me.”<sup>25</sup> Americans were capable of censoring those who deviated from the will of the majority, and maligning members of rival political factions, but not speaking openly about the shortcomings of the nation as a whole. They could, however, readily identify the splinter in their neighbor’s eye.

The imperative for setting the U.S. apart from its European origins was particularly articulated by nationalists in the young republic, who saw their country setting off on a grand and conspicuous experiment. It was not for slavery, obviously, that

---

<sup>25</sup> Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1844), 209.

they wanted to be exceptional. If in the company of foreign visitors Americans were reticent about human bondage, their motive is understandable enough: they instinctively recognized slavery not only as an issue that held the potential for tearing apart the new nation but also as a magnet for foreign reproach.

But as U.S. patriots discovered in the 1830s, '40s, and '50s, discussions of Latin America worked as a way to present issues of race and slavery before foreign and domestic audiences without striking too close to home. By asserting the differences between the United States and the Latin American republics, U.S. nationalists hoped to ascribe the worst abuses of the slave system to others. If foreign critics commented on the brutality of labor in the cotton fields, they needed to compare it to the sugar plantations of Cuba. If European visitors remarked on the Quadroon population of New Orleans, writers in the U.S hoped to distract them with the mixed-race chaos of Brazil.

To maximize its potential as a screen upon which portrayals of U.S. slavery could be projected, Latin America had to be characterized as the Other, a region incapable of living up to the U.S. model. The assertion of U.S. preeminence colored discussion of Latin America throughout the 1830s, '40s, and '50s. Latin America served as a negative example by which the comparative integrity and achievement of the United States was thrown into sharp relief. Latin American revolutions were smudged carbon copies of the U.S. war for independence; Latin American governments were unsteady and corrupt. From similar beginnings, the United States quickly vaulted ahead of Latin America economically. Preening comparisons with its southern neighbors defined a nation that, however fragmented by politics or sectional interest, was unified by its superiority.

But complicating this easy display of difference was the fact that even as its people scorned Latin American culture, the United States progressively laid claim to Latin American land. No modern reader can escape the conclusion that, when people in the U.S. discussed Latin America in this, the age of Manifest Destiny, expansionism was frequently the subtext. From the earliest days of the republic, people in the U.S. looked to the eventual acquisition of territory south of its borders. “Our confederacy must be viewed as the nest from which all America, North and South is to be peopled,” Thomas Jefferson had written in 1786. “We should take care to not . . . press too soon on the Spaniards. Those countries cannot be in better hands. My fear is that they are too feeble to hold them till our population can be sufficiently advanced to gain it from them peice by peice [sic]. The navigation of the Mississippi we must have. This is all we are as yet ready to receive.”<sup>26</sup> When the navigation of the Mississippi—as well as the control of the vast Louisiana territory—fell unexpectedly into Jefferson’s grasp seventeen years later, the nation faced the task of absorbing not only land but people immediately understood as foreign. Massachusetts Federalist Fisher Ames described them as a “*Gallo-Hispano-Indian omnium gatherum* of savages and adventurers” who could hardly be expected to “sustain and glorify our republic.”<sup>27</sup> In Louisiana, Washington politicians worked out—often through a process of improvisation—a blueprint for the future addition of non-English territory and non-English people into the national polity. In this

---

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Archibald Stuart, January 25, 1786, quoted in John Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 6.

<sup>27</sup> Fisher Ames in *New-England Palladium*, quoted in Kukla, 293.

project they were aided on the ground by federal administrators and local white Louisianans who saw benefits in incorporation rather than separatism or resistance.<sup>28</sup>

Yet until territory was actually absorbed by the U.S., the focus of Americans was not in overcoming the differences they perceived, but expressing and reifying those differences. If anything, comparisons with Latin America in the antebellum republic served to unify and reassure rather than to fracture and provoke. Even as the displacement of domestic conflicts over slavery and race onto discussion of Latin American society provided a safe context in which these issues could be explored, the disparagement of Latin America proved to be something about which many disparate groups could agree. Writers from old families that had settled the original thirteen colonies and migrants on the western edges of white settlement, black Northern abolitionists and anxious white Southerners, scholars hungering for fame and scribblers trying to earn the cost of their next meal, all found Latin America a convenient tablet upon which to inscribe their ideas about U.S. superiority.

The output of these Americans extended across a variety of disciplines, from sermons to scientific inquiry, from the well-rehearsed speeches of lawmakers to kneejerk screed of newspaper squibs, from the low doggerel of third-rate versifiers to the blank verse of five-act dramas. In the antebellum period, congressmen quoted poetry and scientists cited the Bible as evidence; novelists and historians tackled political subjects in

---

<sup>28</sup> Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

their fiction that they knew intimately from their work in politics. The audiences that received this material were similarly diverse.<sup>29</sup>

The chapters in this dissertation admittedly impose a twenty-first century taxonomy on a period that organized ideas into a very different set of categories. This dissertation begins with the sputtering of the short-lived enthusiasm for the newly-independent nations of South America in the early 1820s. At lengthy and widely-publicized congressional debates about U.S. attendance at the 1826 Panama Congress of the American republics, opponents of the John Quincy Adams administration emphasized the Spanish heritage and racial composition of Latin America, erecting a barrier to unity that proved impossible to scale in a period increasingly committed to slavery. The second chapter considers how this focus on the racial superiority of the U.S. co-existed with claimed connections linking the aboriginal past of the U.S. West with that of Mexico and Peru. The essential task for archaeologists of the 1830s and '40s lay in identifying the ancient Americans as white. Novelists and playwrights, the subjects of the third chapter, found liberation in the south-of-the-border settings, treating topics like miscegenation and the possibility of slave rebellion with a directness startling in a period when such issues were generally hushed up. As the Civil War approached, there were different inflections in the way North and South used comparisons with their Latin American neighbors. As discussed in the fourth chapter, Massachusetts historian William Hickling Prescott, though no radical abolitionist, used the history of the Spanish settlement in America to make some pointed remarks about slavery. The attitude of

---

<sup>29</sup> See Lawrence W. Levine's discussion of heterogeneous early nineteenth-century audiences and the jumble of cultural productions they enjoyed in *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988).

proslavery Southerners appraising slavery in Cuba and Brazil, discussed in the last chapter, were also critical of the slave societies of Latin America, insisting that the U.S. version of slavery as superior to all others—perfect, in fact. But perfection allowed little room for adjustment in a rapidly changing world. Each chapter—with the exception of Chapter 3—ends with the discussion of a novel intended to complicate its argument. (Since Chapter 3 looks specifically at novels and plays, it concludes with the examination of two orations). The juxtapositions of these texts gesture at the surprising and serendipitous relationships among popular entertainment and scholarly debate, science and religion, history and fiction that Americans of the early nineteenth century took for granted.

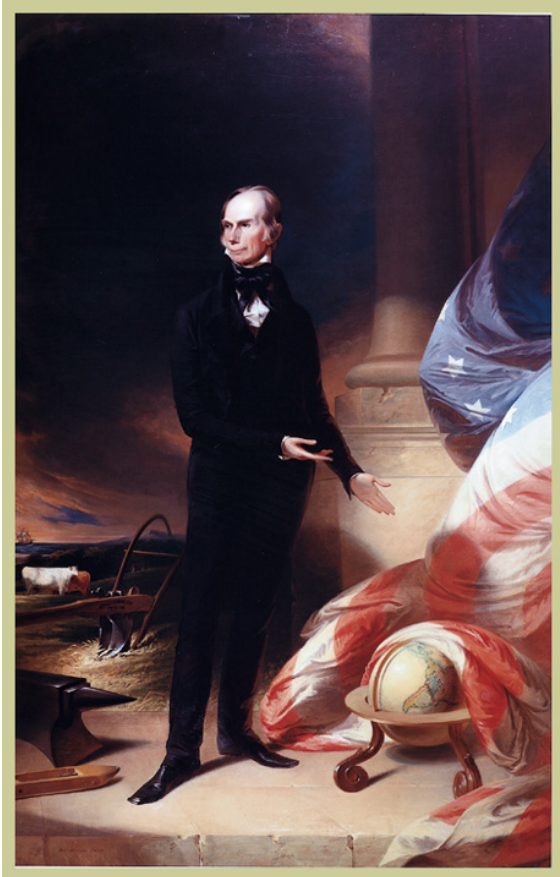
In more than one way, this dissertation is all about boundaries. It is most obviously about the physical lines on a map that separated Anglo America from Spanish America, as well as the political and social differences that made Mexico and Cuba and Peru and Brazil so exotic to travelers from the United States. It is also about the boundaries between races and national groups: how did U.S. nationalists insert the *hidalgo* of obviously mixed race, or the Brazilian soldier of color, into the limited categories of white/black, slave/free with which most people in the U.S. were comfortable? The period covered in this project is one in which the physical boundaries of the U.S. were constantly being negotiated, with much of the new territory added to the U.S. possessions—Texas, the Mexican cession, the Gadsen Purchase—the former property of Mexico. Just as the map makers of the 1820s, ‘30s, and ‘40s were busy drawing and redrawing borderlines, Americans of the early republic had to reconsider where their counterparts south of the border belonged in relation to them.

During this period, among the many roles Latin America played for its U.S. neighbors, the most useful was as a window through which could be viewed the vexed and volatile reality of slavery many Americans did not want to discuss directly. Through this window they gazed with condescension at their counterparts failing to live up to the United States standard even as they beheld something at once familiar and foreign, a simulacrum both exotic and uncomfortably recognizable.

Yet sometimes in the unstable reflection of the glass, Americans glimpsed themselves. “The people of the United States are like persons surrounded by mirrors. They may catch their likeness from every quarter, and in every possible light, attitude, and movement,” declared *The North American Review* in 1838. “. . . Turn we as we may, we catch our reflected features; the vista seems to lengthen at every sight.”<sup>30</sup> Whether the reflection of the United States in the mirror of Latin America was flattering or unsettling, whether it was heeded or ignored, depended upon the circumstances. But in the thirty-five years before the Civil War it consistently served as a measure by which people in the United States judged themselves.

---

<sup>30</sup> “The Americans, in their Moral, Social, and Political Relations” (review), *The North American Review* 46, no. 98 (January 1838): 106-7.



(left) *Henry Clay* (1797-1852), 1843  
 John Neagle, American, 1796-1865  
 Oil on canvas; 111 ¼ x 72 ½ inches  
 Signed and dated at lower left: "Jno. Neagle Pinxit 1843"  
 The Union League of Philadelphia, gift of Henry Pratt McKean  
 Courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Foundation of the Union League of Philadelphia

(above) *John Randolph*. Gilbert Stuart  
 National Gallery of Art  
 Andrew W. Mellon Collection, Washington, D.C.

**Chapter 1:** Henry Clay—in this portrait indicating a globe turned to show South America—advocated the American System of internal improvements and commercial relations between the United States and its southern neighbors. But when in 1826 the United States received an invitation to participate in Simon Bolivar’s Panama Congress, Virginia’s John Randolph pointed out that U.S. delegates might well be seated “beside the native African, or their American descendants, the mixed breeds, the Indians, and the half breeds.” The disagreement between Clay and Randolph escalated into a duel, which ended without serious harm to either opponent, but in the following years Randolph’s characterization of Latin America as marked by racial difference trumped Clay’s understanding of shared republicanism.

## Chapter 1

### Never So Drunk with New-Born Liberty<sup>1</sup>

#### The United States and the Panama Congress of 1826

Reaction to the proposed participation of the United States in the Panama Congress of 1826—a convocation of the American republics organized by Simon Bolivar—marked a turning point in U.S. understandings of Latin America. The years leading up to the prolonged debates in Congress about the wisdom of participating in this assembly had been characterized by popular enthusiasm for the former Spanish colonies’ embrace of republican government as well as canny, acquisitive expectation about how a liberalization of trade policies might benefit producers and exporters in the U.S. After U.S. senators and congressmen finished their harangues in opposition to sending ministers to Panama—and even defenses of the idea—this eager, hopeful sense yielded, if not to active disdain, certainly guarded hesitation about the possibility of fellowship with Latin America. The shift in national attitudes about Latin America was neither immediate nor universal. But the widely-publicized congressional characterizations of Latin America and its relation to the U.S. established a new vocabulary of difference. A new way of understanding the identity of the United States through its relations with its southern neighbors ascended to a primary position in the national imagination.

Many reasons were put forward against participation in the Panama Congress, but

---

<sup>1</sup> “In what respect did the United States *differ* from ‘these new republics,’ which this sturdy democrat here [John Berrien of Georgia] stigmatized as ‘Bucaniers?’ Certainly there *is* a broad difference,—the United States—whether bucaniers or not—never got so ‘drunk with their new born liberty,’ as to demolish their human flesh shambles, in the boisterous merriment of their intoxication. They were always *sober* enough to keep the watch-dogs of their plantations well trained . . .” Loring Moody, *Facts for the People: Showing the Relations of the United States Government to Slavery* (Boston, 1847), 40.

the ones most often repeated and loudly proclaimed concerned the complexion of the republicans in whose company the U.S. ministers would convene. It was this perception of racial difference, and the way race was understood, that would prove so pervasive in the way the U.S. would define itself against a Latin American foil in the thirty-five years before the Civil War. This difference would in turn make possible the open discussion of Latin American slavery at a time when discussions of U.S. slavery in many circumstances remained limited or indirect.

As with many historical turning points, this one is easier to recognize in retrospect than it was at the time. It did not mark a shift as abrupt and complete as some historians assert.<sup>2</sup> It might not have been irreversible without the rise of the second party system, the explosive importance of the slave economy in the U.S., and the abolition of slavery in the West Indies. It corresponded, significantly, with a transition to a second-generation nationalism in the United States, from a colorblind one that invoked the universalizing possibilities of political ideology to one more narrowly connected to race. But it provided the language and set the tone for the way Latin America would be discussed for the next thirty-five years.

Writing in 1854, at the end of a thirty-year career in the Senate, Thomas Hart Benton recalled the 1826 Panama Congress as an “abortion” “long since sunk into oblivion.”<sup>3</sup> Yet at the time, the debate over U.S. participation in this now-forgotten

---

<sup>2</sup> See for example Andrew R.L. Cayton, “The Debate over the Panama Congress and the Origins of the Second American Party System,” *The Historian* 47, no. 2 (February 1985): 219-238; James Lewis, Jr., *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Jeffrey J. Malanson “The Congressional Debate over U.S. Participation in the Congress of Panama, 1825-1826: Washington’s Farewell Address, Monroe’s Doctrine, and the Fundamental Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 5 (November 2006): 813-837.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Years’ View; or, A History of the Working of the American Government for Thirty Years, from 1820 to 1850* (Boston: Frederick Parker, 1854), 66 (“abortion”); 65.

assembly dominated much of the business of the Nineteenth Congress. More than sixty members of Congress participated, at length, in a debate that had far-ranging implications for future foreign policy and relations between the United States and its southern neighbors.<sup>4</sup> The Panama Mission, as Benton referred to it, was to occur on the Isthmus of Panama (at that time part of the Republic of Gran Colombia), the narrow strip of land that divides the Atlantic and the Pacific and connected North and South America, not far from where Europeans had first made landfall more than three hundred years earlier. “[T]he Grecian republics had their isthmus—that of Corinth—where their deputies assembled,” wrote Benton, noting “classic and cherished recollections” that linked the ancient world to contemporary realities.<sup>5</sup>

By 1825 the new Spanish American republics, including Mexico, Peru, Chile, Buenos Aires, Colombia, Venezuela, and Bolivia, had emerged from prolonged wars of independence with Spain. Simon Bolivar, aware that the infant nations were still vulnerable to Spanish attacks, and eager to solidify trading treaties with England, proposed an assembly to discuss a defensive alliance and to forge commercial relationships. Bolivar was disinclined to jeopardize the arrangements recently established with Britain, which was sending an observer to the conference, by having the U.S. present. But Mexico and Colombia, who hoped for better trading relations with Washington, extended an invitation to the United States to attend.<sup>6</sup>

In the U.S., the debates over the implications of sending ministers on the Panama Mission coincided with the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, when

---

<sup>4</sup> Piero Gleijeses, “The Limits of Sympathy: The United States and the Independence of Spanish America,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, no. 3 (October 1992): 495, note 66.

<sup>5</sup> Benton, 65.

<sup>6</sup> Light T. Cummins, “John Quincy Adams and Latin American Nationalism,” *Revista de Historia America* 86 (July-December 1978): 226.

citizens had occasion to reflect on the accomplishments of half a century. The Fiftieth Jubilee was marked everywhere by patriotic speeches, poems, and a series of thirteen toasts (one for each of the original thirteen colonies). Mixed with the cheers of festivity was not a little nostalgic awareness that the revolutionary era was fast fading away. “That was not the Lafayette that I remember!” mused the 89-year-old John Adams when the last surviving general of the Revolutionary War, now an elderly visitor, appeared in Quincy, Massachusetts, on his 1824-1825 tour of the United States.<sup>7</sup> The founding generation was in eclipse. “Columbia’s sires have gone to rest,” mourned the poet “Zero” in the *National Intelligencer* on the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>8</sup> As if to underscore the passing of the old order, on the Fourth of July, 1826, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died within hours of one another.

The termination of the independence struggles by the former colonies of Spain that occurred just in time for this U.S. anniversary added to a national atmosphere that was at once triumphant and melancholy. Spain’s former colonies had followed the example of the United States in declaring themselves republics and producing written constitutions, in many cases copying whole passages verbatim. That these new nations imitated the U.S. demonstrated that its ideals were imitable and exportable; while still a raw and callow nation in many respects, in its relation as a kind of elder sibling to the growing family of republics, the United States assumed a kind of venerability. “[W]e sowed the seed, and others are also reaping the fruits of it. On this continent we have witnessed the establishment of five new Republics, animated by our example and

---

<sup>7</sup> For his part, Lafayette exclaimed the same thing upon meeting the aged Adams: “That was not the John Adams I remember!” Quoted in Andrew Burstein, *America’s Jubilee* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 14.

<sup>8</sup> “Zero,” “For the Fourth of July, 1826,” *The National Intelligencer*, 4 July 1826: 3.

enlightened by our precepts,” exulted the *Richmond Enquirer* in a July 4 editorial in 1826.<sup>9</sup>

More solemnly, the appearance of these upstarts reflected the inexorable passing of time. With the new nations of Latin America freshly admitted to the fraternity of world republics, the United States fell into the role of the more mature, tested veteran called upon to guide and encourage the south-of-the-border initiates. If proud Americans looked with indulgence at the high spirits of their neighbors, they wistfully realized that their own country was, at an estimable fifty, no longer youthful. Its testing period had passed; its mistakes could no longer be so easily forgiven.

The emergence of these new Spanish-speaking, Catholic republics necessitated national stock-taking in the U.S. The freedom-fighters of Central and South America called themselves Patriots, and they championed liberty, established republics, and now assembled a congress. But what, asked the senators and congressmen of the Nineteenth Congress of the U.S., did those words mean in the context of an area geographically contiguous with the United States and yet different? In the course of the debates over the Panama Congress both in and out of the Congress of the United States, the essence of many words came up for consideration: liberalism, liberty, republic, equality, nation. Now they were being applied in new ways, and their universal application could no longer be assumed. Was a black republic a republic? Were the oppressed subjects of a Spanish despot ready for the same prerogatives as a people with a heritage of English freedom? Could equality really stretch to accommodate everyone? Eighteen twenty-six was hardly the first time Americans asked these questions, but there was a new resonance if not a new urgency to them now. These words, and the ideas behind them, were being

---

<sup>9</sup> “The Jubilee of Liberty,” *The Richmond Enquirer* 4 July 1826: 3.

claimed by people who were neither white nor Protestant nor of English descent.

Eighteen twenty-six was the dawn of a new era in American history, when, even as rapid developments in “internal improvements” were knitting together formerly isolated regions, Irish Catholics were appearing in the cities of the North, and the hardening of proslavery thought was building further repressions into the peculiar institution in the South.<sup>10</sup> In many ways the discourse about American participation in the Panama Congress, and U.S. relations with its southern neighbors, anticipated the way new understandings of race would be discussed—and masked—in the 1830s, ‘40s, and ‘50s.

Critically, these debates also provided an opportunity for politicians to talk about how other nations professing republican ideals handled the touchy subject of race. In many cases these nations took much more literally, and embraced much more inclusively, the language of liberty and equality employed by the Founding Fathers of the U.S. By elevating people of mixed race, people of full African descent, and Catholic clerics to positions of political authority, the Latin American nations effectively challenged the United States to realize its self-proclaimed ideals. The U.S. response to this challenge was to assert its own superiority, a superiority measured more often by essential than cultural or political difference. The debate over attendance at the Panama Congress provides a unique opportunity to measure how the United States—North, South, and West; Democrat and Old Republican (or incipient Whig); well-informed politician or man on the streets—perceived itself in relation to Latin America. In the process of defining Latin America, people in the U.S. were defining themselves. Their discussion

---

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Walker Howe’s *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1814-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) emphasizes improved transportation and communication as the phenomena that characterize the period dubbed by Charles Sellers the Market Revolution (*The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1848* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991]).

would continue, of course, but it would not again take a form at once so extensive and so focused.

If until this moment Americans tacitly accepted what Adam Ferguson in 1767 called “civil society”<sup>11</sup> and what is today called civic nationalism, the national venting of racial and religious prejudices against neighboring republics forced a reconsideration of what being American meant. Such prejudices are not easily rooted out: as José Casanova points out in an analysis of supposedly post-secular twenty-first century Europe, the petition of Muslim-dominated Turkey to join the European Union exposed the “implicit, diffused, and submerged Christian cultural identity” that remains in an apparently laicized, nonobservant Europe. “Ironically,” says Casanova, “. . . the more secularist self-understandings attempt to repress this religious heritage from the collective conscience, the more it reproduces itself subconsciously and compulsively in public secular codes.”<sup>12</sup> In 1826, the invitation to the Panama Congress that implied a shared political identity among the United States and the republics of Latin America led to the expression of all the ways the United States differed from its neighbors. The claiming of commonality from abroad provoked cries of distinctiveness—indeed, exceptionalism—at home.

Before the Panama brouhaha, American attitudes toward the independence of Latin America as expressed in newspaper coverage, in toasts, and in political discourse were generally positive. Poring over reports of toasts and considering the number of U.S. cities and counties named for Simon Bolivar and other Latin American heroes and places in the period 1810 to 1822, Mark Jaede in a 2001 dissertation entitled “Brothers at a

---

<sup>11</sup> See Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 75ff.

<sup>12</sup> José Casanova, “Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration,” *Transit* 27 (2004). <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2004-07-29-casanova-en.html>.

Distance” argues that there was tremendous popular support for the success for the wars of independence against Spain and the establishment of republican governments.<sup>13</sup> The numbers of American babies christened Simon Bolivar, and towns, cities, and counties named Peru, Lima, Mexico and Bolivar during this period does suggest a popular fascination with the emerging world to the south.<sup>14</sup> Jaede suggests that this popular enthusiasm did not run deep; it was based on minimal information if not outright misinformation concerning conditions in the new republics, particularly the fact that many of the citizens they claimed to admire were not entirely white. As they toasted “The Patriots of South America,” nationalistic Americans rejoiced in independence and self-government, ideas by which they identified their own nation; “[i]n praising Spanish Americans,” Jaede writes persuasively, “they were both cheering for and reassuring themselves.”<sup>15</sup>

Even when newspaper accounts made clear the race of the republicans in the pre-Panama Congress period, they were more inclined to praise their bid for liberty than shudder at the color of their skin.<sup>16</sup> Southern papers were no less likely to run positive accounts of these revolutionary struggles than northern ones. To be sure, there were qualifications to this rule: news accounts were quicker to blame the race of the insurgents when they suffered defeat than to mention it in celebrations of their victories. The nearer their struggles to the U.S., the more the racial identity of the rebels became a

---

<sup>13</sup> Mark G. Jaede, “Brothers at a Distance: Race, Religion, Culture and U.S. Views of Spanish America, 1800-1830,” (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> One well-known example is Simon Bolivar Buckner (1823-1914), who served in the U.S. Army during the War with Mexico and then as general in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Bolivar, Tennessee was settled in 1823.

<sup>15</sup> Jaede, 79.

<sup>16</sup> Caitlin A. Fitz, “The Problem of Slavery in a Hemisphere of Republics: The United States and Spanish American Emancipation,” a paper presented to the McNeil Center for Early American Studies Seminar Series, The Library Company of Philadelphia, 12 November 2010.

problem, so for example journalists noted the race of the insurgents when rebellion roiled Spanish Florida in 1817 and 1818. But sympathetic reports of Simon Bolivar's attempts to liberate Venezuela and Colombia in 1816 appeared in southern newspapers even though Bolivar was using Haiti as a staging ground for his attack and accepted military and financial assistance from the island's mulatto president. As early as 1793 Southerners were convulsed with fear of rebellion inspired by the Haitian precedent, but Haitian aid in the service of Spanish-American liberation from Spain presented no problem.<sup>17</sup>

Potential trade with Latin America drove much of this enthusiasm. "The commerce of Spanish America is very interesting to all nations, on account of two essential considerations," noted Manuel Torres in a pamphlet published in Philadelphia in 1816. "First, Because [sic] that country consumes yearly, the value of one hundred millions of dollars in articles of foreign manufacturing industry. Secondly, Because it is there, and only there, that all nations can obtain, with facility, those precious metals, which have become so necessary to trade throughout the world, and particularly with Asia . . ." <sup>18</sup> Independent nations not under the thumb of Spain promised the possibility of liberalized trade (although many U.S. exporters resentfully expected that Britain would corner uniquely favorable privileges). As if by magic, trade in free Latin American ports would stimulate the manufactures so necessary to what Henry Clay, then a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Kentucky, called the American System. In 1820, Clay insisted, "It is in our power to create a system of which we shall be the centre, and

---

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of Southern fears of Haitian-inspired revolts, see Robert Alderson, "Charleston's Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, edited by David P. Geggus (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 93-111.

<sup>18</sup> Manuel Torres, "An Exposition of the Commerce of Spanish America; with Some Observations upon its Importance to the United States" (Philadelphia: G. Palmer, 1816), 11.

in which all South America will act with us. In respect to commerce, we shall be most benefitted: this country would become the place of deposit of the commerce of the world.”<sup>19</sup>

The Panama Congress debates followed in the wake of the divisive four-way presidential race of 1824—in which there had been no clear winner—which had been resolved when Henry Clay threw his support behind John Quincy Adams, spoiling the chances of Andrew Jackson, the popular favorite. Adams subsequently appointed Clay Secretary of State, an arrangement Adams’s pro-Jackson adversaries branded a “corrupt bargain.”

But the new president scarcely acknowledged his lack of a mandate. His first message to the Nineteenth Congress in December 1825 presented a startling presumption of presidential power. He proposed that the national government take the lead in constructing canals and turnpikes, funding a national university, and building astronomical observatories (the latter immediately pilloried with his own locution, “lighthouses of the skies”). Europe was harnessing the power of government to effect these ends, and the U.S. ought not fall behind. Adams’ mention that the United States had been invited to participate in a pan-American conference, and his request for congressional approval of the designated plenipotentiaries and funding for their trip, should have been the least contested of Adams’s proposals. In fact it blew up among accusations of secrecy and continued for much of the Congress’ first session, to expose serious reservations about the universal applicability and potential exportability of American ideals.

---

<sup>19</sup> Henry Clay, *The Speeches of Henry Clay: Delivered in the Congress of the United States* (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey & I. Lea, 1827) 226. Similar passages are quoted in Randolph B. Campbell, “The Spanish American Aspect of Henry Clay’s American System,” *The Americas* 24, no. 1 (July, 1967): 3, 6, and 7.

In his defense of attendance at the Congress of Panama, John Quincy Adams focused on three themes: the duty to extend a neighborly hand to the new republics, the wisdom of providing a good example and steering the infant nations from self-inflicted hazards and external dangers, and the practical benefits of neutrality and commerce to be gleaned from participation in the meeting.<sup>20</sup> When they were not actively engaged in deflecting the attacks of Adams's critics, his supporters in the Senate and the House of Representative amplified each of these points.

First, the argument seemingly most colored by goodwill and least tainted by self interest was that the U.S. ought to acknowledge the great accomplishment of the Spanish republics in winning their independence and recognize them with what Representative Charles Miner of Pennsylvania called "parental regard."<sup>21</sup> The invitation to the congress had been tendered in a spirit of friendliness and sincerity, with no hidden conditions the president's supporters could discover; to refuse the outstretched hand of amity was to risk offense.<sup>22</sup> Francis Johnson, Representative from Kentucky, pointed out that there was no shame in being called a friend of liberty.<sup>23</sup>

Second, many of the politicians who spoke in Adams's defense alluded to the ways the U.S. might set Latin America on a better course. "Let us be first to meet them, and, if in our power, afford them useful advice as to the improvement of their condition, and in perpetuating their independence and liberty," urged Representative John Reed of Massachusetts.<sup>24</sup> It was in the best interests of the United States, so long as it could

---

<sup>20</sup> Adams mentioned the proposed participation in the Panama Congress in his first message to Congress on 6 December 1825; subsequently he sent messages to the Senate 26 December 1825 and to the House of Representatives 15 January and 15 March, 1826.

<sup>21</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 25 January 1826, 1117.

<sup>22</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 13 April 1826, 2243.

<sup>23</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 13 April 1826, 2251.

<sup>24</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 12 April 1826, 2224.

avoid active involvement in foreign military affairs, to help position the new republics on a footing secure enough for them to be free of threat of reconquest by Spain or the Holy Alliance. Opening channels of communication through which Latin American leaders could gain access to the guidance of the United States could only strengthen their commitment to so compatible a form of government. Furthermore, as the president himself had suggested, a gentle nudge from the U.S. might encourage the new nations to turn away from a policy of established religion, specifically Roman Catholicism.<sup>25</sup>

Third, the potential profits of trade played no small part in the calculations of those who wished to send representatives to Panama. “These South American States contain twenty millions of freemen: they will require the supply of manufactured goods to the amount of one hundred millions of dollars,” predicted Representative Silas Wood of New York. If American industry needed a goad to expansion, here it was. The vast market would stimulate American manufacture better than any tariff. “And there is no gentleman on this floor who feels for his country; who is impressed, as he ought to be, with the importance of giving a proper direction to its capital, but must long ardently to see some arrangements made with these South American nations,” Wood rebuked his fellow representatives.<sup>26</sup> Senator Asher Robbins of Rhode Island estimated the population of South America still higher, at thirty million, and pointed out that nations of

---

<sup>25</sup> John Quincy Adams, Message of the President of the United States to the Senate, Relative to the Panama Mission, *Register of Debates in Congress*, (Appendix), 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 26 December 1825, 48: “There is yet another subject, upon which, without entering into any treaty, the moral influence of the United States may, perhaps, be exerted with beneficial consequences at such a meeting—the advancement of religious liberty. Some of the Southern Nations are, even yet, so far under the dominion of prejudice, that they have incorporated, with their political constitutions, an exclusive church, without toleration of any other than the dominant sect.”

<sup>26</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 2 February 1826, 1240.

freemen were energetic and prosperous—a natural market for the products of the United States.<sup>27</sup>

There was a limit to how far even the administration’s supporters would go in asserting their fellowship with Latin America. In their defense of attendance at the assembly, they refrained from suggesting that ministers from the U.S. would sit down with their equals. “We have been invited with peculiar caution and delicacy, not as a member of the family, but as a guest; not to a Congress of which we were a party, but as a friend and visiter [sic],” said Louisiana’s Senator Josiah S. Johnson.<sup>28</sup> Despite their calls for friendliness and courtesy, in the remarks of the mission’s advocates a damning-with-faint-praise subtext hinted that the emerging Latin American nations were unformed if not slightly foolish naifs. Representative Daniel Webster of Massachusetts spoke firmly in favor of attendance in the congress of “sister Republics,” among the “great American family of nations,” but at the same time he made clear their inferior status: they were “pupils” in a school from which the United States had presumably graduated with honors.<sup>29</sup> Rejecting the opposition’s refrain that the U.S. might somehow be contaminated by association with its neighbors south of the border, the Adams men suggested that their superiority would prevent their being flecked with pitch even if they touched it. Latin America existed not simply at an earlier stage of political development. It belonged to a wholly distinct order. The problems that might plague it, the diseases to which it might succumb, represented no danger to the U.S., a member of another species entirely and therefore not susceptible to infection.

---

<sup>27</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 183.

<sup>28</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 14, 1826, 219.

<sup>29</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, April 14, 1826, 2276.

Far more colorful than the defenders of the Panama Mission were speakers from the opposition. Unquestionably the most outrageous was the Senate's John Randolph of Roanoke, Virginia, who was generally considered eccentric if not actually crazy. He appeared in the halls of Congress attended by slaves and accompanied by hunting dogs and delivered rambling speeches well-lubricated with alcohol, punctuated by snaps of his riding whip against his boot, and seasoned with Greek quotations and venomous outbursts.<sup>30</sup> During the debates he so offended Secretary of State Henry Clay that he was challenged to a duel, the ostensible cause of which was his comparison, on the floor of the Senate, of Adams and Clay to Bilfil and Black George, detestable characters in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*.<sup>31</sup> But scarcely less offensive was his characterization of the relationship between the president and his Secretary of State as "an alliance, offensive and defensive, . . . got up between Old Massachusetts and Kentucky, between the frost of January, and young, blithe, buxom May—the eldest daughter of Virginia—young Kentucky—not so young, however, as not to make a prudent match, and sell her charms for their full value."<sup>32</sup>

However extreme in their *ad hominem* invective, Randolph's complaints were typical of the opposition's discursive, scattershot approach. Their objections to the Panama assembly were striking in their variety. Among the charges were these: Adams's actions bore the hallmarks of the tyrant. There were no precedents for attendance at this congress. By appearing at Panama, the U.S. would find itself

---

<sup>30</sup> George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952), 354. The duel ended without serious harm to either participant.

<sup>31</sup> Dangerfield, 357. Randolph's remark appears in *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 30 March 1826, 401.

<sup>32</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 30 March 1826, 395. The almost giddy pleasure taken in scurrilous caricature is classic Randolph.

committed to undesirable, expensive, or dangerous policies. The United States would be drawn into war with Spain. The Panama Congress would encourage instability in the strategically significant—and nearby—Caribbean. The abolition of slavery in Latin America would exert a demoralizing effect on white Southerners and a dangerous influence on U.S. slaves.

But the opposition was more organized than it appeared. According to Robert Remini, the forging of a unified opposition out of these assorted objections was the work of Martin Van Buren.<sup>33</sup> John Quincy Adams' proposal to send delegates to the congress languished, a relative non-issue (however unpopular among the supporters of Jackson) until Van Buren took it up as a convenient Adam's rib around which to fashion his new party system. At a meeting with Vice President John C. Calhoun, who volunteered that the president's presumption in accepting the invitation to the congress would lead to a confrontation between Adams and the supporters of Andrew Jackson, Van Buren recognized it as a rallying point for an as-yet scattered opposition.<sup>34</sup> Tapping Jackson supporters from various parts of the country to attack Adams on this point, Van Buren of New York assembled a party that transcended section. Besides Calhoun, Van Buren's allies included Benton of Missouri, Robert Hayne of South Carolina, John Randolph of Virginia, John Holmes of Maine, and John Berrien of Georgia, a geographically-assorted group, each member of which addressed a critical aspect of an opposition position which Van Buren skillfully stitched together. He perceived that resistance to the Panama

---

<sup>33</sup> See for example Robert V. Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party*, (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1951), particularly 104-113. His *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991) similarly retails his thesis, 290-295. Two recent iterations of his argument appear in Malanson, "The Congressional Debate over U.S. Participation in the Congress of Panama," 813-838 and in Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 106.

Congress provided a link between strict republicanism, with its horror of government power, and racial fear—an association invisible to someone like Calhoun.<sup>35</sup> Van Buren’s genius was to give so much integrity to something that might easily have torn apart into sectional patches.

Remini is careful not to declare that Van Buren and his allies were insincere in their opposition to the Panama Mission—although their enemies at the time and later did not hesitate to question their sincerity.<sup>36</sup> Even at the time, supporters of the administration charged that Adams’ enemies were united only in opposition to him, not by any shared political beliefs. The supporters of the as-yet unnamed party that was emerging, in fact, differed considerably in their goals, with some advocating a strong central government, a loose interpretation of the Constitution, and federal support for domestic industry, while others championed local control and *laissez-faire*. “It is not identity of *principle*; it is merely identity of *feeling* that forms the bond of their association,” scoffed former New Hampshire Representative Salma Hale in an 1826 pamphlet called “The Administration and the Opposition.”<sup>37</sup> Hale himself identified the rambling and inconsistent disputations in Congress against participation in the Panama Congress as the weapon wielded by the opposition in an arbitrarily-chosen fight that wasted the government’s time and money.

---

<sup>35</sup> Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise*, 204.

<sup>36</sup> Remini claims as apocryphal the following story—though he does relate it prominently: “Many years later it was reported that a Senator—understood to be Mr. Van Buren—on being rallied on the triumph of the administration party on the Panama mission, replied, “*Yes; they have beaten us by a few votes, after a hard battle; But if they had taken the other side, and refused the mission, we should have had them!*”” (Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 116; italics original). The framing quote is from Nathan Sargent’s 1875 *Public Men and Events*, with Sargent guessing the identity of the unnamed senator in an 1827 letter from William Seaton to Colonel Johnson.

<sup>37</sup> Salma Hale (“Algernon Sidney”), “The Administration and the Opposition” (Concord, 1826), 13.

It did require a certain genius for Van Buren to weave a coherent opposition from such separate and often tangled threads. For example, opponents of the mission demanded precedents for American participation in the congress, not an easy task for a fifty-year-old country navigating a radically changed landscape. “The first reflection upon this subject,” complained Senator Hugh Lawson White of Tennessee, “is produced by its novelty. Since the acknowledgement of our independence, it has no precedent in our history.”<sup>38</sup> Justifying the actions of the present with reference to the events of the past would seem to be par for the course for a society relying on the principles of English common law, but, as Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick point out, the early republic’s “extended encounter with firstness,” meant that the United States had a limited past upon which to draw.<sup>39</sup> The self-conscious setting of precedent could be a torturous process when the new nation was called upon to perform a new role on the world stage with very little rehearsal. But here in 1826 was evidence that the United States had outgrown its formative period and entered the era when it became conscious of its own history.<sup>40</sup>

An unavoidable precedent for the opponents of the Panama Mission would seem to have existed in the looming shape of the Monroe Doctrine, affirmed in the president’s message two years before Monroe’s successor, Adams, dropped his own bombshell on the same occasion.<sup>41</sup> As Dexter Perkins noted in his classic 1927 *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1826*, great popular enthusiasm greeted the assertion of the U.S. intention to consider “any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this

---

<sup>38</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 14, 1826, 198.

<sup>39</sup> Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>40</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 192-99.

<sup>41</sup> The Monroe Doctrine was indeed only part of James Monroe’s annual message to Congress in December, 1823, and not so-called until the 1850s—but popularly known by that title by then. Benton referred to it as such in *A Thirty Years’ View* (1854), 67; 68; 69.

hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety,” and Congress expressed more muted, but still generally positive, approbation. And by 1826 most Americans of the time credited Monroe’s lofty pronouncement with scaring off European monarchists who might wish to hobble the infant steps of republicanism in Spanish America.<sup>42</sup>

But new republics attempting to test Monroe’s reassuring promises of solidarity in 1824 and 1825 had come away disappointed. In 1824 then-Secretary of State John Quincy Adams explained to a petitioning Colombian official that Congress, not the executive, would have to decide the extent of mutual defense against the Holy Alliance in Europe.<sup>43</sup> A year later, when Adams was president and Henry Clay was Secretary of State, Brazil appealed for assistance against rumors of Portuguese reconquest schemes. Clay began with assurances that there was no danger of Portuguese success but reserved for the United States the prerogative to interpret the language of the Monroe Doctrine as it chose according to specific circumstances.<sup>44</sup> Clay appropriated the power of interpretation himself later that year, when Mexico applied for U.S. aid against a threatening fleet of French and Spanish ships in the Caribbean. Clay took the opportunity to invoke the aid of Russia, France, and England in preventing a war that might involve the transfer of Cuba to Mexico.<sup>45</sup> His willingness to draw Europe into the affairs of the Western Hemisphere when it suited his advantage was a clearly expedient tactic contradictory to the Monroe doctrine and “exposed the selfishness of the United States in rather striking fashion.”<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1826* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1927), 144-9; 210-11.

<sup>43</sup> Perkins, 188-9.

<sup>44</sup> Perkins, 197-8.

<sup>45</sup> Perkins, 203-4.

<sup>46</sup> Perkins, 204.

Still more backpedaling and historical revisionism characterized the debates over the Panama Mission. Among its opponents—who generally did not go so far as to repudiate Monroe’s saber-rattling—discourse centered on the identification of the Monroe Doctrine as, in the words of Senator John Berrien of Georgia, not a pledge but “a mere declaration of policy.”<sup>47</sup> “Now I do positively deny that Mr. Monroe ever pledged this nation to go to war or make treaties to prevent the interference of any European nation in the present contest,” insisted Robert Hayne of South Carolina. “. . . The language of Mr. Monroe is extremely vague and indefinite.”<sup>48</sup> Hugh Lawson White of Tennessee likewise affirmed that no pledge was stated or implied in the message of Monroe: “it is a general declaration to his own Congress.”<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately Clay himself had used the word pledge in his instructions to Joel Poinsett, Minister to Mexico, and Poinsett used it as well.<sup>50</sup> Clay explained that he stood pledged to a domestic audience only, not an international one, a fine distinction even his ally Livingston called “a solecism in language.”<sup>51</sup> So, according to both the members and foes of the administration, Monroe’s message was not a precedent.

Much debate concerned the degree to which, through attendance at the congress, the United States would enter an “entangling alliance” with its neighbors. The dangers of overly intimate relations with foreign countries had been outlined by George Washington in his Farewell Address, a document to which many opponents of the mission referred. But as the diplomatic historian Jeffrey J. Malanson points out, the phrase “entangling alliances” actually comes from Thomas Jefferson’s first inaugural address, a much more

---

<sup>47</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 288. Italics original.

<sup>48</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 161.

<sup>49</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 200.

<sup>50</sup> Perkins, 209.

<sup>51</sup> Livingston quoted in Perkins, 210.

all-encompassing interpretation of Washington's parting counsel than Washington actually expressed.<sup>52</sup> Despite the fact that, as early as the December 1825 Annual Message, Adams tried to assure Congress that the United States would not enter into "deliberations of a belligerent character,"<sup>53</sup> opponents of participation in the Panama Congress focused on their concern that U.S. ministers could not attend without being drawn into alliances that would commit them to war against Spain in her attempts to regain her former colonies.

However much they were exploited by Van Buren's machinations, many of the objections arose spontaneously. Two other threads run through many of the arguments. Again and again, the senators and congressmen repeated a fear very closely woven into the fabric of American politics: the president's audacity and his clandestine arrangements signaled something very like the first tentative stirrings of despotism. The fear of tyranny—of a government, answerable to no one, wielding absolute power—is a constant in American history. However far away the American Revolution seemed by 1826, the echoes of its cries against British tyranny were still audible. There is no reason to suppose that opponents of Adams were insincere in their fear of his motives. Neither is there reason to imagine that they did not recognize in their accusations a powerful shibboleth that would elicit automatic reactions from their constituents.

Along with this well-worn charge of tyranny was a second theme, one of more recent creation. The United States ought not submit to anything that looked like an alliance with Latin America because such a union would be an unnatural one. Latin America was too different from the United States, and the proclamation of republicanism

---

<sup>52</sup> Malanson, "The Congressional Debate over U.S. Participation in the Congress of Panama," 813-838.

<sup>53</sup> Adams, Message of the President, 26 December 1825, 48.

was not enough to make all America one. Admittedly, there were too many parallels with the North American situation for even the most skeptical critic to overlook them entirely. Even as John Randolph insisted that Simon Bolivar, the Liberator, was as casually associated with George Washington as anyone “now a days, who has commanded a platoon, is a Caesar or a Hannibal,” he himself felt compelled to make comparisons, if only to dismiss them.<sup>54</sup> Randolph himself could not resist comparing the several republics to the original thirteen United States, and South Carolina’s Robert Hayne declared that their coming together differed “very little from the old Congress under our Articles of Confederation, to which, indeed, it bears a striking resemblance,” a comparison echoed by Martin Van Buren of New York.<sup>55</sup> Searching even earlier in U.S. history for a precedent, Louisiana’s pro-Adams Senator J.S. Johnson said the proposed congress “looks more like a committee of public safety, or of general welfare, than a belligerent council.”<sup>56</sup>

Countering these intimations of commonality, the speeches by the opponents of participation in the Panama Congress form a catalogue of the ways the United States differed from its neighbors. Not all of these differences were specious. Whereas in North America the Continental Congress had coordinated the actions of the thirteen British colonies long before their independence, the Latin American states were coming together for the first time. The original thirteen British colonies emerged as one nation (admittedly one loosely bound together at the beginning), whereas the former Spanish colonies took another route, with the former viceroalties declaring independence on different schedules and as wholly separate nations. And although the new states

---

<sup>54</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1, 1826, 113.

<sup>55</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 14, 1826, 123; 156; 239.

<sup>56</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 14, 1826, 220.

enthusiastically copied the U.S. Constitution, they departed from it in telling ways. They built in provisions for what Brian Loveman calls “regimes of exception,”<sup>57</sup> making constitutional provisions for the suspension of civil rights during periods of political unrest and allowing for domestic control by the military. And they elected not to follow the U.S. practice of disestablishing religion, retaining Roman Catholicism as not merely the sole state-supported church but the only faith tolerated by the government. On the other hand, they took a more enlightened approach to slavery, in some cases providing for its eventual elimination and in others abolishing it totally.

The established Church of Latin America provided a stumbling block for both sides of the debate. Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri attempted to startle his auditors into understanding just how foreign a nation with an established church looked: “Who is the negotiator contending with our Minister in Mexico for this doctrine of exclusive privileges? Is it not *Don Ramos Arispe*? And who is Don Ramos? A Catholic Bishop; (and I do not mention this in derogation of his character . . . )”<sup>58</sup> But other congressmen found themselves in the unaccustomed position of defending the Catholic hegemony. Since President Adams had proposed that influencing the new republics toward a policy of disestablishment was a worthy goal of the Panama Mission, his opponents argued that compulsory Catholicism could be useful, even necessary, to the stability of the Spanish American states. At the very least, it was not the proper place of the U.S. to interfere if the governments to which the people gave their consent made Romanism the state religion. James Hamilton pointed out—couching a perhaps inflammatory statement in an imaginary rebuttal delivered by a Latin American plenipotentiary—that churchmen were

---

<sup>57</sup> Brian Loveman, *The Constitution of Tyranny: Regimes of Exception in Spanish America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993).

<sup>58</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 325.

among the bravest and most determined of the revolutionaries.<sup>59</sup> Senators Hugh Lawson White of Tennessee and John Berrien of Georgia—presumably not otherwise favorable to Roman Catholicism—echoed this argument and added that the guidance of the clerical hierarchy, however far from ideal, might be all that stood between a directionless populace and sheer anarchy: to take away the influence of the priests might be highly dangerous.<sup>60</sup> John Holmes of Maine went so far as to defend the status quo with an unflattering reference to the U.S. Revolution: one of the charges laid at the feet of George III was his tolerance for French Catholics in Canada, and Massachusetts inserted a clause into its constitution excluding Catholics from state office. For successful revolutions, Holmes said, politicians on occasion had to pander to prejudice and bigotry, hoping future open-mindedness would remedy these unfortunate shortcuts.<sup>61</sup>

The gulf between Catholicism and Protestantism, between established religion and the separation of Church and State, was an easy one to understand. Seemingly just as vast a divide, though somewhat harder to describe concretely, characterized the colonial heritage and ancestry of North Americans and South Americans. South Carolina's James Hamilton, citing common language, philosophy, religion, and letters, claimed that people in the United States felt more "real sympathy . . . for the People of Old England, than any States of Spanish origin, whether miscalled or rightly named Republics. . . . Rest assured, moreover, if free principles are ever in danger—if a combination of despots should endeavor to put out the light of liberty—we shall be found fighting by the side of England against the powers of blood and darkness, whatever may be the alliances the Spanish

---

<sup>59</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 10 April 1826, 2156.

<sup>60</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 213; 291-2.

<sup>61</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 273.

Republics may form.”<sup>62</sup> Tennessee’s Hugh Lawson White argued for an exclusive U.S. identity based on the heritage of its European settlers: “[H]ave we not good reason to think that we have been, at all times, and yet are, a peculiarly favored People—that there were some admirable traits in the character of our forefathers, to which the People of other countries can lay but little claim?”<sup>63</sup> Republicanism was not so transformative a rebirth that it could wash away one’s European origins, however distant: there was a fundamental, even an essential, difference between Americans of English descent and Americans of Spanish descent. And simply speaking the right words—republic, congress, independence—did not suffice: it mattered whether those words were uttered in English or in Spanish. Senator White pointed out that a republican form of government should not be prescribed as a universal solution: “Ours is the best for an intelligent and virtuous people: but it does not thence follow, that it would be best for an ignorant and vicious People.”<sup>64</sup>

In the testimony of those condemning participation in the Panama Congress, the difference between U.S. citizens and Latin Americans took on a distinctly racial cast. The racism expressed by Adams’s opponents in 1826 anticipates the assumption of white supremacy that would underlie Jacksonian democracy a few years later. Senator John Holmes of Maine coyly suggested that “When our fresh and fair Ministers shall enter the hall of that Congress, and look round on their associates, I apprehend that they will deem it invidious and indelicate to talk about *color*.”<sup>65</sup> As usual, John Randolph was the most direct: should U.S. delegates go to Panama, they might well be seated “beside the native

---

<sup>62</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 10 April 1826, 2164.

<sup>63</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 14, 1826, 212.

<sup>64</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 208.

<sup>65</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 276.

African, or their American descendants, the mixed breeds, the Indians, and the half breeds.” Indeed the racial purity of all of Latin America was suspect: Randolph pointed out that plenty of African blood ran in the veins of the peninsular Spanish, and Guatemala, adjacent to the province in which the congress would be held, he believed, “was considered as much a black Republic at this time as Hayti itself.”<sup>66</sup>

Some of the congressmen were more circumspect in admitting that the true barrier to hemispheric fellowship was a racial one. A certain amount of reading between the lines is required, but the lines are sufficiently far apart to permit an unobstructed view. Opposition Senator John Berrien of Georgia employed a policy of indirection in talking about race and slavery, though his tack was more to assume the whispered complicity of racial supremacy than to threaten and terrify. Berrien suggested that there were certain loyalties that sent all political ones into eclipse: “I have been educated in sentiments of habitual reverence for the Constitution . . . The feeling is no where more universal, or more strong, than among the People of the South. But they have a stronger feeling. Need I name it? Is there any one who hears, and does not understand me?”<sup>67</sup>

Representative John Floyd of Virginia stated his objection to the Panama Mission thus: “Shall we not be told by this Congress that *every* man, on this Continent, is entitled to liberty?”<sup>68</sup> That representatives of the South American states might point out the contradiction of slavery in the United States was problematic enough; but one of the stated objectives of the congress was to discuss the fate of Cuba and Puerto Rico, still under Spanish rule and still flourishing slave societies, enriching their mother country with slave-generated wealth and supplying a staging area for counterrevolutionary

---

<sup>66</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 1 March 1826, 112.

<sup>67</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 291.

<sup>68</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 31 January 1826, 1214. Italics original.

activities. Looking at the future of Cuba, James Hamilton of South Carolina predicted revolution followed quickly by servile revolt, threatening both the southern states specifically and U.S. access to the Gulf of Mexico more generally.<sup>69</sup>

Representative William Brent of Louisiana shared the Southern fear of abolition in Cuba and Puerto Rico, though he supported the Panama Mission, believing U.S. involvement might prevent the colonies' precipitous liberation from Spain. He likewise spoke about race through indirection, pointing out that while of course his sympathies lay with any people still in the thrall of a monarch, Spain's islands presented a special case, one which a Southern man must "*feel*," though "I need not refer to the population of Cuba, to justify my fears."<sup>70</sup> Brent proceeded to sketch for Congress various scenarios that would follow in the wake of the liberation of islands with black majorities, scenes of "ruin, horror, and desolation, too painful to be portrayed" all indicated through suggestion, intimation, and artful rhetoric. Like the narrator of a ghost story who achieves his effects through dramatic pause and silence, letting the imagination of the hearer supply the details, Brent allowed his listeners to make associations with Haiti and the resulting threat for neighboring Louisiana. "[T]he very thought of the consequences flowing from such a state of things, excites feelings too heart-rending to be dwelt upon for one moment. I must turn from them."<sup>71</sup>

Race clearly trumped professed republicanism even more explicitly in some of the testimony. Without a shadow of hesitation, Georgia's John Berrien defended colonization and attacked the goal of independence if the colony in question had a black majority. The last remaining Spanish colonies, Cuba and Puerto Rico, had large slave

---

<sup>69</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 10 April 1826: 2153.

<sup>70</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 6 April 1826: 2062. Italics original.

<sup>71</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 6 April 1826: 2962.

populations, and he imagined that, should the United States participate in the congress, it would be expected to assist in shuffling off the Spanish fetters. In such case Berrien could imagine no other possibility than that “*these Islands [would] pass into the hands of bucaniers [sic], drunk with their new born liberty*” who would re-enact “the horrors of St. Domingo.” There was but one course: “Cuba and Puerto Rico *must remain as they are.*”<sup>72</sup> The safety of the South—by which he presumably meant the white South—depended upon prevailing over those so literal-minded as to insist that “he who would tolerate slavery is unworthy to be free.”<sup>73</sup> But in this position, Berrien only seconded John Quincy Adams. Owing to the “peculiar composition of their population . . . It is unnecessary to enlarge upon this topic, or to say more than that all our efforts in reference to this interest, will be to preserve the existing state of things,” Adams had admitted.<sup>74</sup> However the defense of European colonization in the Western Hemisphere and the limitation of liberty would seem to be inconsistent with U.S. ideals, the complexion of Latin America demanded a new and more limited understanding of liberty.

One way around this conundrum—in which liberty was not available to everyone—was to define liberty in a particular way. The fulfillment of the promise of freedom—from the standpoint of the abolition of slavery—would seem to be one area where the South American students had vaunted ahead of their so-called teachers. But this mark of superiority depended entirely on what liberty signified. “The fundamental principle of all liberty, Mr [Samuel] H[ouston of Tennessee] said, in his opinion, was equal rights, equal privileges, laws that give protection to individuals, to their lives,

---

<sup>72</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 285. Italics original.

<sup>73</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 285. Italics original.

<sup>74</sup> Message of the President of the United States to the House of Representatives, *Register of Debates in Congress*, (Appendix), 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 15 March 1826, 71.

persons, and property: where the People are represented, and where every man has liberty of conscience guaranteed [sic].”<sup>75</sup> “Liberty of property” presumably included slave property, a right denied in nations with universal emancipation; “liberty of conscience” was code for the absence of established religion.

But liberty to African slaves, insisted some congressmen, threatened the entire social order. Representing the grain-growing state of Pennsylvania, James Buchanan made a remarkable attempt to identify the soul of the nation that would transcend both party division and section. “The cause of liberty in South America is the cause of the whole American People, not of any party,” he declared.<sup>76</sup> The investment of the United States in the republicanism of its Southern neighbors was something upon which the whole country had to agree. On the other hand, added Buchanan, the entire country could find benefits in the continuation of Cuba’s colonial status. Cuba accounted for both one-seventh of the imports and nearly as much of the exports of the United States—a greater proportion than the rest of the Southern Republics. Particularly if it assisted in Cuba’s struggle for independence, Mexico would represent a potential rival for this trade, and its liberation of the island would hurt the West.<sup>77</sup> For the South, the threat of Cuban liberation was even more obvious, involving “a subject to which I have never before adverted upon this floor, and to which, I trust, I may never again have occasion to avert. I mean the subject of slavery.” Though slavery was an evil, Buchanan insisted, its elimination would involve dangers to the prosperity and even safety of the “high-minded, and the chivalrous race of men in the South” that could not be permitted. “For my own

---

<sup>75</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 2 February 1826, 1258.

<sup>76</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 11 April 1826: 2169.

<sup>77</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 11 April 1829: 2179.

part I would, without hesitation, buckle on my knapsack, and march in company with my friend from Massachusetts (MR. EVERETT) in defense of their cause.”<sup>78</sup>

Because of their insistence on the differences between the United States and Latin America, it was possible for senators and congressmen to discuss slavery without violating the informal ban on slavery discourse in the federal arena. Ever since the debates over the Missouri Compromise had exposed the fateful fault-line between Northern and Southern interests, a tacit understanding had kept debates about slavery in the federal Congress as something of a taboo. “[D]eeply shocked by the volcanic anger and potential for sectional division revealed by the Missouri debate, Congress would rarely discuss slavery without recourse to euphemism and circumlocution,” writes Robert Pierce Forbes in *The Missouri Compromise and its Aftermath*.<sup>79</sup> In particular, Southerners insisted that the very mention of slavery had no place in Congress; it was an issue for state legislation only.

But where the subjects of race, slavery, and abolition in Latin America were concerned, Southerners were more eager to bring them up than Northerners, even as they insisted the federal Congress had no business discussing the subject. “Let us then cease to talk of slavery in this House; let us cease to negotiate upon any subject connected with it,” directed Senator Hugh Lawson White of Tennessee in March 1826, before taking up the thread in the following paragraph:

One word more upon this point, Mr. President, and I will dismiss it. If there be any gentlemen in the United States who seriously wish to see an end of slavery, let them cease talking and writing, to induce the Federal Government to take up the subject, because by the course now being pursued, by some, they are protracting a measure which they profess a wish to hasten the accomplishment of. Whenever the States, in which slavery exists, feel it

---

<sup>78</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 11 April 1826: 2180.

<sup>79</sup> Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise*, 36.

as an evil too intolerable, move towards its removal at home, and apply, through their Legislatures, to this Government for aid to abolish it, then and not sooner, we may discuss it within these walls.<sup>80</sup>

Still unwilling to abandon the subject, however, White proceeded to discuss Haiti and the possibility that the abolition of the slave trade would be brought up in Panama.<sup>81</sup>

The impracticality—indeed the impossibility—of advocating the independence of Cuba was due to nothing more or less than the complexion of the majority of its inhabitants, and the forthrightness with which both Northerners and Southerners expressed this apparently self-evident fact, is striking if not surprising. Indeed, one may see these discussions as a kind of outlet, a safety valve: it allowed the airing of taboo subjects in public. The debates over the Panama Congress supplied an occasion for congressional reference to slavery, sometimes with the kind of circumlocution Forbes talks about but sometimes with startling directness, with the audible sound of relief as bottled-up opinions were at last vented. That Cuba and all of Latin America *were* perceived as foreign, that their commitment to republicanism could not quite erase their otherness, made this frank discussion possible, and even allowed the bolder congressmen to address U.S. slavery directly. John Randolph, hardly typical, but sometimes saying what others feared to express, declared, “[Slavery] is a thing which cannot be hid—it is not a dry rot that you can cover with the carpet, until the house tumbles about your ears—you might as well try to hide a volcano, in full operation.”<sup>82</sup>

Some Southern congressmen expressed the fear that complicity with Latin America would force emancipation upon them. “Is this Congress to tell the gentleman from South Carolina, and all of us from the Southern States, that ‘all men are free and

---

<sup>80</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 207-8.

<sup>81</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, March 1826, 208, 210.

<sup>82</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 2 March 1826: 117.

equal;’ and if you join us to command the Emperor of Brazil to descend from his throne, we shall then turn round to you, and say to the United States, ‘Every man is free; and if you refuse to make them so, we will bring seven Republics, in full march, to compel you . . .?’” demanded Representative John Floyd of Virginia.<sup>83</sup> Would participation in the congress signify recognition for Haiti? asked James Hamilton of South Carolina.<sup>84</sup>

Even among the supporters of the administration’s proposal, there was tacit acknowledgement of the difference between the U.S. and Latin America—a difference that was primarily one of race. In his calculation of their progress from humble origins, even Daniel Webster could not refrain from suggesting their essential difference, and that a racial one: “What have we ever known like the colonial vassalage of these States? When did we, or our ancestors, feel, like them, the weight of a political despotism that presses men to the earth, or of that religious intolerance which would shut up Heaven to all but the bigoted. Sir, we sprung from another stock. We belong to another race.”<sup>85</sup> Belonging to another race perhaps had different implications for Daniel Webster than it did for his Southern brethren like John Randolph or James Hamilton—or perhaps not.

Even when slavery did not seem to be the subject of congressional critique, it often lurked just below the surface. In concluding one speech, Webster seemed to be praising the fortitude of the Spanish Americans (even as he managed to get in a dig the Spanish *conquistadores* and their latter-day successors). He concluded his testimony with a quote:

A day of solemn retribution now visits the once proud monarchy of Spain. The prediction is fulfilled. The spirit of Montezuma and the Incas might now well say,

---

<sup>83</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 31 January 1826, 1215.

<sup>84</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 10 April 1826, 2149-50.

<sup>85</sup> *Register of Debates in Congress*, 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, April 14, 1826, 2276.

“Art thou, too, fallen, Iberia? Do we see  
The robber and the murderer weak as we?  
Thou, that has wasted earth, and dared despise  
Alike the wrath and mercy of the skies,  
Thy pomp is in the grave; thy glory laid  
Low in the pit thine avarice has made.”

In a style popular with early-nineteenth century orators, Webster quoted a poem he evidently expected his auditors to recognize as he associated the *criollo* patriots with Montezuma and Atahualpa. The excerpt is from Englishman William Cowper’s long antislavery poem “Charity” (1781). Cowper, a friend of John Newton, the former slave trader turned abolitionist minister (and author of “Amazing Grace”), imagined a scene in which shades of the enslaved Indians of Spanish America emerge from their graves to taunt their former masters: “We come with joy from our eternal rest/To see the oppressor in his turn oppress’d.” Webster’s quotation of this poem simultaneously asserted Spanish inferiority and taunted U.S. Southerners with abolitionism.

On Van Buren’s initiative, those in opposition to Adams and his Panama proposal settled on a strategy of delay. First Adams’ enemies in the Senate demanded a review and publication of the correspondence related to the Panama Congress and then stalled the nomination of delegates. For their part, Van Buren’s allies in the House of Representatives subsequently held up the appropriation of monies to fund the U.S. delegation.<sup>86</sup> Finally on March 14, 1826 the Senate confirmed the nominations of Richard C. Anderson and John Sergeant as ministers plenipotentiary, and appropriations for their remuneration were approved by the House of Representatives in mid-April. In the event, however, Anderson, setting out during malaria season, died on the way, and Sergeant did not arrive until after the congress had adjourned.

---

<sup>86</sup> Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 106; 115.

Mark Jaede suggests that the Panama Congress was an abrupt *coup de grace* for the exuberant glorification of Latin American independence and the popular enthusiasm for universal republicanism and fellowship with the region. For the first time, he surmises, congressional discourse about Latin America emphasized what was dangerous, unsavory, and different about the region.<sup>87</sup> After the widely-published debates exposed newspaper readers to the mixed-race reality and rampant Catholicism of the once-admired republics, he observes a dramatic shift from enthusiasm to reserve. In short, Americans lost interest in the future of their southern neighbors.<sup>88</sup>

Although Jaede is correct that it was difficult to be oblivious about the racial and religious composition of Latin America after 1826, it took a bit longer for public opinion to catch up with political discourse than he suggests. Americans remote from Latin America, and from the center of discussion in Washington, were slow to relinquish their expectations of shared republicanism and their dreams of commercial benefits. The romance of exoticism of Latin America continued to hold their fascination, with both towns and babies christened in tribute well after the immediate postrevolutionary period. Simon Bolivar Hulbert, a Union Private whose Civil War experiences were published as *One Battle Too Many*, was born in 1833.<sup>89</sup> Peru, Indiana, birthplace of the Broadway lyricist and composer Cole Porter was founded in 1834, and Bolivar, Missouri in 1835.

Public toasts, such as those at Fourth of July celebrations, provided both Mark Jaede and David Waldstreicher with a rich source for gauging public opinion.<sup>90</sup> Jaede

---

<sup>87</sup> Jaede, 162.

<sup>88</sup> Jaede, 190.

<sup>89</sup> Simon Bolivar Hulbert, *One Battle Too Many* (Gaithersburg, MD: Olde Soldier's Book, 1987).

<sup>90</sup> Jaede, 41-62; 187-90; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill : Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

notices that the toast to Latin America fell silent by 1827. But during the semicentennial celebrations in 1826, immediately after published reports of congressional testimony had presumably awakened newspaper readers to the many ways Latin America differed from the U.S., toasts reflected popular ambiguity rather than wholesale repudiation. In the typical thirteen toasts, references to South America, Bolivar, or the Panama Congress often appeared at about number eleven, but they were frequently included. Even among toasts reported by one Southern newspaper, *The Richmond Enquirer*, at celebrations in various Virginia communities, these references ranged from the enthusiastic (“Bolivar: Who prefers the plain republican mantle that Washington wore, to the richest imperial robe”;<sup>91</sup> “The Republics of the South! The bright example of the Republics of the North, has not been lost upon them!”<sup>92</sup>) to the cautious (“South American States. As they have done with despots, may they soon extinguish the hopes of Anarchists, by the permanent establishment of wise and free institutions”<sup>93</sup>) to the advisory (“The Republics of South America. *Civil and religious Liberty are inseparable. They cannot shackle the one without crippling the other*”<sup>94</sup>) to the frankly cynical (“The Panama Mission; An egg laid in our Federal Cabinet by the political crusader H. Clay to hatch popularity. In the nest has been found executive corruption, lets its offspring beware of Randolph the Virginia falcon.”)<sup>95</sup> These toasts reflect political faction at home and awareness of the particulars of political organization abroad, but they by no means universally ignore or condemn the new republics.

---

<sup>91</sup> “Toasts Frank at Mitchell’s Spring,” *The Richmond Enquirer* 7 July 1826, 3.

<sup>92</sup> “Celebration by the Richmond Volunteers of the Fiftieth Anniversary of American Independence.” *The Richmond Enquirer*, 7 July 1826, 3.

<sup>93</sup> “Chesterfield Celebration,” *The Richmond Enquirer*, 18 July 1826, 1.

<sup>94</sup> “The Jubilee,” *The Richmond Enquirer*, 18 July 1826, 1. Italics original.

<sup>95</sup> “The following Volunteer Toasts were drank,” *The Richmond Enquirer*, 25 September 1826: 2.

It took more than simply pointing out the racial composition of Latin America to transform the perspectives of U.S. observers. Regardless of race, religion, or Spanish background, local supporters of U.S. participation in the Panama Congress continued discerning a family relationship between the United States and Latin America because of their disavowal of monarchy and their embrace of republicanism. In this respect both the United States and the new Spanish American states shared what Werner Sollors calls nationalities of “consent”—that is, what their citizens had in common was voluntarily chosen, not passed down through blood.<sup>96</sup> Salma Hale, the New Hampshire pamphleteer and former representative to Congress, insisted that “We should prove to our sister republics . . . that we take a lively interest in their success and future prosperity” and attributed family feeling to the Latin Americans as well: “Regarding us as the eldest of the young family of republics,” it was natural that they would solicit and heed the advice of the United States.<sup>97</sup> Republicanism was what made these disparate peoples family. Hale acknowledged that family relations were not always amicable; the U.S. had forged a similar bond with France, which subsequently “forfeited our sympathy, as adherents of republican principles.” But this unsatisfactory outcome did not lead Hale to counsel standoffishness; though he admitted the Latin American states might also prove prodigal with the treasure of independence they had wrested from Spain, they would more likely thrive if the United States were generous with encouragement—and sisterly republics in the neighborhood could only benefit the U.S.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), *passim*.

<sup>97</sup> Hale, “The Administration and the Opposition,” 18-19; 14.

<sup>98</sup> Hale, 16.

It fell to the nation's newspapers, rather than Congress itself, to explain what the Panama debates actually meant. They did not immediately fall in line with the relentless racial analysis that characterized the speeches of many of the politicians, instead continuing to celebrate the possibility of bountiful trade and rapprochement with neighboring republics. When they did connect attendance at Panama to the slavery issue, they could not always be counted upon to say exactly what the party wished. *The Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette*, for example, criticized the way Southern congressmen let their own fears of abolition influence their recognition of the new republics. From Washington, Henry Clay noted in a letter to Cincinnati publisher Charles Hammond that the "Panama articles in the Liberty Hall are able and highly useful" but expressed a wish for "mutual forbearance" on the subject of slavery, particularly from the "Non-slavery holding states, as the stronger, safer and happier party."<sup>99</sup>

In New York, the pro-administration *Post* viewed the growing excitement of the congressional debates with a weary hauteur, declining to work up either any enthusiasm or any consternation over an issue it considered much ado about nothing and presuming that its readers were likewise uninterested in the whole subject.<sup>100</sup> The *Post* identified opposition to participation in the Panama Congress as a politically-motivated rallying point for Adams's enemies and dismissed their case as trivial.<sup>101</sup> But when finally roused to comment upon the debates in Congress, the *Post* excoriated the rhetoric of Randolph

---

<sup>99</sup> Henry Clay to Charles Hammond, 19 April 1826, *The Papers of Henry Clay*, James F. Hopkins and Mary W.M. Hargreaves, editors (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1973): 253.

<sup>100</sup> "The Panama Mission," *New-York Evening Post*, 7 February 1826: 2; "Panama Mission," *New-York Evening Post*, 10 February 1826: 2; "The Panama Mission! The Panama Mission!" *New-York Evening Post*, 6 April 1826: 2. The exclamation points in the last headline do not signal the importance of the subject. The article begins, "Our eyesight is completely tired of seeing these words staring us in the face of every paper from Washington for two months together, and now when we had begun to hope we should see no more of it, behold the *Panama Mission* still before our eyes."

<sup>101</sup> "The Panama Mission," *New-York Evening Post*, 7 February 1826: 2.

and urged participation in the Panama Mission for both practical and philosophical reasons. The U.S. might do good by spreading the benefit of republican principles, and it might do itself some good in the process. The way the *Post* conflated these two objectives suggests a reinterpretation—or at least a decidedly economic inflection—of the U.S. revolutionary goals of fifty years earlier. Rather than seeking liberty from despots, the former Spanish colonies were casting off the fetters of mercantilism: “Great principles are now about to be adopted; a great experiment is making in the world, by which freedom is given to commerce, and the shackles are about to be removed from the enterprise of all nations.”<sup>102</sup> The U.S. might get a share in this good fortune.

For the Old Northwest, the Panama Mission also held out the enticing possibility of enhanced trading opportunities, and western papers worked themselves into more of a lather over the importance of participation than the languid *New York Post*. In roughly equal measure, the *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette* protested the Southern distaste for associating with nations that had abolished slavery, expressed good faith for the republican intentions of the new states, and speculated about the consequences for western prosperity if new commercial possibilities were not adequately exploited or, worse, if relations with South America soured because of southern prejudice. “This subject is one of first importance to the United States generally, but particularly to the Western country,” avowed the pro-Adams *Gazette* on February 17, 1826.

Our local situation must, at no very distant day, lead to the most interesting relations between us and all the states on the Gulf of Mexico: they are our nearest neighbors; our trade must pass almost by their doors, and the character of the two countries [the word “country” is evidently being used very loosely here, with the “Ohio country” one and all of South and Central America the other] is such, that the exports of each will always meet the wants of the other. It would not be extravagant to say,

---

<sup>102</sup> “The Panama Debate Concluded,” *New-York Evening Post*, 14 February 1826: 2.

that their commerce may become, in less than a quarter of a century, of more consequence to the valley of the Mississippi, than that of all the world beside.<sup>103</sup>

On the face of it, this prediction of prodigious trade would seem dubious; both the United States and Latin America at this moment were primarily exporting agricultural products, so the idea that each would supply resources wanted by the other seems unlikely. But an article published a month later quoted statistics to back up this claim with specific regard to Haiti, the locus of much southern disapprobation. In 1824, the *Gazette* stated, U.S. exports to Haiti amounted to nearly two million dollars, with flour, pork, and beef, the products of the West, making up nearly half of total. Sharp-eyed residents of Cincinnati, nicknamed Porkopolis with good reason, would notice that exports of pork totaled \$378,000 and soap and candles (made from the by-products of pork processing) \$158,000.<sup>104</sup>

In such a case it would seem to be more in the interest of the West to mute its objections to the proslavery forces; after all, the intensive cultivation of cash crops in regions dominated by slave societies created markets for the products of free farmers and industrialists, but here the *Gazette* took the high road, condemning the southern arguments and pointing out the hypocrisy of their position. The *Gazette* even went so far as to approve of the potential invasion of Cuba by forces from Mexico and Colombia, a possibility so unpopular with the South that even Adams warned against it.<sup>105</sup> “However the policy of our government, regarding chiefly the security of the slave property of the Southern states, may unite with the views of European governments, in retaining Cuba as a colonial appendage of Spain, we think it very clear that, in all other respects, its

---

<sup>103</sup> “The Congress at Panama,” *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette*, 17 February 1826: 3.

<sup>104</sup> “Negro Slavery,” *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette*, 11 April 1826: 3.

<sup>105</sup> “Cuba,” *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette*, 20 January 1826: 2

independence would be of advantage to itself and to this country,” the *Gazette* noted dryly, appending another chart showing the value of exports to Cuba.<sup>106</sup>

Not until October was the translation of a speech delivered by Don Manuel Lorenzo de Vidaurre of Peru at the opening of the Panama Congress on June 22, 1826 published in the *Cincinnati* newspaper. Vidaurre began with a lesson in the world history of republicanism and then proposed that people of all religious faiths be welcomed, that blacks be respected on terms equal to whites, and that free trade be observed among all American ports.<sup>107</sup> Rather than noting that the speech focused on ideals rather than realities, the *Gazette* accepted its evident sincerity. The paper surmised that any of the critics of attendance at the conference—raving John Randolph of Virginia was specifically invoked—would be covered with “shame and humiliation” at an honest contemplation of the speech. It evidently had been delivered in an audience of both black and white deputies. “But black or white, we challenge Mr. Randolph, or any of his party, to produce a sounder or more republican essay, than the one now before us. It is candid, luminous, and patriotic. It breathes the pure spirit of freedom, and discovers a mind enlightened with all the science pertaining to Republican government.”<sup>108</sup>

At New Orleans, the Mississippi port into which South America-bound produce from the West flowed, eagerness for participation in the Panama Congress was considerably muted, at least in the pages of the *Louisiana State Gazette*. A bilingual newspaper (English and French), the *Gazette* emphasized news of the state congress; it took two to three weeks to get dispatches from Washington, New York, or Philadelphia. Its maritime register mentioned cotton more than *Cincinnati* hams, and it reflected the

---

<sup>106</sup> “Cuba,” *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette*, 14 April 1826: 3.

<sup>107</sup> “Speech,” *The Cincinnati Gazette*, 6 October 1826: 2.

<sup>108</sup> “‘Measures, and Not Men’: Congress at Panama,” *The Cincinnati Gazette*, 6 October 1826: 3.

interests of the slave South more than the grain-growing West. Its objections to the Panama Mission focused less on the fate of Cuba or executive overreaching than the threat of entangling alliances. “If South American independence is threatened, this government can give to our neighbors aid and succor, without alliances.”<sup>109</sup> Explicitly disavowing anti-administration motivations for its opposition to the mission, the *Gazette* maintained a consistent reluctance against “intermeddling” in Latin American affairs.<sup>110</sup> The new states were too tentative in their steps, too unsettled in their arrangements, to be implicitly trusted; when news reached the *Gazette* at the end of June of a revolutionary force headed by General Jose Paez opposing the new government of Gran Colombia, the *Gazette* adopted an I-told-you-so position recalling its opposition to the Panama Mission.<sup>111</sup>

Andrew Jackson’s providential victory in the Battle of New Orleans had occurred only eleven years earlier; perhaps the *Gazette*’s lack of enthusiasm for anything that suggested a military commitment also reflected that recent experience in which disaster and dishonor had so narrowly been avoided. It recognized that one difference between the United States and the republics of Latin America was the reliance among the latter on standing armies. In April, 1826, the *Gazette* announced the fall of the Columbian Castle of Callao, a Royalist stronghold, and expressed some fear over an unemployed military force gunning for additional victories. If Bolivar followed the model of Washington, which he claimed for himself, he would reduce the size of the army; but more likely the Marshal of Avacucho would set his sights on Brazil, still an empire, or Cuba. “The conquest of Cuba to such a man, and with such an army will be but the work of a day.

---

<sup>109</sup> (No title), *Louisiana State Gazette*, 3 March 1826: 2.

<sup>110</sup> (No title), *Louisiana State Gazette*, 15 April 1826: 2.

<sup>111</sup> (No title), *Louisiana State Gazette*, 26 June 1826: 2.

An unemployed army in sight of our coast, flushed with victory, and panting for future conquest, may create no alarm at Boston—but it will excite deep and painful thoughts to the reflecting inhabitants from the mouth of the Sabine to the mouth of the Potomac.”<sup>112</sup>

In Richmond, Virginia, readers of Thomas Ritchie’s *Richmond Enquirer* were aware of the Panama Congress even before Adams announced that he had accepted the invitation to attend. On December 4, 1825, the *Enquirer* reprinted an article from the *National Gazette* pointing out that it might be prudent to participate in any gathering where the fate of Cuba was to be discussed.<sup>113</sup> However, when the President’s Message was received—a mere fourteen-and-a-half hours after it was printed in the *National Intelligencer*, the *Enquirer* exulted—Ritchie immediately took issue with the prospect of attendance at the Panama Mission.<sup>114</sup> Here is evidence that opposition to the mission did not have to be concocted—it was clearly spontaneous—but what rankled Ritchie was Adams’ declaration that the invitation to participate had already been accepted and his assurance that ministers would be commissioned. Adams was clearly overstepping his Constitutional prerogatives.

To its credit, what contributed to the foreignness of Latin America for the *Richmond Enquirer* was not simply the complexion of the Latin Americans, or their policy of abolition. Having obtained from the *Philadelphia Gazette* a sketch of a constitution for the new state of Bolivia said to be of Bolivar’s authorship, the *Enquirer* criticized the way in which the Liberator departed from the federal model of the U.S. Constitution in order to confer “large powers . . . on a Consolidated Government [that], on the contrary, carry with them so much patronage and influence into the hands of the

---

<sup>112</sup> (No title), *Louisiana State Gazette*, 20 April 1826: 2.

<sup>113</sup> “Suggestions,” *The Richmond Enquirer* 4 December 1825: 4.

<sup>114</sup> “The President’s Message: Splendid Government!” *The Richmond Enquirer*, 8 December 1825: 3.

Chief Magistrate, that though it may begin with the name of a Republic, will end in a Monarchy.”<sup>115</sup> (Ritchie’s praise of the federal model, of course, primarily applauded the way those powers not conferred on the central government are reserved for the states.) Bolivar’s proposed legislature consisted of three houses, the highest of which, the Censors, were to hold office for life—as was the president, who also had the power to appoint his successor. In defense of this last position, Bolivar referenced Haiti, a precedent hardly likely to appeal to the *Richmond Enquirer*. If South America had previously copied U.S. models, it was now obviously setting off in a new direction, perhaps because “they have found that the state of society in the two hemispheres is so widely different as to require a different political organization.”<sup>116</sup> If the citizens of Bolivia perceived a difference, perhaps the United States should recognize one as well.

After the Senate confirmation of Anderson and Sergeant, “P. Henry,” writing in the *Richmond Enquirer*, decided that the results of the votes were “curious, and ominous.”<sup>117</sup> “By reference to the map . . . it will be seen, that the whole country south of the Pennsylvania Line, and of the River Ohio, to the Gulph of Mexico, [save Maryland, immediately in the focus of Presidential influence, and Little Delaware, who, I apprehend, is about to fall from ‘her high estate,’] is opposed to this novel, if not dangerous scheme of international diplomacy.”<sup>118</sup> What was “ominous” was not the fact that the vote had broken on clearly sectional lines, but that the kind of intelligent statesmen who dominated the slave-holding regions were so obviously absent from the North and West.

---

<sup>115</sup> “Bolivar and Bolivia,” *The Richmond Enquirer*, 31 October 1826: 3.

<sup>116</sup> “Bolivar and Bolivia,” 3.

<sup>117</sup> “P. Henry,” “Panama,” *The Richmond Enquirer*, 4 April 1826: 3.

<sup>118</sup> “P. Henry,” “Panama.” Bracketed material original.

Actually congressional voting patterns were a bit more complex than “P. Henry” suggested. The interests of the South further diverged according to geography. As historian Andrew R.L. Cayton points out, Maryland and Louisiana, with port cities heavily invested in South American trade, endorsed the Panama Mission. Meanwhile, the North and West were even less solid in their support: while the Northeast was relatively firm in backing the administration, in the West, the Susquehanna and Ohio river valleys demonstrated more interest in the potential benefits of the congress than rural areas remote from water-born trade.<sup>119</sup> But Cayton acknowledges that the protection of slavery and increased opportunities for commerce, more than other, more abstract causes, determined voting patterns.<sup>120</sup> In the essential self-interest of the U.S. support for the mission, the historian Piero Gleijeses agrees. In extending actual assistance to the Latin American revolutionaries generally, and in backing the Panama Congress more specifically, “US sympathy . . . was shallow and warped by territorial greed.”<sup>121</sup> A young republic, its resources tied up in its own defense and development, the United States concentrated on ways of “helping” its neighbors that would bring about better opportunities for itself. Americans were willing to overlook race where money was involved.

Yet this analysis may be unnecessarily cynical; at any rate it hardly tells the whole story. Let one example of a less than purely self-interested popular response suffice. On July 4, 1827, “Philanthropos” published a book called *Essays on Peace and War, Which*

---

<sup>119</sup> Andrew R.L. Cayton, “The Debate over the Panama Congress and the Origins of the Second American Party System,” *The Historian* 47, no. 2 (February 1985): 236-7.

<sup>120</sup> Cayton, 237.

<sup>121</sup> Piero Gleijeses, “The Limits of Sympathy: The United States and the Independence of Latin America,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, no. 3 (October 1992): 505.

*First Appeared in the Christian Mirror.*<sup>122</sup> “Philanthropos” was William Ladd, a Maine anti-war activist who was shortly to establish the American Peace Society. He devoted one of his essays to the Panama Mission, writing, “I can hardly express the relief of my mind, on hearing of the final favorable settlement of this question. . . . I view the Congress of Panama as one of the links in the great chain of events, by which Providence designs to bind all the nations of Christendom,—which will be, finally, all the nations of the world,—in one grand bond of permanent and universal peace.”<sup>123</sup> Ladd also noted a correspondence between the opponents of the mission and the supporters of slavery. “Thus, in this case, as in all others, we find a natural alliance between liberty and peace, slavery and war.”<sup>124</sup> At the Panama Congress, Ladd saw a remarkable confluence of opportunities not for profit but the complete abolition of the slave trade; the end of privateering; a system of international law that would, at a minimum, define contraband and the right of blockade; and the ultimate extension of religious liberty. He beheld the gathering as a potential prototype for the eventual establishment of something that sounds very much like the United Nations.<sup>125</sup> But even Ladd recognized the differences that divided the U.S. and Latin America. He asserted that he did not desire all the nations of the hemisphere, or all Christian nations, united in one empire.<sup>126</sup>

On the surface, it seems clear that in 1826 Americans at home analyzed the Panama situation from many perspectives, not simply racial ones. They had to be coached to pick up on racial cues, and they did not pick them up immediately. But the

---

<sup>122</sup> “Philanthropos” (William Ladd), *Essays on Peace & War, Which First Appeared in the Christian Mirror*, Printed at Portland, Me. (Portland: A. Shirley, 1827).

<sup>123</sup> “Philanthropos,” 83-4.

<sup>124</sup> “Philanthropos,” 85.

<sup>125</sup> “Philanthropos,” 89.

<sup>126</sup> “Philanthropos,” 93.

often-repeated refrains of the Panama Congress debates, that Latin America was different (and therefore inferior) from the United States, that the most important difference concerned race, and that Latin America was therefore safe ground upon which to consider slavery, indeed penetrated regional consciousness over the next decade. What happened?

By the time Ladd's *Essays on Peace and War* was published in 1827, it was becoming clear that the vision of Pan-Americanism proffered by the Panama Congress would ultimately come to naught. Although Buenos Aires and Chile refrained from attending, ministers from Peru, Mexico, Colombia and Guatemala did meet and approved tentative agreements providing for a common army and mutual defense, adjourned, and agreed to reconvene in Tacubaya, Mexico, after their governments had ratified the treaties. But only Colombia went so far as to take that step. With less considerably fanfare than in 1826, Congress approved the posting of John Sergeant and Joel Poinsett to Tacubaya in 1827, but that convocation never took place.<sup>127</sup>

In the years following the pan-American conference in Panama, U.S. politicians and diplomats sent home damning accounts of encounters with their counterparts in the fumbling young republics and their failure to realize republican ideals. In 1832 Francis Baylies, a former Federalist congressman serving as the U.S. *chargé d'affaires* in Argentina, wrote to Gulian C. Verplanck in New York

I wish our moonstruck, imaginative romantic politicians who have deluded themselves with such notions of South American liberty and South American greatness could stay here one-week—I think their hallucinations would be dispelled. . . . I have no hesitation in saying that I think that any well regulated tribe of Indians have better notions of national justice—national dignity—and national policy than the rulers of this Sister Republic of ours.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings*, 365-6; Cayton, 236.

<sup>128</sup> Francis Baylies to Gulian C. Verplanck, 26 July 1832, Verplanck Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York. My thanks to Brendan O'Malley for bringing this material to my attention.

(Note however than despite his sarcasm, Baylies grudgingly acknowledges that even among politicians some deep-rooted confidence in the eventual progress of the “Sister Republics” persists.)

These censures of Latin American culture proliferated in the literature of travel and description published in the U.S. This literature can be read as an American response to European accounts. Captain Basil Hall, Frances Trollope, and Charles Dickens all wrote scathing travel narratives of their experiences in the U.S., describing the same flaws with the thoroughness of checking off items on a list: newspaper reading, incessant spitting, a preoccupation with the getting of money.<sup>129</sup> To omit notice of one was like missing a landmark on a tourist itinerary. American visitors to Latin America simply turned their invective on the next most barbaric destination, composing their own catalogue of faults and retailing their own stereotypes—Catholic church services suspect in their gorgeous theatricalism, bloody cockfights patronized by fat clergymen, well-to-do families with ancestors of dark complexions. The unremitting foreignness of Mexico, Cuba, and Brazil reassured North Americans about their own superiority in the face of European contempt.

The encounter of North Americans and Latin Americans was a clash of these stereotypes—shrewd, enterprising, go-ahead visitors from the United States hurrying along lazy, backward Mexicans or Peruvians. Third-party observers noted them, too. Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley, journeying through North and Central America during the heady days of the Gold Rush in 1849 and 1850, described the “Americanization” of

---

<sup>129</sup> Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lee & Carey, 1829); Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Printed for Whittaker, Treacher, & Co., 1832); Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (New York, Wilson & Co., 1842).

Panama, when enterprising Yankees, seeking ways to profit from ferrying Forty-Niners across the Isthmus to the Pacific, forced labor upon the indolent natives, causing considerable ill feeling. In a glitteringly perceptive observation, Stuart Wortley remarked, “[W]herever there is an American, there is America: he carries his country about with him, and his unremitting industry and perseverance subjugate all around him.”<sup>130</sup>

To the extent that high hopes for the Panama Congress were inflated by dreams of mighty commercial coup, Latin America soon enough proved disappointing. On a typical day in 1826 a port city advertised a dozen ships preparing to sail for Buenos Aires, Valparaiso, Havana and Monte Video.<sup>131</sup> But what commercial advantages could be obtained at the Panama Congress were scooped up by Great Britain’s Edward Dawkins, who represented a nation with products and credit the United States could not supply and who refrained from speaking out against the invasion of Cuba.<sup>132</sup> Meanwhile, the vision of Latin America as a vast marketplace conjured by James Buchanan and the *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette* proved elusive. There was a reason Cuba was such a good market for American products: its economy had not been devastated by war. Mexico, by contrast, took a long time to recover economically. “There is no cash in the country except in the hands of a few individuals, who are already supplied with more goods than they can consume in two years,” complained the *National Intelligencer* in 1825.<sup>133</sup> A population swelled by European immigration never quite materialized: European immigrants perceived the superiority of economic opportunities in the United States.

---

<sup>130</sup> Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley, *Travels in the United States, etc. During 1849 and 1850* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), 343.

<sup>131</sup> A typical example appears in the *Louisiana State Gazette*, 11 April 1826, 2.

<sup>132</sup> Cayton, 236.

<sup>133</sup> “Interior Trade with Mexico,” *National Intelligencer*, 3 December 1825 (supplement), 2.

And as the years went by, the North-South routes made imperative by riparian and maritime transportation were supplanted or at least rivaled by West-East railroad routes, which turned the West into a breadbasket for the industrializing East.

The period following the Panama Congress was once characterized as the Transportation Revolution with good reason; canals, turnpikes, steam-powered boats running on predictable schedules, railroads and telegraphs collapsed the distance that had separated far-flung locations.<sup>134</sup> Fellowship with republicans regardless of complexion became more problematic when they suddenly seemed to be living next door. Unflattering reports of the laziness and prodigality of Spanish Americans reached the U.S. more quickly. The Latin American market, as Richard Henry Dana noted in his 1840 *Two Years Before the Mast*, in which he recounted a voyage as a common sailor from Boston round the cape to California and back, was relatively unsophisticated. The local population he encountered on the Pacific coast lined up to buy the gimcrackery of Massachusetts manufacture for something like three hundred percent the going rate in Boston.<sup>135</sup> Dana scornfully listed the “boots and shoes from Lynn, calicoes and cottons from Lowell” that could be unloaded on “an idle, thriftless people [who] can make nothing for themselves.”<sup>136</sup> Although he did understand that the high prices paid by the people were partly owing to the tariff imposed by the Mexican government hoping to prevent an outflow of silver from the country, Dana chose to view this gullibility not as

---

<sup>134</sup> See George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York: Rinehart, 1951).

<sup>135</sup> Richard Henry Dana, Jr., *Two Years before the Mast* (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), 82.

<sup>136</sup> Dana, 81.

fault that might as easily characterize New Englanders transported to an isolated frontier but as an congenital flaw in the Spanish character.<sup>137</sup>

But if longer in coming, popular understanding of Latin America as a place where race and slavery did not look the way they did in the U.S. ultimately made an impression. As we will see in the following chapters, new understandings of race as a justification for slavery would gain ground in the U.S. South for a variety of reasons. Alarm over real and supposed threats to the peculiar institution would grow. The debates left a bad taste in the mouths of many Southerners, convinced that John Quincy Adams had intended to use his office to wrest control of slavery from the states. The emergence of the Democratic Party under Andrew Jackson became for these people a safeguard of their rights as slaveholders.<sup>138</sup>

Abolitionists in the North had an even longer memory. In a pamphlet published during the U.S. War with Mexico, Loring Moody quoted Senator Berrien's remarks in the Panama Congress debates to show just how far short of the example set by the Latin American republics the United States fell in its commitment to liberty: "In what respect did the United States differ from 'these new republics,' which this sturdy democrat here [Berrien] stigmatized as 'Bucaniers?'" asked Moody. "Certainly there is a broad difference,—the United States—whether bucaniers or not—never got so 'drunk with their new born liberty,' as to demolish their human flesh shambles, in the boisterous merriment of their intoxication. They were always sober enough to keep the watch-dogs of their

---

<sup>137</sup> Dana, 82.

<sup>138</sup> William J. Cooper, Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 8-9.

plantations well trained . . . ”<sup>139</sup> So for both the South and the North, the greatest point of difference would come to be the way Latin America resolved the issue of slavery.

But in 1826 divergent understandings of race and slavery were only one component in a whole palette of difference between the republics of the Americas. While it was difficult to be blind to the foreignness of an area that had been scrutinized so publicly, some Americans clung to hopes for fellowship, while others uneasily acknowledged that achieving fellowship would involve a great deal of patience and effort.

Something of the complexity of these initial post-Panama reactions is revealed in Timothy Flint’s *Francis Berrian, or, the Mexican Patriot*, a fictional work that appeared in American bookstores “in the fifty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America,” as the publisher noted.<sup>140</sup> It was the first U.S. novel with a Spanish-American setting.<sup>141</sup> Published even as the Congress of Panama assembled *sans* representatives of the United States during the summer of 1826, *Francis Berrian* witnesses the creation of the new Mexican republic through the eyes of a Massachusetts native who plays a pivotal role in the war for Mexican independence in 1821 and 1822.<sup>142</sup> This character becomes

---

<sup>139</sup> Loring Moody, *Facts for the People: Showing the Relations of the United States Government to Slavery* (Boston, 1847), 40.

<sup>140</sup> Timothy Flint, *Francis Berrian, or, The Mexican Patriot* (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company: 1826), I, 2.

<sup>141</sup> Frederick S. Stimson, “‘Francis Berrian’: Hispanic Influence on American Romanticism,” *Hispania* 42, no. 4 (December 1959): 511; John T. Flanagan and Raymond L. Grismer, “Mexico in American Fiction Prior to 1850,” *Hispania* 23, no. 4 (December 1940): 309.

<sup>142</sup> Timothy Flint’s own biography reflected his hero’s background: he was also a Massachusetts transplant to the West, and he explored some, though not all, of the wild country he described in *Francis Berrian*. Frances Trollope, the vituperative English traveler who set down her experiences in the United States in *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, made room in her generally caustic account for a thoroughly positive portrait of Flint: “The most agreeable acquaintance I made in Cincinnati, and indeed one of the most talented men I ever met, was Mr. Flint, the author of several extremely clever volumes, and the editor of the *Western Monthly Review*. His conversational powers are of the highest order: he is the only person I remember to have known with first-rate powers of satire, and even of sarcasm, whose kindness of nature and manner remained perfectly uninjured. In some of his critical notices there is a strength and keenness

in effect an American Lafayette, a foreign visitor swayed by the vision of independence and singularly efficacious in its achievement.<sup>143</sup>

*Francis Berrian* was written by Timothy Flint, a New England native like his hero, who traveled to Cincinnati as a minister but became a novelist, short story writer, and editor of the short-lived journal *The Western Monthly Review* (1827-1830). On the surface, his novel is a story of battle, romance, and upward mobility, resolved by marriage at the end of the second volume. On another level, the novel can easily be read as an allegory, the prediction of the happy union of a personified United States and Mexico, each allowed to retain its essential character. But beneath its adventure-story veneer lurks skepticism about the heroics of revolution, the hardiness of republicanism, and the future of relations between the United States and Latin America. The novel documents the shifting meanings of race and nation, fraternity and foreignness during that memorable summer, demonstrating that the wariness and ambiguity over the implications of future U.S.-Latin American relations was expressed in many varying contexts. The two regions do not share the blood of brothers, but their ultimate marital

---

second to nothing of the kind I have ever read. He is a warm patriot, and so true-hearted an American, that we could not always be of the same opinion on all the subjects we discussed . . .” Mrs. Trollope’s application of the word “patriot” to Timothy Flint is perhaps not coincidental; she read and enjoyed *Francis Berrian, or, The Mexican Patriot*, calling it “excellent” in one place and “delightful” in another. (Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, edited by Donald Smalley, [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949], 90; 178; 313.)

<sup>143</sup> Both *The North American Review* and *The United States Review and Quarterly Gazette* took issue with the improbability of Flint’s fictional hero playing such a leading role among actual historical figures (“Critical Notices: *Francis Berrian*,” *North American Review* 24, no. 54 [January, 1827]: 210-11; *The United States Review and Literary Gazette* November 1826: 1, 2; 94). But Flint based his character on the historical Henry Adams Bullard, the “patriotic soldier of fortune” to whom he dedicated his novel (Flint, I, 3). Bullard, a distant relation of John Quincy Adams, responded to an appeal by Don Jose Alvarez de Toledo to revolutionize Texas in 1813. His efforts were unsuccessful and he was lucky to escape royalist revenge with his life, but he went on to a career as a Louisiana legislator (Dora J. Bonquois, “The Career of Henry Adams Bullard, Louisiana Jurist Legislator, and Educator,” *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 [October 1940]: 999-1106). Joel Poinsett, later U.S. Minister to Mexico, took a similarly active, if less central, role in Chilean independence (Fred Rippy, *The Rivalry of the United States and Great Britain over Latin America, 1808-1830* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929], 10).

union in the novel becomes much more intimate than the fraternity invoked by U.S. congressmen. Race is explicitly not an impediment that presents irreconcilable differences. Yet Flint refrains from promising the perpetual success of this marriage.

The title character, off to seek his fortune, heads to the southwest where he is introduced to a community of Comanches, who live partly by plundering nearby Spanish settlements and holding captives for ransom. There Berrian meets and rescues a Spanish captive, the noble Dona Martha, who throws herself upon his mercies, citing their common background: ““Stranger! you are of our race.””<sup>144</sup> Berrian delivers her into the home of her father, the Conde, a *Gachupin* committed to suppressing the incipient rebellions for independence erupting throughout Mexico.

Despite her Spanish blood, instinctive monarchism, and Catholic piety, Martha turns out to be an appropriate love object; her flashing black eyes and curly black hair remind Berrian of none other than his first beloved, the minister’s pretty daughter back in his native New England.<sup>145</sup> Further, Martha instinctively understands and appreciates the political ideals Berrian takes for granted. The Spanish character—at least as represented by Martha’s family—proves remarkably open to the revealed wisdom of North American ways. Martha is under love’s spell, so it is not surprising that she finds herself “something more than half a Patriot,” as she confesses to a friend.<sup>146</sup> Her mother is not far behind in acknowledging the Patriot cause. Even her father the count is eventually converted. People of Spanish origin do not lie beyond hope of redemption, Berrian recognizes: “Enlighten their ignorance;—break their chains;—remove the threefold veil of darkness with which your priesthood has hoodwinked them. My heart tells me that

---

<sup>144</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian* I, 68.

<sup>145</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian* I, 64.

<sup>146</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian* II, 185.

nothing can be more amiable than the Spanish character,” he says.<sup>147</sup> Martha, a devout Catholic, admits that if Berrian is typical of heretics, she would consider joining their number.

Ultimately Martha does not turn Protestant. Though she is hardly a feminist heroine, she is not a pushover, either. The book’s resolution sees her surrendering neither religion nor country. She and Berrian arrange in their marriage settlement that all their girlchildren shall be educated as Catholics and all boys as Protestants.<sup>148</sup> The couple spends half of each year in Mexico and the other half in New England. Metaphorically, the union Flint imagines, between the United States (male) and Latin America (female), is not represented as one of domination and submission but an apparently even exchange between two well-matched partners of strong character and firm principles. They share their native territory through compromise and cooperation, finding much to admire in both Mexico and the United States.

In fact, Berrian seems no less susceptible to inferior Mexican values than Martha is attracted by the superior virtues of U.S. ways. For example, he reveals a taste for titles and hereditary privileges. When the Conde’s estates are confiscated under the revolutionary Mexican government, the professedly republican Berrian takes up arms with the remnants of the Patriots, rising to the rank of general. The Conde, brought low by the seizure of his property, consents to the marriage of Berrian and Martha. Martha is impatient for the celebration of their union, but Berrian resists her haste, delaying their wedding until the order of confiscation is reversed: ““We do not mean to sheathe the sword of patriotism and justice, until you are reinstated in every tittle of your possessions

---

<sup>147</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian II*, 23.

<sup>148</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian II*, 277.

and honors, which have been so unjustly wrested from you.’”<sup>149</sup> It is an odd scene: Berrian, the ostensible champion of republicanism, swearing to restore the Crown-bestowed property of his aristocratic future father-in-law, who has by this point proved himself to be a thorough-going fool.<sup>150</sup>

It is possible to analyze this personified relationship between the two countries as marked by a blind, or at least nearsighted, infatuation on both sides. The neighboring republics are literally in their honeymoon period, eager to believe the best about one another, though behaving in ways that occasionally reveal that they do not entirely subscribe to the noble ideas they claim to espouse. What does it mean if a Spanish count’s daughter is as good a republican as a New England Yankee? If republicanism is so easy a child can master it—or at least a convent-bred Spanish royalist—how rigorous is it? Even as Berrian delights in the echoes of his own philosophies from the lips of the beautiful Martha, he depends on her faith to reify the dogma about which he seems to entertain some doubt. If Martha is less an apt pupil who is instinctively drawn to the truth of republicanism than a silly schoolgirl copying a highly fallible husband, what will the future bring?

Two celebrations bookend Francis Berrian’s adventures, (even as the national jubilee served as the context of the novel’s publication). Early in the story, after Berrian’s rescue of Martha, the Conde has a party to celebrate her safe return.<sup>151</sup> On his estate, the Conde and Condesa and their daughter share the dance floor with Martha’s corpulent duenna and the family’s illspoken Irish servant. Titled guests smile upon the

---

<sup>149</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian II*, 239.

<sup>150</sup> The Conde is also a scoundrel. Trying to win Don Pedro’s favor, Martha’s father colludes in her kidnapping and forced marriage. Martha’s strategies buy her some time in forestalling this development, but at last Berrian arrives to prevent its consummation.

<sup>151</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian I*, 150.

Terpsichorean efforts of the humble, and servants share the dance floor with the great. “Our national manners call for all this, and allow strangers privileges here, which would not be tolerated in any other place,” says Martha, when Berrian turns up his nose at this demonstration of unexpected democracy. “I should think it would be conformable to your republican notions to see the rich and the poor mixing together in the same sports, in which their ancestors mixed in the generations of the past. Will you have the goodness to walk this dance with me?”<sup>152</sup> To Martha’s annoyance, Berrian refuses. After a sleepless night of torment, however, he accepts the justice of her rebuke and begs her forgiveness.<sup>153</sup>

Then at the end of *Francis Berrian*, Flint’s hero takes his new bride on a visit to his family in Massachusetts. On the way, she notes the generally prosperous appearance of the urban populations of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, where the disparity of wealth and condition to which she is accustomed in Mexico is not apparent.<sup>154</sup> But Berrian wants to make a particularly good impression on his new wife in showing off his hometown, so he sends Bryan, his clownish but loyal Irish servant, ahead of the bridal party “with a good round sum of dollars” to be invested in “plenty of wine, turkies, and pies for a sociable visit of a whole winter” as well as new clothes for his family and a fresh coat of whitewash for his father’s stone fence.<sup>155</sup> Bryan, a veritable Potemkin preparing a village for the state visit by the empress, does his work well: Berrian finds his mother decked out in “false ‘everlastings,’ false teeth, and every thing false but her

---

<sup>152</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian I*, 152.

<sup>153</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian I*, 152.

<sup>154</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian II*, 269-70.

<sup>155</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian II*, 271.

maternal heart” and his father suitably unrecognizable in a “long-tailed wig.”<sup>156</sup>

Berrian’s whole village proceeds to partake in an extended orgy of “invitations, and dinners, and parties without number”<sup>157</sup> where his less fortunate neighbors vie with one another in their degree of fawning adulation and envy. They want to bestow on Berrian a title, finally settling on General in preference to Don or Duke, and, however jealous of his good fortune, they give him his due “of being estimated somewhat according to my merits. The people there all possess, at least, a most accurate sense of the real and practical utility of dollars; and much as they look down upon all assumption of every sort, they think none the less of a man for being rich.”<sup>158</sup>

A curious contrast, to be sure: two festive occasions, the one in aristocratic Mexico where “old and young, parents and children, masters and servants, on these occasions to join in the same dance;” the one in the United States characterized by titles, false hair, and envy, where “merits” are equated with dollars. Looked at from one perspective, Hispanic “amiability” bodes well for the future relations of the United States and the Spanish republics. But from another angle some troubling ambiguities emerge, and Berrian looks less like he has met his bride halfway than that he is the one who has been seduced.

The differences between the U.S. and Latin America are not racial ones; as Martha points out, “you are of our race.” (In marked contrast, by 1835 the novelist Robert Montgomery Bird would acknowledge that “among the southern provinces of Spain and Portugal . . . the blood of Europe has mingled harmoniously with the life-tides

---

<sup>156</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian II*, 274.

<sup>157</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian II*, 275.

<sup>158</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian II*, 276.

of Africa.”<sup>159</sup>) Still, the differences are real, and potentially dangerous to the U.S. If Mexico is elevated by association with its handsome neighbor, the U.S. is somehow debased. The relationship also points up ways in which the U.S. falls short of its own professed ideals. If anything defines—and divides—the characters beyond hope of change, it is, paradoxically, class, as much as political affiliation, country of nativity, or religion. While Flint acknowledges that the Patriot army is primarily composed of Indian, mulatto, and Creole “rabble,”<sup>160</sup> his characters are the well-educated, like Francis and his Harvard classmates, who are drawn to the struggle for liberty; or the titled, like the Conde and his family; or the well-to-do, like a Saxon family of minor characters. As far as the progress of the novel is concerned, the rabble need scarcely exist, and some of the characters even declare that these people are not worthy of liberty. Is Flint suggesting that it is in this failed goal of republican equality that the success of the project of independence is marred? Except for Martha’s challenge concerning Francis’ fastidiousness about the fandango, there seem few suggestions that Flint regards segregation by class as unnatural or undesirable. Still, Martha’s censure hangs in the air.

The novel, which is narrated by the author who has encountered Berrian on a southbound steamboat, concludes with a curiously resentful meditation. The author’s descriptions of Berrian are charged with occasional hints of homoeroticism, as he displays a breathless admiration for his hero, repeatedly describing Berrian as attractive, even “pretty,” and expressing jealousy for the happiness of this much-blessed paragon. At their parting, the author’s resentment is mitigated only by a reflection on Berrian’s mortality:

---

<sup>159</sup> Robert Montgomery Bird, *The Infidel; or, The Fall of Mexico: A Romance* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1835), I 57.

<sup>160</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian I*, 283.

[W]hen I parted from this amiable man hurrying back to his Martha with the eagerness and impatience of love, my fancy ran on to sketching his meeting with his family in Durango. I was verging towards something like envy at the idea of the rare felicity that seemed to have fallen to his lot. But on the whole, I remembered how soon the great leveller [sic], Death, will set all these on a footing of equality, and every emotion of that sort died away.<sup>161</sup>

It is not in the marriage bed that Mexico and the United States will find “a footing of equality,” but in the grave.

That Flint himself became increasingly conflicted about the probable future of republicanism south of the U.S. border is demonstrated among the pages of his journal *The Western Monthly Review*. In September, 1827, a prophetic report from the imaginary *Gazette of Oregon* seventy-three years in the future reported favorably on the progress of “[o]ur adjacent sister Spanish republics” which both emulated and were emulated by the United States.<sup>162</sup> On the other hand, supplying his readers with a digest of Robert Owen’s visit to Mexico, Flint mentioned the “ignorant, factious, bigoted and versatile inhabitants, who seem as little fitted to enjoy that liberty, for which they are struggling through revolutions, as the slaves of our southern country would be, if they were at once emancipated.”<sup>163</sup> Flint also produced “Paulina, or the Cataract of Tequendama,” a short story set in Colombia that reprised in eight pages many of the situations of the 600-page *Francis Berrian*. Published in 1830, its hopes for the proximate progress of republicanism were decidedly tepid, amidst “the heavy, monotonous and sickening

---

<sup>161</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian II*, 284-5.

<sup>162</sup> Timothy Flint, “Noval Progenies et Aurea Sec’la Redeunt,” *The Western Monthly Review*, September 1827: 257.

<sup>163</sup> Timothy Flint, “Owen’s Concluding Speech,” *The Western Monthly Review*, September 1829: 142-3.

chronicle of politics, and Bolivar, and what knave of to-day has supplanted the fool of yesterday.”<sup>164</sup>

John Pendleton Kennedy goes further in the novel *Swallow Barn* (1832). The intention of the character Ned Hazard to help liberate Latin America is presented as a youthful indiscretion, a “scurvy crusade,” and no dark-eyed senorita beckons him to mix his blood with hers.

A few years ago he was seized with a romantic fever which manifested itself chiefly in a conceit to visit South America, and play knight-errant in the quarrel of the Patriots. . . . [A]fter glancing at the Patriots in all their positions, attitudes, and relations,—with an eye military and civil,—and being well bitten with fleas, and apprehended as a spy, and nearly assassinated as a heretic, he carefully looked back upon the whole train of this fancy, even from its first engendering, with all the motives, false conclusions, misrepresentations, and so forth, which had a hand in the adopting and pursuing of it, and then came to a sober conclusion that he was the most egregious fool that had ever set out in quest of a wild goose.<sup>165</sup>

In the years following the Panama Congress debates of 1826, many of the new states of Latin America failed to live up to the rosy predictions of U.S. optimists. Some of the republics slipped into a period of *caudillismo*, where local strongmen and petty dictators snatched the reins of power over separate territories. At the same time, some took the concepts of liberty and republicanism to an extreme to which the U.S. would not follow. In the United States the meaning of the newly emerging democracy was trimmed to exclude men of color and women generally. In the years that followed, the franchise was increasingly withheld from black freemen, and the possibility of manumission for individual slaves was similarly circumscribed. The Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831,

---

<sup>164</sup> Timothy Flint, “Paulina, or the Cataract of Tequendama,” *The Western Monthly Review*, March 1830: 469.

<sup>165</sup> John Pendleton Kennedy, *Swallow Barn, Or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion*, (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1962) [facsimile of the revised edition of 1853], 52-3.

demonstrating how sorely slaves chafed under bondage, was met not with a less burdensome yoke but heavier chains. The new republics of Latin America had extended an invitation to attend a congress, but also challenged the U.S. to accept an enlarged definition of its own ideals. Like Francis Berrian answering Martha's invitation, the United States refused, effectively responding, "If I wished to caricature rational beings in the deepest malignity of heart, I would set them to capering, bowing, skipping, cringing, and conducting after the manner of this dance."<sup>166</sup>

The multivariate nature of U.S. responses to the Panama Mission both in and out of Congress suggests that what happened in 1826 was not an abrupt change in attitude by citizens of the U.S. concerning their southern neighbors. But the proclamations of difference, particularly racial difference, began displacing the expectations of fellowship and communion. In 1826 the understanding of race and slavery was only one of the ways the U.S. differed from Latin America, but it would come to be the most conspicuous because of changes taking place in the United States. As we will see in the following chapters, the United States continued to hold up its southern neighbors for purposes of comparison. But with the rise of Jacksonian democracy, scientific racism, and virulent abolitionist and proslavery rhetoric, the differences between Latin America and the United States became more useful than the similarities. In the process of redefining the relationship between early republic of the U.S. and the new republics of Latin America, the definition of republicanism became more limited, and the exceptionalism and racial composition of U.S. nationalism became more pronounced.

---

<sup>166</sup> Flint, *Francis Berrian I*, 153.



**Chapter 2:** Although there are few mid-nineteenth century visual representations of aboriginal earthworks, a fascinating exception is the *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley* by John J. Egan (1850). First exhibited in Philadelphia, the artwork was featured as the centerpiece of a lecture series throughout the Mississippi Valley. Archaeologists tried to establish a connection between the people who had built these mounds and the monuments of Mexico and Peru.



Artist Frederick Catherwood illustrated John Lloyd Stephen's accounts of his explorations of the Yucatan in the early 1840s (the 1844 illustration above depicts a pyramid at Tulum). His sketches, drawn *in situ* with exacting detail, made clear that there was little resemblance to North American mounds.

## Chapter 2

### “Our” Aborigines<sup>1</sup>

#### Making the Toltecs White, 1829-1848

Even as Americans of the post-Panama Congress period distanced themselves from the Latin American version of republicanism, and the mixed-race population of the newly independent nations, they sought connections with the ancient peoples of the New World through the emerging discipline of archaeology. Although the Spanish Americans of Mexico and Peru could not be their brothers because they included people who were not quite white, the long-dead peoples who built the imperial roads of Cuzco and mysteriously abandoned the hidden cities of the Yucatan were claimed as the forefathers of white Americans. The evidence for such beliefs was necessarily circumstantial, and followed this outline: nineteenth-century Indians were nomadic and improvident; they drifted from place to place, warring savagely with other tribes. The ancient builders of America’s ruined monuments—the great mounds of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, the pyramids of Central and South America—were settled and civilized. Accordingly, ran the common wisdom of the archaeologists of the early nineteenth century United States, both groups of people—the so-called Mound Builders and the ancient Toltecs of Central America—must have sprung from one race, which was necessarily white. They crossed the Atlantic or the Pacific in boats, arriving variously from Israel, from Wales, from Carthage, from Egypt, thrived, built their monuments, and ultimately fled before the

---

<sup>1</sup> “As Americans, no part of Anthropology, or the Natural History of Man, can be more interesting to us than that of our Aborigines,” began an article titled “Origin and Characteristics of the American Aborigines” that appeared in the *United States Democratic Review* 11, no. 54 (December 1842): 603-621. The use of the possessive pronoun *our* is characteristic in the many articles that examined “relics and monuments found in the United States, which point for their origin towards Mexico” (611).

invasion of the modern Indians who had crossed the Behring Strait from Asia like latter-day barbarians descending on Rome.

From a modern perspective, the obliviousness necessary to sustain such assumptions is staggering. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the flaws in this theory would be too obvious to ignore, and more professional, better-trained archaeologists would begin offering alternative versions of the ancient history of America. But in the 1830s and '40s, territorial expansion and archeological speculation operated hand in hand. Citizens of the United States took over large tracts of land in Texas, and then went to war with Mexico to defend their right to annex the territory as part of the United States, and sheared off even more of Mexico in the process, while amateur archaeologists blithely supported the proposition that the once and future United States was a white man's country. Manifest Destiny thus restored order to a land that had been temporarily mired in chaos under Indian and then Spanish ownership. The land formed one integral whole, awaiting reunification. "And who will say that the West shall remain dismembered and mutilated, and the ancient boundaries of the republic shall never be restored?" demanded Senator Robert J. Walker of Mississippi in a pamphlet of 1844.<sup>2</sup>

These assumptions reveal much about U.S. understandings of race at midcentury, ideas that would in turn inform views about slavery. Beliefs that racial differences were essential and unchangeable, that land occupied by Others might be conquered and cleansed, that the race-based, slave-dependent economy of the Market Revolution did not signal the emergence of a new stage of capitalism but the restoration of an order rooted in

---

<sup>2</sup> "Letter of Mr. Walker, of Mississippi, Relative to the Reannexation of Texas," (Philadelphia: Mifflin and Parry, 1844), 9.

and justified by history, all supported the *status quo*. Just as open discussions of Latin American slavery served as a means of saying things about domestic bondage otherwise left unspoken, these archaeological speculations also operated as a form of displacement, a way of talking about race in the contemporary U.S. by projecting modern attitudes back upon the ancient American past. “It would seem that the White race alone received the divine command, to subdue and replenish the earth! . . . thus the youngest people, and the newest land, will become the reviver and the regenerator of the oldest,” crowed Thomas Hart Benton in 1846.<sup>3</sup> But whereas certain remarks about slavery were silenced because they were too volatile, assumptions about the race of ancient Americans were often quietly assumed because they were considered self evident, hardly worth the trouble of defending. “Few slaveholders ever bothered to offer a coherent racial defense of bondage in their letters or diaries,” wrote James Oakes in *The Ruling Race*. “So ingrained were their racist assumptions that slaveholders were most likely to reveal themselves by recoiling in shock from the mere hint of racial egalitarianism or antislavery sentiment.”<sup>4</sup>

Efforts to connect ancient peoples of North and South America were not unique to this period, but they achieved a heady exuberance in the 1830s and ‘40s. This shift exactly coincided with the most intense period of territorial aggrandizement, proliferating between the U.S. colonization of Texas and the U.S. War with Mexico. Even as U.S. nationalists proved hesitant to ally themselves with their contemporary south-of-the-border neighbors, they claimed a common past in the peoples who had once dominated

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Congressional Globe*, 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session, 28 May, 1846, 918. “The oldest” race to which Benton refers is the people of Asia.

<sup>4</sup> James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 131.

the territory beyond the Rio Grande. Patriotic Americans had an obligation to take pride in the antiquities of the continent, chided the *Knickerbocker* in 1837.

Aside from the historical interest of American antiquities, the ingenuity and magnitude of these specimens of art already discovered, are well calculated to inspire national admiration. We need only turn in proof of this position, to the extraordinary works on Paint Creek, and the Licking River, in Ohio, Mount Joliet, in Illinois; the Great Mounds at St. Louis, in Missouri; the ruined walls and cities in Wisconsin and Arkansas; the three hundred tumuli of the Mississippi, or the stupendous pyramids of ancient Mexico and Tultica, some of which exceed in dimensions the largest of Egypt; and the vast ruins of immense Tultican cities,

remarked the writer, apparently untroubled by the fact that citizens of the United States could not take national pride in the archaeological remains of Mexico, or perhaps anticipating a not-far-off day when Mexico would be part of the U.S.<sup>5</sup> These theories proliferated during a particular historical moment. It was not until the 1850s that the scholarship that linked the Mississippi Valley with Mexico and Peru began contending with alternate interpretations as the study of ancient remains became increasingly professionalized and as the distribution of reliable descriptions and images increased. But most importantly, these theories lost ground after the U.S. War with Mexico checked expansion because they proved less politically useful.

The opponents of participation in the Panama Congress in 1826 rehearsed arguments proclaimed much more lustily with the election of Andrew Jackson as the seventh president of the United States. In 1828 voters rejected what the opposition to John Quincy Adams termed “splendid government”<sup>6</sup> and elected a candidate who embodied the power of the people, the triumph of democracy. Jackson, who hailed from the West, promised to represent the interests of a constituency that felt hemmed in

---

<sup>5</sup> “American Antiquities,” *The Knickerbocker; or New York Monthly Magazine* 10, no. 1 (July, 1837): 5.

<sup>6</sup> “The President’s Message: Splendid Government!” *The Richmond Enquirer*, 8 December 1825: 3.

between the established settlements of the Atlantic coast and threatened by the Indians of the frontier. In 1829, four years after Adams had proposed to harness the power of government for internal improvements and educational initiatives, Jackson in his first address to Congress outlined one of the proposals that would define his presidency: Indian removal to allow western settlement by white citizens (and the spread of African-American slavery).

The riotous territorial expansionism of the United States in the Jacksonian era required not simply the expulsion of natives from the West. It also involved the occupation and eventual acquisition of vast tracts of land in the south, property claimed by a neighboring republic that had just won its independence from a European power, following the example of the United States. North Americans had to defend their dubious U.S. claims to this territory with guns. Yet they also created another justification through the manipulation of the past through popular narrative and scholarly discourse. In particular, the nascent discipline of archaeology—understood as the systematic description or study of antiquities—both informed and was informed by the U.S. acquisition of territory south of the border. Theories that connected human and architectural remains in North America with those in Central and South America reflected a vigorous population spreading beyond the political boundaries of the nation. These theories were explicitly and implicitly tied to race, legitimating white ownership of land occupied by Indians as a place to extend African-American slavery.

Jackson's Indian policies manifested a growing attitude that redefined the way white Americans understood not only their republican counterparts in Latin America but also the non-white Others within their own borders. Whether one dates the turning point

to the Panama Congress debates of 1826, or to the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, or to the utterances of the proslavery argument around 1830, white Americans began exhibiting a racially exclusive rather than politically-defined nationalism in this era. Historians often point to expanded access to the franchise as the pivot point when United States nationalism ceased being grounded in an ideological commitment to republicanism and became increasingly defined by race. A democracy that disregarded property qualifications as a prerequisite for voting also began privileging white male voters at the expense of all other members of the polity. Researches into dubious science and history justified racism and celebrated an ambiguously-defined Anglo-Saxonism. A vigorous defense of slavery extolled it as a positive good rather than a necessary evil.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, according to Benedict Anderson, the period that began in the second quarter of the nineteenth century was one in which both North and South American ““second-generation”” nationalists de-emphasized the novelty of what they were doing and began searching for historical roots of the nation in the unplowed earth of the New World. No less than European nationalists of the same period, Americans ““began the process of reading nationalism *genealogically*—as the expression of an historical tradition of serial continuity.””<sup>8</sup> The problems this project posed in America,

---

<sup>7</sup>That the expanded democracy is essentially a cover for white supremacy is one of the themes of Daniel Walker Howe’s *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); see for example 357; 440-43; 497; 852. See also Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 116-17. William Stanton’s *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-1859* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) remains a compelling analysis of scientific racism. The construction of Anglo-Saxonism as a justification for the policies of Manifest Destiny is considered in Reginald Horsman’s *Race and Manifest Destiny: Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). For the emergence of the “positive good” proslavery argument, see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders’ Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 110; also Howe, 478-80.

<sup>8</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006), 194; 195. Italics original.

where the aboriginal past contained few written records and continuity had clearly been interrupted, were obviously different than in Europe. Where European nationalists mined the historical record to substantiate their national past, Americans turned to the infant discipline of archaeology. The long-ago builders of ruined pyramids and temples were America's "Gauls and Goths," insisted Southern novelist William Gilmore Simms.<sup>9</sup> Considering the roads of Peru, "how idle is the assertion . . . that America contained no monuments older than the conquest!" exclaimed craniologist Samuel Morton.<sup>10</sup> In certain respects, their surmises, in rejecting Biblical chronologies and drawing on modern techniques of observation and analysis, appear progressive. But these studies of the ancient American past were simultaneously held back by unquestioned assumptions about Indian inferiority and the justification of white expansionism.

Beginning in the late 1820s, U.S. nationalists became increasingly engaged in the project of establishing their own cultural heritage based on pan-American indigenous foundations. When the earliest settlers descended upon the Ohio and Mississippi valleys in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they discovered earthen mounds towering as high as 100 feet above ground. Apparently built both for defense and internment of the dead, these mounds were unlike anything known on the East Coast, clearly constructed by settled, well-organized societies. They consequently challenged the popular conception of Native Americans as wandering barbarians. Here was evidence of an unexpected, but extremely useful, American past. Living natives were a

---

<sup>9</sup> Susan Scheckel, *The Insistence of the Indian: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana; or, A Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1839), 120.

nuisance, but dead ones—and the longer dead the better—helped the United States claim a Romantic history. Out of the ground came proof of American antiquity.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, news of recent archaeological expeditions and accounts of almost forgotten discoveries since the time of the Spanish Conquest trickled out of post-independence Latin America. The remains encountered in Central America—whole cities of structures decorated with spectacular carving—were still more prepossessing than the newly explored western mounds. Nationalists in the United States were eager to claim this evidence of a glorious past, and made ingenious, if farfetched, connections between the land they occupied in the continental West and the territory that belonged to their neighbors. Although familiarity bred contempt, remoteness spawned admiration. Because Indians in Latin America, especially the Toltecs and Mayas, could be kept at a reliable remove, doubly distant because of time and space, they supplied a past for the United States that provided a historical foundation for its striving, ambitious present. While U.S. nationalists defined themselves in ways that kept their current political structures separate from those of their Latin American counterparts, they had no difficulty seeing North, Central, and South America, as they existed in ancient times, as a continuous whole. Claiming the unknown people of these regions as metaphorical ancestors served their expansionist interests.

The imagined relation with the ancient aborigines cultivated in the United States in the antebellum period was preceded by a related phenomenon in the heady days of

---

<sup>11</sup> Robert Silverberg's *Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1973) remains an excellent resource about the discovery and changing perceptions of the mounds by white Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Barbara Alice Mann's *Native Americans, Archaeologists, and the Mounds* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003) considers the history of the mounds, their despoliation and attempted Native American reclamation from her perspective as a Seneca-descended scholar.

Mexican independence twenty years earlier. Then patriotic *criollos*—people of Spanish blood born in America—indulged in what Philip Wayne Powell calls a “cult of Indianness,” a reaction against the Spanish *peninsulares* who dismissed the achievements of the Americans, whether of European or Indian descent.<sup>12</sup> D.A. Brading expands this idea in *The First America*, in which he points out the importance of texts like Juan de Torquemada’s *Monarquia indiana* and Garcilaso de la Vega’s *Comentarios reales de los Incas* in contributing to a sense of *criollo* patriotism.<sup>13</sup> These works, glorifying the indigenous heritage and, in the case of de la Vega, the contributions of mixed-race peoples, served as a source of inspiration to the independence seekers of the 1810s and ‘20s. Whereas Hernan Cortes had torn down the city of Tenochtilan and built Mexico City out of the rubble in a conscious attempt to eliminate “symbols of Aztec sovereignty and national identity”<sup>14</sup> and Fray Diego de Landa had carefully assembled an exhaustive collection of the codices of the Mayan people and then burned them as idolatry, *criollo* patriots resurrected these symbols of homegrown legitimacy. Partly this change was due to new understandings of history. In his now-classic history of archaeology, C.W. Ceram attributes the profligacy of the Spanish conquerors for wiping out all traces of aboriginal civilization to a more rudimentary way of understanding the past: they belonged to an era that “had many chroniclers but no historians.”<sup>15</sup> By the early 1800s the uses of history in legitimizing proprietorship were well understood.

Among white nationalists of the United States, reverence for the aboriginal past

---

<sup>12</sup> Philip Wayne Powell, *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudice Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World* (New York and London: Basic Books, 1971), 115.

<sup>13</sup> D.A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and The Liberal State 1492-1867* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archeological Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 69.

<sup>15</sup> C.W. Ceram, *Gods, Graves, and Scholars: The Story of Archaeology*, translated by E.B. Garside and Sophie Wilkins (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 346.

was related but different. Their goal was not so much saving the remnants of Indian national identity as constructing their own past, a project that demanded first of all that the ancient peoples be white. From the ancient people of America, U.S. nationalists looked for a kind of interrupted ancestry. In the Romantic period illustrious ancestors were required to bless nineteenth-century Americans: where were the “Picts, Pelasgians, or ancient Druids”<sup>16</sup> of the New World? Lacking the rich relics discovered by Peruvian and Mexican creoles, nationalists in the United States effectively redefined America to include Peru and Mexico, and appropriated what they wanted from Central and South America.

The enthusiasts contributing to the production of amateur archaeology hailed from an extraordinarily diverse set of backgrounds. They used what came to hand—obsidian arrowheads, scraps of scripture, second- and third-hand descriptions of the wonders of Copan and Cuzco—to construct their theories, which became a quintessential American product. Many writers insisted that the builders of the great ruins could not have been the ancestors of the modern Indians, who had arrived later and drove off their more civilized predecessors. From the accounts of the *conquistadores*, U.S. readers knew that the Aztecs had displaced an earlier nation called the Toltecs: the nineteenth century would see these Toltecs as migrants from Israel, Carthage, or Phoenicia, and suggested that they might have been Welsh, Norse, or Roman.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, nationalists understood the natives of ancient North America as a separate race, the Mound Builders, who had less in common with nineteenth century Indians than with Jacksonian-era white Americans

---

<sup>16</sup> “M,” “Our Illustrious Predecessors,” *Arcturus, A Journal of Books and Opinions*, February 1841: 1.

<sup>17</sup> The Spanish historian Clavigero repeated the theory that the Toltecs had emigrated from the north, where they had built cities surrounded by earthen walls. See Samuel F. Haven, *Archaeology of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1856), 31.

(because, in fact, they *had been* white).<sup>18</sup> The apparent contradiction between the glorification of the Toltecs and the removal of contemporary Native Americans, a pan-Americanism that claimed territory while rejecting the contemporary community that occupied it, in other words, was not a contradiction at all: both professional and amateur archaeologists of the 1830s and '40s identified them as different people. "Whatever may be our uncertainty, in regard to American antiquities, it is scarcely possible to resist the conviction that we owe them to a race, or races, other than the red men who were found by the Spaniards in the country," wrote editor William Gilmore Simms in an article entitled "The White Man,—Northman or Irish,—in America."<sup>19</sup>

Alice Beck Kehoe's polemical but brilliant *The Land of Prehistory: A Critical History of American Archaeology* reminds us that archaeology is anything but disinterested; its history in the U.S. is "a remarkable example of post hoc objectification of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny."<sup>20</sup> Even in the infancy of the discipline, the men who had the leisure to investigate human origins, and the connections to get their speculations published and promoted, tended to come from the conservative bourgeoisie; they subsequently "found support from organizations promoting national identity, using archaeology to establish a preconquest past crying out for the technological breakthroughs brought to the continent by the superior race now dominating the

---

<sup>18</sup> In *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) Steven Conn argues that midcentury Americans needed the Mound Builders to be a separate people from the Indians they knew in the present. Once archaeologists like John Wesley Powell presented convincing evidence that the Mound Builders were in fact the ancestors of modern Indians, nineteenth century Americans lost interest in them (120-35).

<sup>19</sup> William Gilmore Simms, "The White Man,—Northman or Irish,—in America," *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 77.

<sup>20</sup> Alice Beck Kehoe, *The Land of Prehistory: A Critical History of American Archaeology* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), xi.

hemisphere.”<sup>21</sup> Archaeology told a tale of progress that ended with—and justified—the present. Having a past gave a nation a foundation.<sup>22</sup>

In his *History of Archeological Thought*, Bruce Trigger argues that the rationale for the idea that the Toltecs were a race of white Indians driven off by savage hordes from the North foreshadows the racist archaeology cultivated in late nineteenth century Africa. According to popular colonialist belief, lighter-skinned Hamitic people—descended from Noah’s son Ham—in the north of Africa had declined through miscegenation with darker-skinned “Negroes” from the south. Cecil Rhodes, among other colonizers, presented his conquests as the reclamation of territory that whites had previously ruled. In both the cases of Africa and America, amateur archaeologists and white settlers on the frontier found it useful to insist that contemporary indigenes were unassociated with the builders of ancient monuments. To acquire Texas and Mexico in the 1840s was therefore simply taking back what had been fated to belong to the United States all along. An important difference was that, while scholarly archaeologists at the turn of the twentieth century rejected these theories as they applied to Africa, the scholarly community of the 1830s and ‘40s promoted them in the context of Mexico.<sup>23</sup>

If expansionism lay at the heart of Americans’ admiration of the Central and South American aborigines, political and racial exclusivity served as the ostensible justification for Andrew Jackson’s policy of Indian removal from the U.S. Southeast in the 1830s. Expansionists understood modern Indians, however much they assimilated into American culture, as separate peoples. The Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws,

---

<sup>21</sup> Kehoe, xii.

<sup>22</sup> Kehoe, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archeological Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 130-134.

Chickasaws, and Seminoles relocated from the states of Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama were termed the “five civilized tribes.” Despite the fact that the Cherokees had adopted a form of government based on the consent of the governed with a written constitution inspired by that of the U.S., and followed such practices as house-building, cotton-growing, and slave-owning, when white Americans looked at them their first impression was still of difference. If republican government had not been enough to make brothers of the European-descended peoples of Latin America in 1826, it was certainly not enough to render the Cherokees any less foreign to the white people of the U.S. in 1830.<sup>24</sup>

The imperative for Indian removal reveals with striking clarity the political implications of archaeological speculation. Andrew Jackson invoked the Indians’ membership in separate nations as the justification for expelling them from states that were already part of the Union. In his first address to Congress in 1829, the president cited the Indians’ project of forming “a foreign and independent government” within the boundaries of existing states as a practice in no one’s best interest. When Jackson addressed Congress on the issue a year later—after criticism of his proposal of Indian removal in *The North American Review*, among other places<sup>25</sup>—his defense of policy had a slightly different inflection and invoked archaeology as an explanatory tool. A racial definition of the Indians nations replaced a merely political one. Philanthropy, Jackson acknowledged, had long concerned itself with the fate of the Indians.

---

<sup>24</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace describes the politics of Indian Removal in *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993). See also Robert Remini’s *The Legacy of Andrew Jackson: Essays on Democracy, Indian Removal, and Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) and *Andrew Jackson and his Indian Wars* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2002).

<sup>25</sup> See “Speeches on the Indian Bill,” *The North American Review*, October 1830: 396ff.

But true philanthropy reconciles the mind to these vicissitudes as it does to the extinction of one generation to make room for another. In the monuments and fortifications of an unknown people, spread over the extensive regions of the West, we behold the memorials of a once powerful race, which was exterminated or has disappeared to make room for the existing savage tribes.<sup>26</sup>

The Indians had themselves displaced an earlier people. Now Fortune's wheel had turned again and in the fullness of time they, the interlopers, needed to leave in order to make room for "our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms."<sup>27</sup>

Quite possibly the source for Jackson's theory of cyclical displacement was Caleb Atwater, whose "Description of the Antiquities discovered in the State of Ohio and Other Western States" had appeared in the very first *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* in 1820.<sup>28</sup> Atwater had included a copy of the *Transactions* in a letter to Jackson on June 24, 1824 in which he promised his support for Jackson at the presidential nominating convention to be held in Columbus, Ohio that summer.<sup>29</sup> Atwater (1778-1867), trained as a lawyer, had moved from New York State to Circleville, Ohio, built on the site of an Indian mound, and had become interested in American antiquities and modern politics. A fervent Jacksonian, Atwater claimed the honor of supporting his hero was ample compensation for his efforts in his first presidential campaign ("[M]y pledge to support you is redeemed. It has occupied all my time, but the pleasure I feel in looking back on it, is an ample reward.")<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, when Atwater lost an election to state office in 1829, Jackson appointed him a

---

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Jackson, Message of the President of the United States to Both Houses of Congress, *Register of Debates in Congress*, (Appendix), 21st Congress, Second Session, 6 December 1830, x.

<sup>27</sup> Jackson, Message, 6 December 1830, x.

<sup>28</sup> My thanks to David Spanagel of the Worcester Polytechnic Institute who pointed this out to me at the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic Conference in Rochester, NY, 25 July 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Caleb Atwater to Andrew Jackson, 24 June 1824, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson Volume V, 1821-1824*, edited by Harold D. Moser, David R. Hoth, and George H. Hoemann (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 421.

<sup>30</sup> Caleb Atwater to Andrew Jackson, 1 November 1824, *Papers V*, 448.

commissioner authorized to negotiate a treaty with the Winnebago Indians in Wisconsin, an account of which he published as *Remarks Made on a Tour to Prairie du Chien* (1831).<sup>31</sup>

In 1833 Atwater's *Transactions* piece was published as *A Description of the Antiquities Discovered in the Western Country*. Citing Clavigero, the Spanish historian of the Conquest, and Alexander von Humbolt's *Views of the Cordilleras*, Atwater speculated on the origins of American aborigines:

Some persons suppose that Mexico and Peru sent out their colonies, in a northeastern direction, until they gradually reached the northeastern shore of lake Ontario; while others, like the author of this essay, believe the authors of our antiquities began their settlements in New York, and extended them in a southwestern direction, until they reached South America. But one fact is, I suppose, quite certain, which is, that all our antiquities belonged to the same people whose posterity was found in Mexico and Peru, by Cortez [sic]. That this people were not the ancestors of present Indian race in the United States, seems to me a well established fact.<sup>32</sup>

Some of Atwater's conclusions would be disputed in the 1830s, among them the idea that the modern Indians were aboriginal to America while the ancient peoples had come from Asia, and that the Aztecs were a true remnant of the earliest peoples in Mexico. But for Andrew Jackson, the "fact" that the present-day Indians were not the original inhabitants of the area but were in fact part of a history of migration established an invaluable defense for their displacement. "The present policy of the Government is but a continuation of the same progressive change, by a milder process," said Jackson.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Caleb Atwater to Andrew Jackson, 1829, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson Volume VII, 1829*, edited by Daniel Feller, Harold D. Moser, Laura-Eve Moss, and Thomas Coens (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 43-6.

<sup>32</sup> Caleb Atwater, *Writings of Caleb Atwater* (Columbus: Published by Caleb Atwater; Printed by Scott and Wright. 1833), 150.

<sup>33</sup> Jackson, Message, 6 December 1830, x.

Although it is not surprising that Jackson would find Atwater's supposition useful, the Whig Party, emerging in opposition to Jackson's Democrats, was not far behind in employing this theory. Perhaps nowhere are the twin efforts of sundering the ties of ancient aborigines and modern Indians, and connecting the Toltecs and Mayas with the early inhabitants of North America, all in the service of vindicating U.S. proprietorship over land, so economically expressed as in a short discourse prepared by William Henry Harrison. Intended for presentation at the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio in 1838, Harrison, then between his two efforts to win the Whig nomination to the presidency, was prevented by family illness from actually delivering the discourse.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, it received considerable attention, first published as a 51-page pamphlet in 1838, then in 1839 in the society's *Transactions*, then again as a pamphlet in 1840, once more in pamphlet form in 1883, and finally in an abridged form in 1890.<sup>35</sup> It was reviewed in both the *North American Review* and the Western journal *Hesperian*.<sup>36</sup>

Two years after preparing this discourse, William Henry Harrison would ride to power as the first Whig elected president—and then sink into semi-obscurity as something of a historical footnote, dying of pneumonia on his thirty-second day in office, serving as president for a shorter time than anyone before or since. Harrison managed to

---

<sup>34</sup> "Literary Notices: *Aborigines of the Ohio Valley*," *The Hesperian*, September, 1838: 411.

<sup>35</sup> William Henry Harrison, *A Discourse on the Aborigines of the Valley of the Ohio: To Which are Prefixed Some Remarks on the Study of History* (Cincinnati [printed at the Cincinnati Express], 1838; *Transactions of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio*, Part Second, Volume I (Cincinnati, Geo. W. Bradbury, 1939), 217-267; William Henry Harrison, *A Discourse on the Aborigines of the Valley of the Ohio* (Boston: William D. Ticknor, 1840); William Henry Harrison, *A Discourse on the Aborigines of the Ohio Valley* (Chicago: Fergus Printing Company, 1883), William Henry Harrison, *The Mound Builders of the Ohio Valley: an Extract from a Discourse on the Aborigines of the Valley of Ohio, before the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, published in the Transactions of the Society, 1839* (Boston: Old South Meeting House, 1890).

<sup>36</sup> "A Discourse on the Aborigines of the Valley of the Ohio," *North American Review* 51, no. 108 (July 1840): 46-68; "Literary Notices: *Aborigines of the Ohio Valley*," *The Hesperian*, September, 1838: 411.

successfully challenge the party of Jackson, but he shared some of the highlights of Jackson's curriculum vitae. Like Jackson, he had made his name in the War of 1812, and like Jackson he won a reputation as a ruthless Indian fighter—in his victory in the Battle of Thames, Tecumseh was killed, and with him his vast pan-Indian project. To win the election of 1840, Harrison's well-connected Virginia background was effectively erased and he was remade as a humble frontiersman after the style of Jackson himself.<sup>37</sup>

In composing his *Discourse*, Harrison drew on his experiences negotiating with Indians and his knowledge of military tactics. He had a relevant background making connections with Latin America as well, having served as minister plenipotentiary to Gran Columbia in 1828-29. (His tenure there was little longer than his presidency, arriving just before Christmas and being removed by Jackson as soon as the latter took office in March—but he made an impression, reproaching Simon Bolivar for his dictatorial tendencies in no uncertain terms.) And in writing the discourse, he kept his name before the public two years after his defeat in the 1836 election, and two years before his 1840 campaign (the pro-Whig Cincinnati *Daily Gazette* took the occasion to cite the learned *Discourse* as proof against “the silly charge of *mental dotage*, which the partisan press has brought against General Harrison.”)<sup>38</sup>

“Fifty-five years ago,” Harrison explained, “there was not a Christian inhabitant within the bounds which now compose the state of Ohio.”<sup>39</sup> Neither, aside from a few wandering tribes, were there many Indians—and yet there were earthen remains, which

---

<sup>37</sup> Robert M. Owens's *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007) argues that an examination of Harrison's policies as governor of Indiana prefigure the perspectives that would shape the policy of Indian removal later in the nineteenth century.

<sup>38</sup> “General Harrison's Discourse,” *The Cincinnati Daily Gazette* 21 September 1838, 2. Italics original.

<sup>39</sup> *Transactions*, 222.

Harrison had examined in the 1790s, that indicated that Ohio had once been populated by a considerable number of people. As described, the builders of Ohio's mounds sound remarkably like the pioneers of Harrison's own state—devout in religious observance, builders of cities, but also agricultural, with dwellings “ample and convenient, if not neat or splendid.”<sup>40</sup> The remains that survived Harrison identified as forts, with “a military character stamped upon them which cannot be mistaken,” built by engineers who “appear to have known the importance of flank defences.”<sup>41</sup> These people, Harrison declared, citing the Rt. Rev. James Bishop Madison, of Virginia, were the “Astecks.” What happened to them? Attacked “by a race of men, inferior to the authors of the great works we have been considering,” the Aztecs made a last stand near what is now Cincinnati, and then fled south, over time losing “in the more mild and uniform climate of Anhuac, all remembrance of the banks of the Ohio.”<sup>42</sup>

Having argued that the industrious native Aztecs were driven off by a wholly different race, the barbarous usurpers, Harrison proceeded to what was in fact his main purpose.

The proposition against which I contend, asserts the right, at the period of which I am speaking, of all the country watered by the Ohio, to the Iroquois, or Six Nations, in consideration of their having conquered the tribes which originally possessed it. . . . I shall endeavor to prove that their alleged subjugation of the north-western tribes, rests upon no competent authority; and that the favored region which we now call our own, as well as that possessed by our immediate contiguous western sisters, has been *for many centuries* as it now is,

“The land of the free and the home of the brave.”<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> *Transactions*, 223-4.

<sup>41</sup> *Transactions*, 225.

<sup>42</sup> *Transactions*, 226-7; 226.

<sup>43</sup> *Transactions*, 230. Italics mine.

The Iroquois had made claims to the whole territory watered by the Mississippi, but Harrison showed, in an argument not fundamentally unsound, why this claim could not be sustained. He set out to challenge Iroquois pretensions with rhetoric of stunning ruthlessness, seeking to demolish through the sheer accumulation of evidence that their claims were unsupported by evidence other than their own assertions, that they exhibited ignorance of the land they claimed to occupy, that they played fast and loose with dates in order to strengthen their authority. Setting the claims of other tribes in opposition to those of the Iroquois, Harrison rhetorically carved up their empire. In his hands, history was as deadly a weapon as a sword.<sup>44</sup>

Harrison presented his case as a military strategist and a politician. But his argument was one of many that came from different perspectives and dovetailed, overlapped, and sometimes butted up against each other in fascinating ways, yet always directly or implicitly supported claims to white superiority and legitimacy. A diverse assembly of early nineteenth century philologists, historians, scientists, and theologians gathered around the problem of explaining the origins of the native peoples of the New World. Some were gentlemen scholars from well-heeled families—physicians, jurists, or professors who made a hobby of the study of antiquities and who published their monographs for the edification of their friends. For antiquarians trying to make money

---

<sup>44</sup> Another politician who speculated about Indian origins and made connections between North and South America was Thomas Loraine McKenney, appointed Superintendent of Indian Trade by James Madison in 1816 and serving as Superintendent for Indian Affairs from 1824 to 1830, when he was fired by Andrew Jackson. His *Memoirs Official and Personal* (1846) is essentially an extended act of self-justification written by a public servant who considers himself mistreated. Although he sheds tears over past U.S. policies against the Indians, he supported Indian removal. McKenney believed the Indians of America were descended from the Tartars of Asia, having traveled across “Behring’s Straits.” But when these migrants advanced into North America, they found a people already living there. “[W]hilst pushing their population onward, and when the continent itself seemed just within their grasp, they were suddenly surprised by the presence of a race that had preceded them in the occupancy of the country” (Volume II, p. 35). From whom could this earlier race have been descended? “I believe them to have been MEXICANS, or PERUVIANS, or both” (Volume II, p. 43). (Thomas L. McKenney, *Memoirs Official and Personal; With Sketches of Travels Among the Northern and Southern Indians* [New York: Paine & Burgess, 1846]).

from their speculations, options were more limited. Learned organizations like the New-York Historical Society tried to promote research, but they were not a source of lavish grants. The federal government dispensed patronage jobs taking censuses of Indian populations, but a change of administration could end these sinecures quickly. State and city governments were even more unreliable.<sup>45</sup> Some amateur archaeologists apparently did hope to make money from their work, and presumably the more entertaining or outrageous their speculations, the larger market share they could corner. Thus some of the material on the aborigines was written by giddy enthusiasts who relied more on inspiration than observation or study. They published books that they clearly hoped would sell.

But the gentlemen scholars and the cranks shared some characteristics. In many of their works there is a curious combination of gullibility and good sense. Their speculations drew on unquestioned prejudices about the validity of scripture as well as acute powers of critical observation and scientific methods. They applied new theories they found useful, heedless of their sources, and ignored what was discomfiting or distressing. What was said in one context was not infrequently embraced by someone with quite another agenda. Most importantly, they shared an assumed racial superiority, an unexamined confidence that, if civilized peoples of ancient America had built cities and spread empires, they must have been white. Thus popular prejudices antedated the “scientific” racism of the 1840s and ‘50s, but scientific arguments for separate creations

---

<sup>45</sup> Brian Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 161.

and new understandings of what constituted a species were eagerly picked up by Western frontiersmen and proslavery rhetoricians.<sup>46</sup>

White Americans identified the “civilized” Indians of Mexico and Peru as the foundation of their own national past in an era that saw the dawning of scientific racism and the eclipse of political nationalism with a more exclusive white supremacy. Yet these two apparently contradictory impulses could also be reconciled. That American nationalists might draw a line that connected themselves with the most prepossessing of the indigenes is no more unlikely than that they should subscribe to a belief in the Anglo-Saxon “race” (variously understood as including Goths, Scandinavians, Germans, and Normans) and then claim descent from it. They were in fact constructing national identity on two separate foundations: in the first case they were composing for themselves a national past in which they had a history venerable enough to rival the origins of Greece, Rome, Israel or Egypt. Sometimes they argued that the Mound Builders, the Aztecs, and the Incas were in fact descendants of these Old World peoples. But for many nationalists, simply occupying the same physical space as these vanished heroes was enough: their ancient predecessors gave them legitimacy. On the other hand, when they argued for the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon people, they were constructing a genealogy of blood in which they were securely separated from the pollution of inferior races. Here the importance of a traceable lineage was paramount (even if it was no less fanciful).

In their use of archaeology in the project of Manifest Destiny, white U.S. nationalists of the 1830s and ‘40s engaged in a two-part process: drawing parallels between the geographically separated natives of North and Central America, the Mound

---

<sup>46</sup> Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 115, passim; Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots*, passim.

Builders and the Toltecs and Mayas, and establishing that those people had been white. First, they argued that the ancient people who had left the spectacular monuments they discovered as they pushed westward were related to the people who built the great empires of Central and South America but were unrelated to modern Indians. Second, they attempted to establish racial connections, if not genetic continuities, between themselves, the original inhabitants of the continental West, and even the territory they did not (yet) control in Mexico and Peru. What had to be sundered in the present needed to be laced together in the past. These two related projects—collapsing the distance between the Ohio Valley and Central America, and severing the connections between ancient and modern Indians—were not the result of idle speculation. They provided a background for both Indian removal and the acquisition of territory in Texas and Mexico. The use of archaeology in the twenty years before the Mexican War expressed the project of Manifest Destiny. The conclusions drawn by both scholarly and popular archaeologists frequently served the political imperatives of expansionism and Indian removal no less than those of politicians like Jackson and Harrison.

The first of the two parts of the early nineteenth century archaeological project reimagined the ancient continents of North and South America controlled by a common group of people. In the process, Americans found themselves looking at another map, one both familiar and strange. The map of the early nineteenth-century United States was divided into East and West, the East densely settled and broken into states, the West vast, sparsely populated, and still relatively unexplored. It was also divided into North and South, a North increasingly urban and rapidly industrializing, a South agricultural and dependent on its slaves. Boundaries running east to west separated the nation from its

northern and southern neighbors. The ancient nation, on the other hand, was concentrated in the middle of the continent, its settlements stretching from Lake Superior in the North to Peru in the South, petering out on the edges past the Alleghenies and the Cordilleras. Migrants had once pressed from the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys not west but south. To look thus at America was to see a rather different world—one that disregarded the limits that circumscribed national expansion. Nineteenth-century eyes had to be trained to look at geography this way—by excavating the earth, by exploring another dimension.<sup>47</sup>

Finding the evidence that linked the geographically separated ancient inhabitants of North and Central America required literal digging into that third dimension. Antebellum white Americans tried to find a connection between the earthworks of the North American West and the far more impressive monuments in Mexico and Peru. Yet claiming a connection between North America and the ancient peoples who built Palenque, Tenochtitlan, and Cuzco required no greater imaginative leap than anointing Christopher Columbus, a Genoese explorer sailing under the flag of Spain who never reached land north of Caribbean, as a hero for patriotic citizens of the United States.<sup>48</sup>

Speculation that the sophisticated inhabitants of Tenochtitlan and Cuzco must have had counterparts in North America dated as early as the late eighteenth century.

Benjamin Smith Barton, born in Philadelphia in 1766 and educated in Scotland, was one

---

<sup>47</sup> As Stephanie M.H. Camp notes, what Edward Said refers to as “rival geography” describes the way two groups of people understand and use space. In her work with the way slaves imaginatively mapped their plantation worlds, rival geography could serve as a form of resistance (see Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004]). Interestingly, in the case of the Manifest Destiny-era U.S., it was the more powerful white Americans who found utility in borrowing the spatial conceptions of their Indian predecessors.

<sup>48</sup> Claudia L. Bushman analyzes the process through which this national canonization took place in *America Discovers Columbus: How an Italian Explorer became an American Hero* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1992).

of the first to speculate that the builders of the Ohio Valley mounds (who he suspected had come from Denmark) had later migrated to Mexico. It was they, he suggested in his 1787 *Observations on Some Parts of Natural History*, who were subsequently known as the Toltecs.<sup>49</sup> In 1798 the Reverend Daniel Story was sent from Hamilton, in Essex County, Massachusetts, to minister to the infant community at Marietta, Ohio. Somewhat unusual among the towns established in the vicinity of ancient Indian habitation, which usually wasted no time in scraping the mounds flat to allow for agriculture, Marietta was laid out around the mounds by General Rufus Putnam and his agent, the Reverend Manasseh Cutler. Cutler, an amateur archaeologist as well as a minister, counted the rings of the trees growing upon the mounds and reckoned they were at least 500 years old.<sup>50</sup> In 1798 Cutler charged the Reverend Story with the task of saving souls in the West, noting that he would be bringing Christianity to an area where human sacrifice had once been practiced. He added in a note,

The large mounds in the great square, it can hardly be doubted, were appropriated to religious purposes. On them they [the aborigines] erected their temples, placed their idols, and offered their sacrifices: for it is difficult to conceive of any other purpose for which they could have been designed. Comparing their form and situation with places of worship in Mexico and other parts of the country, when first discovered, we find as great a similarity, as there was in the places of worship among those different tribes. . . . If the Mexican tribes, agreeably to their historic paintings and traditions, came from the northward, and some of them, in their migrations, went far to the eastward, it is not improbable, that either some of those tribes, or others, similar to them in their customs and manners, and who practiced the same religious rites, were the constructors of those works . . .<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Silverberg, 30-32. See also Benjamin Smith Barton, "Some Observations and Conjectures concerning Certain Articles which were Taken out of an Ancient Tumulus, or Grave, at Cincinnati," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 4 (1799): 181-215.

<sup>50</sup> Brian Fagan, *Elusive Treasure: The Story of Early Archeologists in the Americas* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 91-94.

<sup>51</sup> Manasseh Cutler, "The Charge by the Rev. Doctor Cutler of Hamilton," in *A Sermon Preached August the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1798, at Hamilton, at the Ordination of the Rev. Daniel Story* (Salem: Thomas C. Cushing, 1798), 35-6.

In notes deposited at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia accompanying an 1818 translation of a description of the great Aztec calendar stone discovered in Mexico City, Robert Hulings mused,

May not the Mounds discovered in the western parts of our Country, which bear the appearance of regular fortifications have been the work of some of the Nations since settled in Mexico; constructed during the frequent stops made by them in their journeys from their Country Aztlan, which, in some places, were extended to a period of many years? This appears to me more than probable, as Aztlan is said to have been somewhere on the North West Coast of America, & peopled perhaps originally from Asia, by the way of Bhering's Straits, or otherwise.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the fact that information about the ancient remains of Central America was scarce, writers did not hesitate to draw connections between North and Central America. During the period when the Viceroyalty of Mexico was a Spanish colony, sources of information about ancient ruins were often inaccessible, printed in Spanish in limited editions, priced beyond the means of most readers, or still in manuscript, locked away in European archives. Yet what limited information leaked out American audiences eagerly consumed. At the turn of the nineteenth century Charles IV commissioned Guillermo Dupaix to report on the ruins of Palenque. His writings might have languished in Spanish archives had not Lord Kingsborough translated them and published them in an expensive edition called *Antiquities of Mexico* in 1820. Kingsborough subsequently sponsored the expedition of Frederic Waldeck to Uxmal, resulting in the publication of *Voyage pittoresque* in 1838.<sup>53</sup> The U.S. popular press recognized the interest in American antiquities and supplied a reasonable means of satisfying it through excerpts and review articles. Newspapers and journals ran articles,

---

<sup>52</sup> Robert Hulings, Note to Antonio de Leon y Gama, *An Historical and Chronological Description of Two Stones Found Under Ground, in the Great Square of the City of Mexico, in the Year 1790*, 1818, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. Underlining original.

<sup>53</sup> Fagan, 119-128.

both singly and in series, about antiquities both in the U.S. and in Latin America.<sup>54</sup>

But borderland inhabitants like Manasseh Cutler were not the only contributors to the literature. Twenty-six-year old New Yorker Alexander W. Bradford (1815-1867) produced *American Antiquities and Researches into the Origin and History of the Red Race* in 1841. Bradford would go on to become a lawyer and then a judge active in Whig politics.<sup>55</sup> He concluded that the ancient inhabitants of North and South America were “all of the same origin, branches of the same race, and possessed of similar customs and institutions. . . . [and that] the only indications of their origin, to be gathered from the locality of their ruined monuments, point toward Mexico.”<sup>56</sup> The spottiness of his evidence, curiously, did not bother him: the connection he established between burial mounds in the Ohio Valley and pyramids in Mexico was that both are high, and manmade. Differences between the stone pyramids of Mexico and the earthen ramparts of Ohio, he decided, could be explained on the basis of the different construction materials available in each location.

What strikes the modern reader is not only what these early nineteenth-century antiquarians got wrong but also what they got right. There was a widespread acceptance of a migration from Asia across a land bridge at the Behring Strait, for example. But what is also striking is their felt need to justify their hypotheses with textual sources

---

<sup>54</sup> A very cursory catalogue of articles about ancient Americans might include the two-part series “Aborigines in America” (*The American Monthly Magazine* I, nos. 1 and 2 [April and May, 1829]); the five-part series “American Antiquities” (*The Knickerbocker* X, nos. 1, 2, 4, 6 and XI, no. 2 [July, August, October, December 1837 and February 1838]); Francisco Corroy’s “American Antiquities” in *The Knickerbocker* II, no. 5 (November 1833), “Mexican Antiquities” in the *United States Democratic Review* (October 1837) and countless feature-length articles based on the works of Josiah Priest, John Delafield, Samuel Morton, John Lloyd Stephens, and Ephraim Squier.

<sup>55</sup> *Testimonial of Respect of the Bar of New York to the Memory of Alexander W. Bradford, Esq.* (New York: Baker & Godwin, Printers, 1868), 5-6; 12; 18; *The Writings of Herman Melville: Correspondence* (edited by Lynn Horth), (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 37.

<sup>56</sup> Alexander W. Bradford, *American Antiquities and Researches into the Origin and History of the Red Race* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1843).

rather than the geologic record. Positing the timetable generally accepted now—with the peopling of North America between 10,000 and 30,000 years ago—was impossible for scholars trying to work with then-available information. The nineteenth century would witness the development and refinement of geological dating and archaeological techniques, but many scholars still tried to fit their theories into a biblical framework. The chronology of Anglican Bishop James Ussher (1581–1656) went so far as to hazard an actual date of creation—October 23, 4004 BCE—but both Johannes Kepler and Isaac Newton independently formulated chronologies with creation dates around that time, and these timetables were still accepted in the 1800s.<sup>57</sup> Many assumed the veracity of Noah’s flood (dated to 2348 BCE by Ussher) with the emergence of distinct races occurring through his three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japeth.<sup>58</sup>

Some early scholars managed to pioneer new methods of observation and experimentation that subtly challenged Ussher’s chronology without radically upending a worldview based on belief in the Bible. For example, by the 1830s and ‘40s the new study of craniology supplied additional linkages between North and South.<sup>59</sup> In the 1830s John Collins Warren (1778-1856), a member of the faculty of the Harvard Medical School, came into the possession of a skull unearthed from a mound on the banks of the Ohio River, leading him to speculations about it. In a paper for the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1837, Warren declared that the cranial characteristics of the ancient mound skulls, while different from those of modern Indians, bore an exact resemblance to ancient skulls found in Peru and a striking similarity to those of modern

---

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, “Fall in the House of Ussher,” *Natural History* 100 (November 1991): 12-21.

<sup>58</sup> Ham is popularly supposed to be the father of African people, Shem the father of Asian people, and Japeth the father of European people.

<sup>59</sup> See Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots*.

“Hindoos.” “The ancient race of the mounds is identical with the ancient Peruvians,” he concluded.<sup>60</sup> Warren was credited with being probably the first to use anatomical evidence to demonstrate the existence of ““another and more advanced race having existed in the Western country previous to those who were found there at the time it was discovered and explored by the Europeans.””<sup>61</sup>

But much better known than Warren is Samuel George Morton (1799-1851), a Philadelphia physician and President of the Academy of Natural Sciences who in 1839 published *Crania Americana*, an artistically imposing study of skulls found in America to argue for the essential unity of race and species among all the native inhabitants of the American nations.<sup>62</sup> Morton measured hundreds of human skulls, studying and recording their dimensions and angles and filling them with peppercorns to ascertain their capacity.<sup>63</sup> Like many other scientists of his era, Morton, despite his hands-on techniques, was hampered by his understanding of historical time and his reliance on textual sources. Defending what would today be called essentialism, he maintained the unchanging characteristics of race through history, dating the emergence of races to the period after the flood.<sup>64</sup> Admittedly, he insisted on the unity of human species and seemed to find “race” a somewhat problematic term for the five divisions he identified—Caucasian, Mongolian, Malay, American, and Ethiopian. The American race had not come from anywhere else; it was native to America.

---

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Haven, 76.

<sup>61</sup> Dr. Wyman, “Memoir of Dr. Warren, read to the Society of Natural History in December, 1856,” in Edward Warren, M.D., *The Life of John Collins Warren, M.D.* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860), 329.

<sup>62</sup> Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana; or, A Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1839), 244.

<sup>63</sup> Charles D. Meigs, M.D., *A Memoir of Samuel George Morton, M.D.* (Philadelphia: T.K. & P.G. Collins, 1851); Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots*, 24-44.

<sup>64</sup> Morton, 1; 3.

Morton provided an argument from still another angle that the paragons among ancient Americans in both North and South America—the Peruvians, the Toltecs, and the Mound Builders—shared the same cranial characteristics “from the confines of Chili to the shores of Lake Superior.”<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, even in maintaining the essential unity of the American race, he found it necessary to break it into the American family and the Toltecan Family—the former debased and primitive, the latter advanced and civilized.<sup>66</sup> While not denying that modern Indians were related to the ancient Americans, they were descended, according to him, from a distinct family that had mixed its blood with those of Toltec stock. He cited an early *conquistador* who, inquiring if modern Peruvians had built the monuments that amazed the Europeans, was greeted with laughter: the Indians themselves could not imagine being responsible for the accomplishments of their predecessors. “[T]he mixed and motley people who now bear their names, are as unlike their ancestors in moral and intellectual character, as the degraded Copts of Egypt are unlike their progenitors of the age of Pharaoh.”<sup>67</sup>

Morton’s scholarship thus combines relatively progressive strategies of research and unapologetic, standard-issue racism of the nineteenth-century variety. The kind of study he pursued and the evidence he collected would ultimately help discredit Ussher’s chronology. Morton’s theory even suggested the possibility that human beings had arisen in different parts of the world. To make such an assertion was to challenge the Biblical account of creation—a challenge apparent to writers arguing from a Christian

---

<sup>65</sup> Morton, 230.

<sup>66</sup> Morton, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Morton, 84.

perspective.<sup>68</sup> Unshackling science from a literal reading of the scriptures appears like progress in certain contexts. But for all of his originality of outlook, his studies served primarily to reinforce the existing order. Morton's concept of separate creations proved invaluable to proslavery authors arguing for the innate inferiority of the Africans.<sup>69</sup> The work for which he is best known measured the cranial capacity of skulls to bolster the assumption that the white race was destined to dominate and to argue for the inferiority of nonwhite races.<sup>70</sup>

The second part of the process, making the Toltecs white, necessitated Old World origins for America's ancient peoples. This presumption became an essential and nearly universal aspect of archaeological thought by the late 1820s and held sway for the next twenty years. Indians encountered by nineteenth century whites lived a shiftless, nomadic existence, leaving no trace of their time on earth; ancient Aztecs had left behind pyramids and temples, and Incas had levied taxes and built roads. Clearly the dispirited tribes of the nineteenth century could not have built the great monuments of American antiquity. "The only circumstance, that strongly discredits their having been formed by the progenitors of the present Indians," wrote Timothy Flint in the *Western Monthly Review*, "is the prodigious size of some of them; beyond what could be expected from the sparse population, and the indolence of the present race. We know of no monuments,

---

<sup>68</sup> See for example Samuel Forry, "The Mosaic Account of the Unity of the Human Race, Confirmed by the Natural History of the American Aborigines," *The American Biblical Repository* 10, no. 1 (July 1843): 29ff.

<sup>69</sup> Stanton, 52.

<sup>70</sup> In the late twentieth century Stephen Jay Gould attempted to duplicate some of Morton's studies and found his methods sloppy and irregular even on their own terms (Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981). Morton himself acknowledged that the size of his sample was not always ideal: whereas he had a hundred Peruvian crania to measure, he based his study of the Mound Builders on the examination of only eight skulls (Morton, 97; 228). The Mexican skulls in his collection were hardly ancient, dating only from the time of the Conquest (Morton, 144).

which they now raise for their dead, that might not be the work of a few people in a few days.”<sup>71</sup>

An indication of the way theories of the American archaeologists shifted in the late 1820s can be gleaned through a comparison with a European scholar writing in 1824. Constantine S. Rafinesque (1783-1840) was one of the more colorful early archaeologists. An eccentric, self-taught scholar born in Constantinople who was teaching at Kentucky’s Transylvania University, he wrote in the 1820s before the assumption of ancient whiteness was pronounced. He conjectured that the most ancient of the migrations, which he called the “*Eastern or Atlantic*,” had crossed the Atlantic from Western Europe and North Africa. The second race, the Iztakan, had crossed the Pacific from Asia and settled in California, Mexico, and Peru. It was they who built the pyramids and temples of Central America. The third race, “the Northern or Oguzian,” the newest arrivals, crossed the “Berhing strait” from Siberia. “Their Monuments are easily known by their relative modern appearance, rude structure, irregularity, recent graves, signs of dwellings, &c.”<sup>72</sup> American scholars never accepted him as one of their own, partly no doubt because of his greed for fame and his weakness for other men’s wives, partly because they were inclined to discredit the pretensions of a European.<sup>73</sup> Too extreme to be entirely credible, Rafinesque was too well-read to be entirely dismissed; with ironic understatement, Samuel Haven of a later generation of archaeologists allowed in 1856, “Mr. Rafinesque was a laborious student in almost every

---

<sup>71</sup> Timothy Flint, “Indian Mounds,” *The Western Monthly Review* 1, no. 3 (July 1827): 144.

<sup>72</sup> C.S. Rafinesque, “Ancient Monuments of North America,” *American Monthly Magazine* 1, no. 4 (April, 1824): 316-7.

<sup>73</sup> David Ian Spanagel, “Chronicles of a Land Etched by God, Water, Fire, Time, and Ice,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1996), 100-118.

conceivable department of knowledge, and only wanted the faculty of judicious discrimination to secure him a distinguished name among men of science.”<sup>74</sup>

Josiah Priest (c1790-c1850) was Rafinesque’s equal in imagination if not in scholarship, and took some of Rafinesque’s more dubious conclusions even further. Writing a dozen years after Rafinesque, the ancient Americans he invented came from Greece and Rome. In 1837 he speculated that the Romans might have built a fort at Marietta, Ohio, “however strange this may appear.”<sup>75</sup> He reported the discovery of an engraved stone that proved that “a contemporary of Aristotle, one of the Greek philosophers, has dug up the soil of Brazil and La Plata, in South America”<sup>76</sup> which according to the title of his book provided “evidence that an ancient population of partially civilized nations differing entirely from those of the present Indians peopled America many centuries before its discovery by Columbus.”<sup>77</sup> One of the amateurs who clearly hoped to benefit from his hobby, Priest evidently saw no profit in cautious scholarship or circumspection. He dispatched a team of door-to-door salesmen who unloaded more than 20,000 copies of *American Antiquities* in thirty months.<sup>78</sup> A through-line connects Priest’s assumptions about white superiority with his declarations of black inferiority (and the fitness of Africans for slavery). In 1851 he published *Bible Defence of Slavery; or, The Origins, History and Fortunes of the Negro Race* in which he

---

<sup>74</sup> Samuel F. Haven, *Archaeology of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 1856), 41 n. 1.

<sup>75</sup> Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West* (Albany: Hoffman and White, 1837), 44.

<sup>76</sup> Priest, 47-8.

<sup>77</sup> Priest, title page (n.p.).

<sup>78</sup> Fagan, 115.

argued, among other things, that the “pyramids [were] built by the shepherd kings, a race of copper-colored men of the blood of Shem, and not by the blacks of Egypt.”<sup>79</sup>

Scientifically-inclined researchers like Samuel Morton notwithstanding, many early writers tried to fit their speculations about ancient America into a Bible framework. “What a wonderful book is the Bible!” exclaimed Charles McIlvaine, Episcopalian Bishop of the Diocese of Ohio, in his preface to John Delafield’s 1839 *An Inquiry Into the Origin of the Antiquities of America*. “But what connection has the Bible with American Antiquities?” In a reply that unblushingly privileged the written word over all other forms of historical evidence, McIlvaine replied, “. . . the registers of long lost events and generations, inscribed upon the rocks and buried in the fossil remains of far distant ages, or scattered far and wide in the ruins of once mighty empires, are so many witnesses, constantly multiplying, to the history contained in the Bible.”<sup>80</sup>

Using the Bible as evidence helped amateur archaeologists construct a flattering national myth. For his part, Delafield (1812-1866), in the main part of the text to which McIlvaine provided the introduction, constructed an elaborate theory that connected the “advanced” American Indians with the “Scythic race.”<sup>81</sup> The Scythians, Delafield explained, were descendants of Cush, son of Ham and grandson of Noah. Scattered after building the Tower of Babel, the Scythians turned up, according to Delafield, in Egypt, Ireland, Siberia, and finally America. Philological evidence supported his claim, he said, as did a comparison of the skulls of American Indians and the tribes of Northern Asia, the usage of hieroglyphics, the observance of the Sabbath, the importance of caste, and the

---

<sup>79</sup> Josiah Priest, *Bible Defence of Slavery; or, The Origins, History and Fortunes of the Negro Race* (Glasgow, KY, Rev. W.S. Brown, 1853 [sixth stereotype edition]), x.

<sup>80</sup> The Right Reverend Charles P. McIlvaine, D.D., preface to John Delafield, Jr., *An Inquiry Into the Origin of the Antiquities of America*, New York: Colt, Burgess & Company, 1839 (n.p.).

<sup>81</sup> Delafield, 26.

pyramidal form of architecture. These Scythians, early arrivals in North America, were driven south by the Lenni Lenape, a much inferior race of Indians.<sup>82</sup> Delafield came from a prominent New York family, but his interests veered off in wild directions; his second effort, published eighteen years after his *Inquiry*, was *Mysticism and Its Results: Being an Inquiry into the Uses and Abuses of Secrecy*.<sup>83</sup>

Imagining a glamorous origin for the first people of America was not solely the occupation of cranks and enthusiasts. The poet William Cullen Bryant deftly described the eclipse of ancient mound builder civilization by invading hordes of barbarians in his 1832 poem “The Prairies,” composed on a visit to his brother in Illinois:

. . . Are they here—  
The dead of other days?—and did the dust  
Of these fair solitudes once stir with life  
And burn with passion? Let the mighty mounds  
That overlook the rivers, or that rise  
In the dim forest crowded with old oaks,  
Answer. A race, that long has passed away,  
Built them . . .  
. . . The red man came—  
The roaming hunter tribes, warlike and fierce,  
And the mound-builders vanished from the earth.<sup>84</sup>

After describing the heaps of corpses resulting from the encounter of the mound builders and the red men, Bryant’s concluding lines predicted the subsequent eclipse of the red interlopers with a new race of “Sabbath worshippers.” He omitted scenes of carnage in describing this second encounter, or any suggestion of compulsion in the Indians’ search

---

<sup>82</sup> Delafield, 14.

<sup>83</sup> William S. Pelletreau, *Historic Homes and Institutions and Genealogical and Family History of New York*, Volume I (New York and Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1907), 261; John Delafield, *Mysticism and Its Results: Being an Inquiry into the Uses and Abuses of Secrecy* (St. Louis: Edwards & Bushnell, 1857).

<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, Robert Taylor Conrad in a poem called “The Sons of the Wilderness: Reflections Beside an Indian Mound” (*Graham’s Magazine* 23, no. 1 [July 1843]: 39-47) inquired who had extinguished the race that built a “death-fill’d mound” beside a “cotter’s window” and predicted that “history will say/That we . . .Robb’d them of home, and drove them to the wild . . .” Conrad went on to annotate his 37-verse poem with six pages of footnotes cataloguing white betrayals of the Indians.

for “wilder hunting-ground.” Instead, the agent in this second removal was divine, as innocent of conscious intention as the act of breathing, and as full of destiny as the inspiration of heaven: “Thus arise/Races of living things, glorious in strength,/And perish, as the quickening breath of God/Fills them, or is withdrawn.”<sup>85</sup>

Searching for forebears among the ancient inhabitants of North America was a pastime popular enough that it could even be parodied for its absurdity. In the short-lived journal *Arcturus*, editor Cornelius Mathews (best known for coining the soubriquet “Young America” in a speech of 1845<sup>86</sup>) inquired of the Mound Builders, “Who was their great man in their palmyest day? Was he, Webster-like, of huge thews and sinews; or did he steal upon the nation in the dwarfish shape and guise of a Van Buren? Or were their politics, their parties and political divisions, based on some tomb-building question?” Mathews proceeded to sketch a picture of ancient life preoccupied with nineteenth-century concerns, a sort of Jacksonian-era *Flintstones*. Although the humor was broad, the author suggested an indigenous past that corresponded with the modern Market-Revolution present, down to the particulars of stock markets, charter elections, and auctions. “Tread lightly, therefore, on the fair fields of the west; for you know not what ancient and cherished echoes may be slumbering in its cliffs and riversides, nor how gently the fore-parents of us all are sleeping there!” Mathews concluded.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> A similar effort is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “The Skeleton in Armor,” which appeared in *The Knickerbocker* 17, no. 1 (January 1841): 52-4. It describes the imagined career of a soldier whose armed skeleton was disinterred in Fall River, Massachusetts in 1832. “I was a Viking old!” declares the spirit of the remains.

<sup>86</sup> Edward L. Widmer, *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 57.

<sup>87</sup> “M” [Cornelius Mathews], “Our Illustrious Predecessors,” *Arcturus, A Journal of Books and Opinions* 1, no. 3 (February 1841). Mathews’ authorship is confirmed by the appearance of this article in a collection of his work, *The Various Writings of Cornelius Mathews* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 346-8.

Mathews even attempted a short novel imagining the life of the ancient American people in *Behemoth: A Legend of the Mound-Builders* (1839). The incidence of sixteen occurrences of the words “nation” or “national” when describing this “great race that preceded the red men as the possessors of our continent”<sup>88</sup> in a work of only twenty-five dense (and, unfortunately, tiresome) pages suggest that, if Mathews was not constructing an allegory of the future American republic, he was at least presenting a case for the predecessors of U.S. citizens. “. . . [I]f they [readers and authors] be of strong minds and true hearts [, a] green forest or a swelling mound is to them as glorious as a Grecian temple; and they may be so simple as to be well nigh as much affected by the sight of a proud old oak in decay near at home, as by the story of a baronial castle tottering to its fall, three thousand miles off.”<sup>89</sup> Mathews’ mound builders forged weapons of steel, buried their dead with polished copper breastplates in the shape of a cross (though Mathews claimed not to know how they came by this tradition),<sup>90</sup> and spoke like English peasants out of Sir Walter Scott (“The star which fell but yesternight luridly athwart his dwelling, foretold that sequel too well”<sup>91</sup>). But in a clear link to the future, their warrior hero, who devised a way to exterminate the mastodon of the title that terrorized the mound builders, was graced with the honorific “father of his country.”<sup>92</sup>

Backyard archaeology exploded in the 1820s, often linking buried artifacts with the book with which white settlers were most familiar, the Bible. On farms in western New York, in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, plows constantly turned up bones and

---

<sup>88</sup> Cornelius Mathews, *Behemoth: A Legend of the Mound-Builders* (1839) in *The Various Writings of Cornelius Mathews* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 91.

<sup>89</sup> Mathews, *Behemoth*, 91.

<sup>90</sup> Mathews, *Behemoth*, 94.

<sup>91</sup> Mathews, *Behemoth*, 99.

<sup>92</sup> Mathews, *Behemoth*, 110.

arrowheads. On land made suddenly accessible to white settlement by the Erie Canal, everyone turned into an amateur antiquarian.<sup>93</sup> Randall McGuire has suggested that the most active myth-makers were Westerners on the borders of white settlement who were most apt to benefit from Indian displacement.<sup>94</sup> One of these enthusiastic amateurs was minister Ethan Smith (1762-1849), who published a volume called *View of the Hebrews* in Poultney, Vermont in 1823. Ethan Smith drew his evidence—with some apology—from Esdras, one of the apocryphal books of the Bible, which described the exile of the ten tribes of Israel northeast from Ararat to a destination a year and a half's journey away. "Suppose an extensive continent had lately been discovered, away north-east from Media, and at the distance of 'a year and a half's journey,'" suggested Smith coyly.<sup>95</sup>

You find [the inhabitants] with their traditional history that their ancient fathers once lived where people were dreadfully wicked, and that nine tenths of their fathers took counsel and left that wicked place, being led by the Great Spirit into this country; that they came through a region where it was always winter, snow, and frozen. That they came to a great water, and their way hither was thus obstructed, till God dried up that water; (probably it froze between the islands in Behring's Straits.) You find them keeping an annual feast, at the time their ears of corn become fit for use; and none of the corn is eaten, till a part of it is brought to this feast, and certain religious ceremonies performed. You find them keeping an annual feast, in which twelve men must cut twelve saplin poles, to make a booth . . .  
. . . would you hesitate to say you had found the ten tribes of Israel?<sup>96</sup>

To this rhetorical question Smith answered triumphantly, "Methinks I hear every person whisper his full assent, that upon the suppositions made, we have found the most

---

<sup>93</sup> Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 34.

<sup>94</sup> Randall H. McGuire, "Archeology and the First Americans," *American Anthropologist* 94, no. 4 (December 1992): 816-36. In *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004), Steven Conn argues that consigning the study of Native American history to the discipline of archaeology further distances and estranges it from the narrative of the United States nation (146-51).

<sup>95</sup> Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews* (Poultney, Vermont: Smith & Shute, 1823), 76.

<sup>96</sup> Ethan Smith, 79-80.

essential *pile* of the prophet Ezekiel's valley of dry bones!"<sup>97</sup> Suppressing the inconvenient fact that in Ezekiel's vision those particular bones were reanimated, Smith further added, for the particularly dense among his readership, "They are *the aborigines of our own continent!*"<sup>98</sup> He adduced his evidence from such "facts" as the origin of Indian languages in Hebrew, their imitation of the ark of the covenant, their practice of circumcision, and their living in tribes.<sup>99</sup>

Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* is sometimes cited as an inspiration for a much more noted account of the origins of the ancient Americans, Joseph Smith's *The Book of Mormon* (1830). Despite the same surname, the two men were unrelated, although at one time they lived near one another in Vermont. Joseph Smith's family moved west in search of ever-elusive prosperity, and young Joseph participated in what was a far-from-uncommon practice of magic in economically unsettled upstate New York.<sup>100</sup> In 1825 Josiah Stowell of Harmony, Pennsylvania hired Joseph and his father to find a cache of Spanish silver that he imagined was buried on his property.<sup>101</sup> While Joseph Smith found no buried treasure in Harmony, shortly afterward he announced that he had dug up golden plates near his home in Palmyra, New York. According to Smith's translation of these plates, America was settled by a group of Israelite refugees who escaped Jerusalem at the time of that city's capitulation to the Babylonians in 586

---

<sup>97</sup> Ethan Smith, 80. Italics original.

<sup>98</sup> Ethan Smith, 80. Italics original.

<sup>99</sup> Ethan Smith, 84.

<sup>100</sup> John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge and New York: The Cambridge University Press, 1994), 30-31.

<sup>101</sup> Richard Lyman Bushman with the assistance of Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 47.

B.C.E.<sup>102</sup> The exact route taken by these people is vague: upon leaving Jerusalem they proceeded in a “south-southeast” direction<sup>103</sup> (presumably down the Arabian peninsula) until they reached the ocean, where Nephi, their leader, received instructions from God to build a ship.<sup>104</sup> Guided by a divine compass, he and his people arrived at the “promised land,”<sup>105</sup> but there is no indication of whether they sailed west around the tip of Africa and crossed the Atlantic or east across the Arabian and Indian Oceans before reaching the Pacific. Descendants of a pilgrim named Lehi, they were further divided into two tribes, the Nephites, who were God-fearing and honorable, and the Lamanites, who were cursed for their disobedience with dark skin.<sup>106</sup> An even earlier group of immigrants, who had made an ocean crossing after the destruction of the Tower of Babel, had arrived at the Land of Promise via “barges.”<sup>107</sup> This group, the Jaredites, who established an advanced civilization, settled near a “narrow neck” of land that separated the “east sea” from the “west sea”—a geographic detail that suggested to one of Joseph Smith’s earliest critics, Eber D. Howe, the New World location of Darien on the Isthmus of Panama.<sup>108</sup> The Book of Mormon, in other words, repeats the trope of several migrations of people distinguished by their physical characteristics and accomplishments or lack thereof.

In their first attempts to boost sales of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith and his brother Samuel described it as a history of the Indians. Richard Bushman, Joseph Smith’s biographer, finds this decision—what an early twenty-first century entrepreneur

---

<sup>102</sup> The story of the Israelite emigrants is recounted in Joseph Smith, Jr., translator, *The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon, Upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi* (Palmyra, NY: E.B. Grandin, 1830), 1 Nephi.

<sup>103</sup> Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 16:13.

<sup>104</sup> Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 17:8.

<sup>105</sup> Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 19: 23.

<sup>106</sup> Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 5: 21.

<sup>107</sup> The Jaredites’ journey is recounted in *The Book of Mormon*, Ether.

<sup>108</sup> Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: Telegraph Press, 1834), 283.

might call branding—somewhat surprising given that “[t]he question of [Indian] origins was not a pressing issue for New York’s rural population in 1830.”<sup>109</sup> By this moment the farmers around Palmyra encountered few living Indians in their neighborhood. On the other hand, Fawn Brodie, in her 1957 biography *No Man Knows My History*, quotes Smith’s mother, who recalled how as a teenager he entertained his family with speculations about “the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular . . . ”<sup>110</sup> Characterizing the Book of Mormon as an account of the origin America’s indigenous peoples situated it in a familiar body of literature in the 1830s and ‘40s. During a period when ideas about race were undergoing a rapid change, the Book of Mormon clung to an older view that emphasized skin color as simply a mark on the body—one that could be applied or removed—rather than an essential difference. The book of Nephi identified dark skin as a curse for disobedience<sup>111</sup> although the curse could be lifted.<sup>112</sup>

To rally his struggling church, Joseph Smith continued to draw upon the ancient aborigines as predecessors of his community. In 1834 the Mormons were divided into two settlements, a more established one in Ohio and a second, besieged one on the Illinois frontier. Smith raised a militia to confront the Illinois settlers who were persecuting the Mormons. Near the Illinois River the small army discovered an Indian mound which they proceeded to excavate, discovering a skeleton with an arrowhead lodged in its ribs. The prophet announced that the skeleton belonged to a “white

---

<sup>109</sup> Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, 94.

<sup>110</sup> Brodie, 35.

<sup>111</sup> Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 5: 21

<sup>112</sup> Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 3: 15.

Lamanite” named Zelf killed in the last great confrontation between the Lamanites and the Nephites. Heartened by this fortuitous discovery of a connection between the landscape and their sacred text, Smith’s followers took the arrowhead and bones with them as relics.<sup>113</sup>

Assumptions about the ancient unity of the race that overspread both North and South America, and their whiteness, quietly justified the expansionism of the U.S. in the nineteenth century. A simultaneous sense of U.S. proprietorship of the ancient aboriginal past and the legitimacy of U.S. ownership of Texan and Mexican territory defined the early 1840s. The dual projects of territorial and scholarly appropriation of the region south of the U.S. border are neatly personified in John Lloyd Stephens (1805-1852). Probably no author did more to popularize the study of Central American antiquities than this travel writer, political operative, and amateur archaeologist, ably assisted by illustrator Frederick Catherwood (1799-1854). Where his predecessors studied skulls in their back bedrooms or dug up arrowheads in their backyards, Stephens made a series of comprehensive visits to the areas he studied, analyzing artifacts *in situ* and comparing them to the antiquities of the Old World, which he had also encountered firsthand. Although his fieldwork could be sloppy and his intentions were unabashedly commercial, Stephens brought a new, less speculative approach and a more modern outlook to the study of ancient monuments.

Like many nationalists with an interest in the aboriginal past, Stephens had many useful political connections. In 1839 Secretary of State John Forsyth appointed him as Special Ambassador to Central America. A New York lawyer, Stephens had made a name for himself as a popular travel writer, having introduced American readers to the

---

<sup>113</sup> Brodie, 149; Bushman, 240-41.

wondrous Petra, an ancient city cut out of rose-colored stone, in a best-selling book of 1837. But he owed his consular appointment to being a well-connected Jacksonian.<sup>114</sup> The mission to Central America was of particular interest to Stephens, who had been looking for an opportunity to explore the ancient ruins of the Americas, and who teamed up with Frederick Catherwood, an architect and draftsman who proposed to travel with him to illustrate the journey. In his official duties Stephens failed entirely; he was unable to even identify the legitimate government of the area, which was embroiled in civil war during his residence.<sup>115</sup> But Stephens and Catherwood were much more successful in their exploration of pre-Columbian sites, exploring dozens, with a dizzying pace that suggests latterday tourists on a tight schedule, and publishing two accounts of their travels, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (1841) and *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (1843), both set before the public in affordable editions by Harper and Brothers.<sup>116</sup> When Stephens's first account appeared in a two-volume edition priced at \$5, readers purchased 20,000 copies.<sup>117</sup> "We know that the public expectation has been generally awakened in relation to this work; that people are prepared to find it wonderfully curious, entertaining, and instructive: such was our own anticipation; and we cannot praise it more highly than by saying that the anticipation was realized and satisfied to its full extent," enthused *The Knickerbocker* in its review.<sup>118</sup>

It is little wonder that Stephens' books proved tremendously popular. They conveyed a positively visceral sense of the exhilaration of sweeping aside a veil of

---

<sup>114</sup> Fagan, *Elusive Treasure*, 138-149.

<sup>115</sup> R. Tripp Evans, *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination, 1520-1915* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 49-60.

<sup>116</sup> Stephens claims to have explored forty-four ancient cities. John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1843), Volume II, 444.

<sup>117</sup> Fagan, 186.

<sup>118</sup> "Literary Notices: *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*," *The Knickerbocker* 18, no. 1 (July 1841): 71.

obscuring foliage to reveal mysteries hidden for centuries. The reader even gets a sense of the recognition of a new kind of usable evidence as Stephens acknowledges that the indecipherable hieroglyphics proved, “like newly-discovered historical records, that the people who once occupied the Continent of America were not savages.”<sup>119</sup>

Catherwood’s illustrations, subtly shaded and finely detailed, even now strike the viewer with their strangeness. But if the ruins were the most memorable aspect of the books, they were set in a now-familiar context that emphasized the foreignness of Latin America, a travel narrative describing cockfights, corrupt officials, and Catholics. While Catherwood remained at his drawing board, attempting to represent in two-dimensional sketches the carvings that frustrated his abilities to capture them, Stephens traveled through Guatemala and Mexico, reporting on lazy Indians, well-fed prelates, and the horrors of a “sanguinary” civil war.

If Catherwood fits the picture-taking tourist stereotype down to his omnipresent camera (which was a cumbersome daguerreotype model), Stephens can be cast as a U.S. traveler of an equally familiar stamp, the pitiless souvenir hunter. He no sooner caught a glimpse of the exotic than he expressed the urge to possess it. In the name of saving ancient remains he pried them from their original contexts, destroying much of what he discovered and carelessly smearing the archaeological record. When one particularly fine example of a carved mask did not yield to his attempts to dislodge it from its setting, he left it, not particularly improved by his exertions, *in situ*.<sup>120</sup> Greedily he snatched the best preserved and most perfect specimens, packed them in straw, and sent them to New York to be displayed in Catherwood’s Panorama, a museum of curiosities the artist operated on

---

<sup>119</sup> John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841), Volume I, 102.

<sup>120</sup> Stephens, *Yucatan*, I, 43.

Broadway. Fate itself seemed to mock the pretensions of the would-be saviors: the priceless artifacts, after surviving so many eons' exposure to the elements and a sea journey to North America, were all lost one night soon after their arrival in a devastating fire.<sup>121</sup>

But to give Stephens his due, his pretensions of rescuing and preserving the ruins were not wholly delusional: he noted that the modern Indians frequently used the ancient cities as stone quarries, constructing the foundations of new houses out of the intricately sculpted remains they discovered, and he reported that Don Simon, a local landowner, suggested using the constituent pieces of monuments as paving stones.<sup>122</sup> Stephens apologized for his haste in tearing off from one site to another, explaining that he felt the need to keep one step ahead of the decay that seemed to be ready to overtake them. Everywhere he described crumbling arches, roofs caved in, walls sinking under the weight of fecund tropical vegetation. In some cases, spots revisited just 24 or 36 months after his initial encounter of them revealed further ruination. "In a few years, even these will be gone," he lamented.<sup>123</sup>

The juxtaposition of archaeological fieldwork and diplomatic affairs in John Lloyd Stephens's *curriculum vitae* was typical of many of the early scholars of the American past. The fact that so many writers investigating aboriginal origins south of the U.S. border dabbled—or immersed themselves—in politics at a time of aggressive expansionism might suggest that the projects of claiming a past and staking out territory

---

<sup>121</sup> "The Rotunda in Prince street, N.Y., erected for the exhibition of Catherwood's admirable Panoramas, was consumed by fire on Friday night, 29<sup>th</sup> ult. The manner in which it took fire is yet a mystery . . ." "General Intelligence: A Great Loss," *New York Evangelist* 4 August 1842, p. 123.

<sup>122</sup> Stephens, *Yucatan*, I, 233; 273; II, 230.

<sup>123</sup> Stephens, *Yucatan* II, 50.

were not entirely unrelated.<sup>124</sup> Certainly the idea that white Americans were reacquiring territory that had been savagely appropriated by red men in the distant past can be seen as an expression of the imperatives of Manifest Destiny. The absence of a written record that might contradict what appears highly improbable to modern understanding allowed the justification of a land grab sorely in need of defense.

On the other hand, the ambitious historian should no doubt take care not to suggest too definite a causal relationship between the claimed connection between the “white” mound builders and the ancient aborigines of Latin America and the claiming of vast tracts of Texas and Mexico. As Reginald Horsman argues in *Race and Manifest Destiny*, the elaborately worked-out myth of Anglo-Saxon superiority that eclipsed Enlightenment hopes for the assimilation of savages did not provoke Indian removal. Quite the opposite: in the nineteenth century, scholarly science caught up with the racism of Tennessean and Georgian frontiersmen.<sup>125</sup> In a similar fashion, archeological speculation fed on the expansionist impulse of the ‘30s and ‘40s as much as it nourished that impulse. The repeated assertions that the mound builders could not have been the ancestors of the modern Indians, and that the ancient inhabitants of the Ohio Valley were one people with the inhabitants of the valley of Mexico, sounded not so much as a rallying cry as a faint but perceptible hum in the background of westward and southward migration.

Except sometimes the hum erupted in a shout, or even a roar. Some outbursts, in which the claims of ancient inheritance and contemporary ownership are explicitly

---

<sup>124</sup> As Robert D. Aguirre writes in *Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 101: “[W]riting and looking are frequently inseparable from desire, despoliation, and appropriation.”

<sup>125</sup> Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 114-5.

connected, command attention. In the case of John Lloyd Stephens, he did not stop at simply sending antiquities out of the Yucatan: he conceived the idea of purchasing an entire archaeological site, which he proposed to ship home and reconstruct on the banks of the Hudson River.<sup>126</sup> “John Lloyd Stephens Buys a Jungle City,” archaeological historian C.W. Ceram titled one of his chapters, handily capturing the absurdity of the enterprise, which even Stephens relayed as comedy.<sup>127</sup> One of the curious hangers-on who tagged along as he and Catherwood hacked their way through the jungle in 1839 turned out to be Don Jose Maria Asebedo, who owned the land along the Rio Copan where the most impressive of the Guatemalan ruins were situated. Why should ownership not be transferred? Stephens describes his epiphany in the language of real estate speculation:

All day I had been brooding over the title-deeds of Don Jose Maria, and, drawing my blanket about me, suggested to Mr. Catherwood ‘an operation.’ (Hide your heads, ye speculators in up-town lots!) To buy Copan! remove the monuments of a by-gone people from the desolate region in which they were buried, set them up in the ‘great commercial emporium,’ and found an institution to be the nucleus of a great national museum of American antiquities!<sup>128</sup>

Elaborate *opera buffa* negotiations over money followed, concluded at last when Stephens pulled his tattered diplomatic dress from his traveling trunk, appeared before Maria in his role as an American official, and bought Copan for fifty dollars.<sup>129</sup> Stephens tried to repeat this coup in Palenque, but there his Mexican hosts insisted he would need to be married to a Mexican citizen to make the purchase, a condition he evidently considered fulfilling, weighing the marital prospects of the area, among whom was a girl

---

<sup>126</sup> Evans, 53-54.

<sup>127</sup> Ceram, 348.

<sup>128</sup> Stephens, *Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan I*, 115.

<sup>129</sup> Ceram, 356-60.

of fourteen. Ultimately he made the arrangements for the purchase of some six thousand acres through an American consul who conveniently came equipped with a Mexican wife.<sup>130</sup>

The Yucatan Stephens described was in turmoil, a ripe fruit ready to fall into open hands. Some of his readers may have been more interested in his descriptions of unstable governments and officials ready to sell their patrimony or switch loyalties for the right price. In 1841, the year *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* was published, some Texans tried to lure Yucatecan rebels into secession, and contracted with them to supply three ships from the Texas navy to help keep the sea lanes open between Yucatan and Vera Cruz while they carried out the proposed war of independence. Meanwhile Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, president of the Republic of Texas, aided rebels in New Mexico in their breakaway project, hoping to consolidate more Mexican territory into their new nation.<sup>131</sup>

Similarly, adherents of Mormonism found Stephens's discoveries useful in the vindication of their sacred text. The very year that Frederick Catherwood's illustrations produced graphic evidence of ancient civilization in the Yucatan, Mormon apologist Charles Blancher Thompson associated the Maya people with the Nephites in *Evidence in Proof of the Book of Mormon*.<sup>132</sup> A year later the Mormon newspaper *Times and Seasons* stopped just short of identifying the ruins of Quirigua as the site of Zarahemla, mentioned in the Book of Mormon.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> Fagan, *Elusive Treasure*, 179.

<sup>131</sup> Timothy J. Henderson, *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 123-7.

<sup>132</sup> Charles Blancher Thompson, *Evidence in Proof of the Book of Mormon* (Batavia, NY: C.B. Thompson, 1841), 101, cited in Evans, 99.

<sup>133</sup> *Times and Seasons*, 1 October 1842, 927, cited in Evans, 99.

In still other ways the Mormons read the latest archaeological findings to show that they were following the footsteps of their ancient predecessors. Joseph Smith, who had depicted America's aborigines as fugitive Israelites and unearthed the bones of a "white" Indian on his trek west, died at the hands of a mob in 1844. Brigham Young, one of his disciples, took over his role as leader and decided his people would never live in safety among the Gentiles. When Young finally reached the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 and declared, "This is the place," Utah was still part of Mexico, not becoming incorporated into the United States until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican War in 1848. But like the Indians, the Mormons treated national boundaries as irrelevant, migrating according to another map.

Young's dealings with the Indians in the Salt Lake Valley were inconsistent. According to Mormon belief, the Indians were degraded "Lamanites" who might be redeemed and become a "pure and delightsome" people.<sup>134</sup> But the Indians were not ideal neighbors; besides stealing from the Mormon settlers, they engaged with the Mexicans in a brisk trade in children to be deployed as slaves.<sup>135</sup> While Young urged the settlers not to kill Indians as a punishment for theft, he ordered his militia to Provo in 1850 on a mission of extermination of Indian thieves.<sup>136</sup> Later that year he tried to arrange federal removal of the Indians from the territory where the Mormons were settling.<sup>137</sup>

The archaeological investigations described above took place in the decades when Americans were moving into Texas and encouraging its independence from Mexico. In

---

<sup>134</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 211.

<sup>135</sup> Arrington, 214-5.

<sup>136</sup> Arrington, 213.

<sup>137</sup> Arrington, 214.

the 1820s U.S. settlers had flocked into the sparsely-populated Tejas region of Northern Mexico at the invitation of the Mexican government. Conflict was perhaps inevitable, especially when the settlers, led by Stephen Austin, brought their slaves into a country that had abolished the institution, but the consequences of that conflict were not foreordained. As D.W. Meinig points out, in 1824 the U.S. and Mexico were surprisingly similar in size, and Mexico approached the U.S. in population.<sup>138</sup> Mexico had certain advantages to offer. In a curious article that appeared in the popular publication *Atkinson's Casket* in 1831, the author, "C.S.R.," having come into the possession of a Spanish manuscript, offered a report on the situation in the new Mexican republic. Concerning the territory that lay just to the south of the U.S. border, the article argued

In any future contest with North America, the Mexicans think they will be quite a match for their northern neighbours. It happens that the nearest states to Mexico have a large slave population, which it will be very easy to rouse by an offer of complete freedom. Also the borders of the two countries are filled with Indian tribes, driven by the United States, and very unwisely concentrated in a vulnerable point, which would join the Mexican soldiers, who are nearly all Indians,<sup>139</sup>

C.S.R. argued. C.S.R? C.S.R. was Constantine S. Rafinesque, the same eccentric autodidact from Europe who had posited the three waves of ancient immigrants into America, whose imagination, according to Samuel Haven, outran his evident capacity for

---

<sup>138</sup> The United States of America had 1.8 million square miles and 9.6 million people; the United States of Mexico had 1.7 million square miles and more than 6 million people (from D.W. Meinig's *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, Volume II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) cited in Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995), 32-3.

<sup>139</sup> "The Mexicans, in 1830. By a Mexican Citizen," *Atkinson's Casket* 6, no. 4 (April 1831): 161. This article purports to be taken from a Spanish manuscript by the C.S.R., who edited it. "The writer of this appears an impartial and well informed man; his name will be disclosed to any one who may doubt his assertions." Having provided this disclaimer, the editor proceeds to supply a highly unflattering portrayal of the United States behavior toward its southern neighbor.

serious research.<sup>140</sup>

But events did not transpire as Rafinesque predicted. When Mexican General Manuel de Mier y Teran made an expedition to the lands settled by Stephen Austin's Anglo migrants, he made a prescient analysis of the situation. The Americans, he wrote, avoid "armies, battles, or invasions, which make a great noise and for the most part are unsuccessful." Instead they simply moved in and insinuated themselves, making claims at once exaggerated and provocative that insisted on their legitimate ownership of the land.<sup>141</sup> Lúcas Alamán, Mexican minister of the interior, echoed this assessment in 1830:

[I]nstead of sending conquering armies, [North Americans] . . . begin by introducing themselves in a territory that they desire and establish colonies and trading routes. Then they demand rights that would be impossible to sustain in any serious discussion, and basing their claims on historical facts that nobody admits . . . little by little these extravagant ideas, out of repetition, become sound proofs of ownership."<sup>142</sup>

Archaeology became the most scholarly and apparently scientific of these fictions.

U.S. settlers in Texas allied themselves with the non-Indian *Tejano* elite and disparaged the Indian natives and *mestizos* in the region. When the Mexican Army led by Santa Anna (and composed, it was pointed out, primarily of Indians) tried to reassert control of the region, it was routed by Samuel Houston and his U.S. forces in 1836. Texas became an independent nation. In his inaugural address as first president of the Lone Star Republic, Houston cast the Mexicans (not the Americans) as "the base invader."<sup>143</sup> Although the independent Texas sought annexation to the U.S., Andrew

---

<sup>140</sup> T.J. Fitzpatrick establishes Rafinesque's authorship of this article in *Rafinesque: A Sketch of His Life with Bibliography* (Des Moines: The Historical Department of Iowa, 1911), 153-4. The unnamed Mexican citizen was a Mr. Ismar, whom Rafinesque met in New York.

<sup>141</sup> Timothy J. Henderson, *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 60.

<sup>142</sup> Quoted in Andres Resendez, "National Identity on a Shifting Border: Texas and New Mexico in the Age of Transition, 1821-1848," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 2 (September 1999): 681.

<sup>143</sup> Horsman, 213.

Jackson feared international condemnation for the expansionist behavior of the United States and Martin Van Buren drew back from potential conflict with the northern states over the extension of slavery into the region.<sup>144</sup>

The ultimate expression of the justification for the U.S. takeover of supposedly ancestral land is contained in the Democratic platform calling for the “reannexation” of Texas in James Polk’s 1844 presidential campaign. The term has an echo of the Spanish policy of *reconquista*, through which the Iberian Peninsula was taken back from the Moors on the eve of Spain’s New World exploration. It also recalls a series of articles in the *St. Louis Beacon* in 1829, when Thomas Hart Benton spoke of the “retrocession” of territory awarded to Spain in 1819.<sup>145</sup> Senator Robert J. Walker of Mississippi published a pamphlet calling for the “Reannexation of Texas” in early 1844.<sup>146</sup> Polk argued that he simply wished to take back what John Quincy Adams had ineptly surrendered to Mexico in the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty that established the boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase.<sup>147</sup> “Natural borders”—so went the Democratic argument—trumped political ones, and made inevitable the United States possession of land occupied by unworthy Mexicans.<sup>148</sup> But in the U.S. context, the term reannexation would have had an even more venerable justification for Americans convinced that white aborigines had once populated the middle of the continent, only to be driven south by invading hordes of red

---

<sup>144</sup> David S. Reynolds, *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 117-8; Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995), 33.

<sup>145</sup> William Montgomery Meigs, *The Life of Thomas Hart Benton* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Company, 1904), 340-41.

<sup>146</sup> “Letter of Mr. Walker, of Mississippi, Relative to the Reannexation of Texas,” (Philadelphia: Mifflin and Parry, 1844).

<sup>147</sup> Asked to explain to a Cincinnati group his views on Texas early in his campaign, Polk replied that he favored “immediate re-annexation” of Texas 23 April 1844, (Charles Sellers, *James K. Polk: Continentalist, 1843-1846* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966], 67).

<sup>148</sup> Stephanson, 44.

savages.

It is crucial to remember that if the archaeology of Manifest Destiny supplied a handy myth that would explain the presence of white Americans in Mexico, those white Americans brought with them their black slaves. Abolitionist Theodore Sedgwick understood the acquisition of Texas, whatever the reasons given in its justification, as “but another name for the *perpetuity of slavery*.”<sup>149</sup> In whatever disguise it was dressed, the land grab was nothing more or less than claiming more territory for the cultivation of cotton by an enslaved population. “Ask not my vote for peopling a new continent with slaves,” wrote “One of the People” to the *Brooklyn Eagle* in 1848, then tellingly adding, “The gaze of the world is on us.”<sup>150</sup>

Expansionists placidly believed that even opponents of the Texas takeover would eventually be won over to its benefits. In her account of life in one of the new U.S. towns in Texas, Jane Cazneau maintained that American consciences “like that peculiarly useful article of which we make shoes and life preservers. . . stretch indefinitely when they come among cotton fields, and melt altogether in the ardent heat of sugar and rice plantations.”<sup>151</sup> Slavery would not be extended: it would simply be displaced. In a brilliant piece of rhetorical strategy, Senator Walker in his 1844 letter argued that the takeover of Texas would not so much expand the reign of bondage as facilitate the spread U.S. blacks into new territory and ultimately out of the United States:

[B]y the reannexation, as the number of free blacks augmented in the slave-holding states, they would be diffused gradually through Texas into Mexico,

---

<sup>149</sup> Theodore Sedgwick, *Thoughts on the Annexation of Texas* (New York, 1844), 38, quoted in Stephen Harnett, “Senator Robert Walker’s 1844 *Letter on Texas Annexation*: The Rhetorical ‘Logic’ of Imperialism,” *American Studies* 38, no.1 (Spring 1997): 41.

<sup>150</sup> “One of the People,” “The Past and Future—No. 1,” *The Brooklyn Eagle* 13 July 1848, 2.

<sup>151</sup> “Cora Montgomery” (Jane Cazneau), *The Eagle Pass; or, Life on the Border* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Company, 1852), 24.

and Central and Southern America, where nine-tenths of their present population are already of the coloured races, and where, from their vast preponderance in number, they are not a degraded caste, but upon a footing, not merely legal, but what is far more important, of actual equality with the rest of the population.<sup>152</sup>

Once again the races would be on the move. Archaeology helped set the moment of Manifest Destiny in the *longue durée*, in which slavery and Indian removal could be understood as inconveniences woven into the great tapestry of history.

The archaeological assumptions of the whiteness of the Toltecs belonged to a particular historical moment, and by the late 1840s that moment was passing. When U.S. explorers gained access to Mexico and Central America in the 1840s, either as part of the vanguard of expansion or as apparently disinterested visitors, their surmises became more sophisticated. Closer inspection allowed for new understandings of the past. The fevered interest in ancient peoples cooled in the 1850s. Steven Conn suggests that Samuel Haven's 1856 survey, *Archaeology in the United States*, was the climax of antebellum interest in the ancient aboriginal past.<sup>153</sup> According to Conn, the era of the ubiquity of Indians in printed discourse ended with the Civil War, when western battles limited access to study sites. After the war the disappearance of the Indian seemed inevitable, and the curiosity generated by proximity to native cultures waned.<sup>154</sup>

Actually, it is possible to recognize the retreat from the most assured archaeological justifications for U.S. takeover of Latin American territory exactly when

---

<sup>152</sup> "Letter of Mr. Walker, of Mississippi, Relative to the Reannexation of Texas," (Philadelphia: Mifflin and Parry, 1844), 14.

<sup>153</sup> Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 126-7.

<sup>154</sup> Conn, 126-7. Popular discourse about Indians did not disappear, but it reemerged for other purposes. As Alan Trachtenberg writes in *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans 1880-1930*, the end of the nineteenth century saw a "shift in representation of Indians, from 'savage' foe to 'first American' and ancestor to the nation." (Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans 1880-1930* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), xxii.

they would seem most useful: during the U.S. War with Mexico. Ephraim George Squier's and E. H. Davis's *Observations on the Aboriginal Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (1847), subsequently published in enlarged form as the first volume of the Smithsonian Institution's Contribution to Knowledge series in 1848, is regarded by modern archaeologists as representing a significant step forward in method and argument: Squier and Davis approached their study with skepticism and resisted speculation. Though they wrote before the codification of modern archaeological methodology, they are admired for their systematic approach.<sup>155</sup> Squier, an Ohio newspaper editor—who served as a diplomat in Central America from 1849 until 1869—lived near the mounds he analyzed and had some acquaintance with the Latin American antiquities to which he compared them, and conducted systematic research on the objects of his inquiry, something that set him apart from many of his contemporaries.<sup>156</sup> He also identified the stratification of the earthworks as essential to analyzing evidence collected.<sup>157</sup> Sites might have been disturbed, or corpses added to graves centuries after they were originally dug; the antiquarian had to consider carefully whether all materials collected from a single location could be dated to the same era.<sup>158</sup>

Although Squier and Davis did not relinquish the assumption that the Mound

---

<sup>155</sup> Bruce Trigger suggests that their intellectual rigor and restraint in speculation were very much the result of the guidance of Joseph Henry of the new Smithsonian Institution. (Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archeological Thought* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 107-8.)

<sup>156</sup> At one point, exasperated by Henry Schoolcraft's leaps to conclusions in accepting the dubious provenance of a "relic" with an inscription in hieroglyphics purportedly discovered in a mound at Grave Creek, Squier wittily cites this exchange from *Hamlet*:

*Pol.* By the mass! And 't is like a camel, indeed!

*Ham.* Methinks it is like a weasel.

*Pol.* It is backed like a weasel.

*Ham.* Or like a whale?

*Pol.* Very like a whale!

(E.G. Squier, *Observations on the Aboriginal Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (New York: Bartlett & Welford, 1847), 72.)

<sup>157</sup> Squier, 30.

<sup>158</sup> Squier, 34; 45.

Builders were related to the Toltecs, they are notable for their lack of prejudice and their caution about making assumptions based on superficial resemblance. In his inspection of the mounds in the Ohio Valley, Squier, echoing William Henry Harrison, posited that the earthworks constituted a comprehensive “*system of defences*, extending from the sources of the Alleghanny in New-York diagonally across the country, through central Ohio to the Wabash” behind which the mound builders assembled for protection.<sup>159</sup> Squier hazarded several possibilities as to whether these peoples had repulsed attacks from the northeast or the south or from one another. But he concluded, from evidence collected from distant mounds, that one could detect “a uniformity sufficiently marked to identify them as a single people.”<sup>160</sup> Squier hints at findings, evidence like “sanguinary observances” similar to that found on Aztec altars, and pottery “hardly distinguishable” from Peruvian specimens, that links the mound builders with the ancient peoples of Central and South America.<sup>161</sup> Still more compelling hints of ancient trade appeared in tools of obsidian from Mexico and gallinazo stone from Peru.<sup>162</sup>

It is even possible to read an anticipation of this more careful approach earlier, in the work of John Lloyd Stephens himself, in 1843. Taken together, Stephens’s two books describe a journey not simply through the Yucatan but to a new understanding of the people he was studying. His earlier book begins with frequent references to the “mystery” of a race who “vanished,” but by the end he was prepared to hazard that “opposed as is my idea to all previous speculations, . . . [the abandoned cities] were constructed by the races who occupied the country at the time of the invasion by the

---

<sup>159</sup> Squier, 22. Italics original.

<sup>160</sup> Squier, 23.

<sup>161</sup> Squier, 28; 33.

<sup>162</sup> Squier, 50.

Spaniards, or of some not very distant progenitors.”<sup>163</sup> His second book, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, goes further: it can be read as an extended argument for the connection of the present to the past. The Spanish had proved themselves not merely ineffectual custodians but active destroyers of the ancient wonders of Central America. Stephens was well aware of the *conquistadores*’ habit<sup>164</sup> of effacing the Indian past as a way of establishing their own hegemony. The doggedness of their process of cultural obliteration suggested to Stephens that there was a direct link between the ancient and the modern Indians that the conquerors felt a need to destroy; their very thoroughness in erasing traces of the past suggested the native vitality they had confronted.<sup>164</sup> Although Stephens pointed out that the Indians had degenerated from their former glories, he was the first to argue that ancient and contemporary Indians were in fact one people.<sup>165</sup> A measure of his theory’s controversy was its reception in contemporary reviews: *Arcturus*, for example, took him to task for inconsistency in imagining that contemporary Mexicans could have any relation to the builders of Copan and Palenque.<sup>166</sup>

Despite the fact that Stephens suggested the modern Indians of Mexico were descended from the Toltecs, it took somewhat longer for scholars in the U.S. to acknowledge a connection between the builders of the mounds and the Indians they knew. It remained difficult to admit that the ancient inhabitants of North America had any relation to the sometimes hostile, sometimes dispirited, always improvident people who lived on the edges of nineteenth-century white settlement.

Archaeological speculations of the 1850s were increasingly ready to concede the

---

<sup>163</sup> Stephens, *Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, II 442-3.

<sup>164</sup> Stephens, *Yucatan*, II, 244-55.

<sup>165</sup> Jennifer L. Roberts, “Landscapes of Indifference: Robert Smithson and John Lloyd Stephens in Yucatan,” *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 3 (September, 2000): 550.

<sup>166</sup> “Stephens’ Central America,” *Arcturus* 2, no. 9 (August, 1841): 152 ff.

possibility that modern Indians were the descendants of the builders of the mounds and that the latter were unrelated to the Aztecs.<sup>167</sup> In corners of the popular imagination Americans clung to the myth that the mound builders were a lost race. On the eve of the Civil War schoolchildren were reading that, while scattered points of resemblance were insufficient to demonstrate that the ancient aborigines were descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel, “[i]t seems far more probable that the first settlers of America were from Egypt.” On the other hand, G.P. Quackenbos’s *Illustrated School History of the United States*, in a display of dubious etymology, acknowledged that the Indians themselves maintained that “they are aborigines, or in other words, that they sprung [sic] from the earth and are not connected with any other people.”<sup>168</sup> Theories linking the builders of the Ohio mounds and the Mexican pyramids did not disappear entirely, and it was not until the end of the century that the popular understanding of the mound builders as a race essentially distinct from modern Indians was exploded at last by Cyrus Thomas in his *Report on the Mound Explorations* of the Bureau of Ethnology published by the Smithsonian in 1894.<sup>169</sup> But after the war with Mexico, what Robert Silverberg called the “great debate” over the probable origins of the Indians became less one-sided.<sup>170</sup>

One reason for this shift was that the archaeological discipline became more professionalized, theories less fanciful and more cautious. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, writing in 1857 with funding from the U.S. Congress, carried on digs at Ohio’s Grave

---

<sup>167</sup> See for example Samuel F. Haven, *The Archaeology of the United States* (Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, 8), (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1856) and Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1857).

<sup>168</sup> G.P. Quackenbos’s *Illustrated School History of the United States*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857), 14-5.

<sup>169</sup> Barbara Alice Mann, *Native Americans, Archaeologists, and the Mounds* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); Silverberg, 173.

<sup>170</sup> Silverberg, 97.

Creek Mound and concluded that it had been constructed by ancestors of modern Indians.<sup>171</sup> Samuel Haven (1806-1881), the librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, published his *Archaeology* as part of the Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge series. He synthesized much of the available scholarship without adding too many conclusions of his own—although he did state definitively

We may regard it as established, that there are not in the valley of the Mississippi any remains of edifices from which can be inferred a knowledge of the art of working solid materials into permanent and ornamental buildings for religious or secular purposes. There are no ruins of temples or other structures of stone, wrought by the hammer or the chisel, such as abound in Central America. There are no traces of roads and bridges to connect territorial divisions, or facilitate the commerce of an organized state, as are found in Peru. . . . In a word, tokens of civil institutions, of mechanical employments, and the cultivation of science and literature however humbly, such as appear among the remains of Mexican and Peruvian civilization, have no positive counterpart in the regions of which we are speaking.<sup>172</sup>

Like Schoolcraft, Haven saw more of a relationship between Mound Builders and modern Indians than between Mound Builders and Toltecs. Like Stephens, he pointed out that the earliest Spanish and French explorers had considered the natives they encountered capable of producing the artifacts of their ancestors. Anticipating twenty-first century historians, Haven also pointed out that in North America the natives' encounter with European trade goods led them to abandon their own manufactures.<sup>173</sup>

Several other factors may have contributed to the more measured speculations of the 1850s. First of all, news about archaeological discoveries in Latin America had chiefly been available previously in written description. Catherwood's extraordinary illustrations had been singular not only for their faithfulness to their subjects but their novelty. "Artistic images of the Mound Builder culture of the Ohio and Mississippi

---

<sup>171</sup> McGuire, "Archeology and the First Americans," 821.

<sup>172</sup> Haven, *Archaeology of the United States*, 154.

<sup>173</sup> Haven, 155.

Valleys are rare,” asserts art historian Angela Miller.<sup>174</sup> But in the 1850s new printing technologies made possible the wider dissemination of visual images. Illustrated weekly magazines like *Frank Leslie’s* (1852) and *Harper’s Weekly* (1857) brought pictures of exotic scenes, historical episodes, and current events into every living room.<sup>175</sup>

Schoolcraft’s multivolume *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* (1851-1857) was illustrated with plates by Seth Eastman and other artists; Ephraim Squier and Edwin Davis’s *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (1848) was illustrated as well. As access to graphic representations of both North and Central American antiquities became more readily accessible, a glance at views of the ancient cities of the Yucatan and the mounds of Ohio revealed as many differences as similarities.

Firsthand exposure to Mexico during and after the U.S. War with Mexico also made an impression. John Russell Bartlett, hired by the Mexican Boundary Commission to survey the two thousand miles between Mexico and the U.S., had ample opportunity to inspect antiquities in southwest. The more he saw, the more he became convinced that the people that had produced them were not related to the Aztecs.<sup>176</sup>

I have been unable to learn from what source the prevailing idea has arisen of the migration of the Aztecs, or ancient Mexicans, from the north into the valley of Mexico, and of the three halts they made on their journey thither. This is another idea which has been so widely promulgated that it has settled down into an acknowledged fact, although I confess I have seen no satisfactory evidence of its truth. . . . No analogy has yet been traced between the language of the old Mexicans and any tribe at the north of the district from

---

<sup>174</sup> Angela Miller, “‘The Soil of an Unknown America;’ New World Lost Empires and the Debate over Cultural Origins,” *American Art*, Summer/Fall 1994: 10.

<sup>175</sup> Joshua Brown’s *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2006) provides a good overview of the transformation effected by the spread of graphic images through nineteenth-century magazines.

<sup>176</sup> Brian W. Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 219, 253.

which they are supposed to have come; nor in any of the relics, ornaments, or works of art, do we observe a resemblance between them.<sup>177</sup>

The growing professionalization of archaeology made the ravings of hobbyists less credible. To be sure they did not disappear; Wisconsin Indian trader William Pidgeon's *Traditions of De-Coo-Dah* (1852), which purported to be an account of the "Tortoise Mounds" provided by a ninety-year-old descendant of the tribe that had built them, belongs in the category of Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* and Priest's *American Antiquities*. Although Pidgeon's work was unquestionably popular—it went through three printings—Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, in the sixth annual report of the Smithsonian Institution, declared it dubious.<sup>178</sup> Theodore Lewis revealed as a hoax in 1886.

Doing the kind of research that modern archaeology involves was costly. Brian Dippie in *Catlin and His Contemporaries* points out that serious scholars of native peoples—or those hoping to support themselves from their work—often turned to the federal government. Because Congress had to vote on appropriations of funds, even well-connected writers and artists had to tread carefully. The resulting scholarship could be dull and badly organized—as Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's surveys notoriously are—but they tended to avoid the fanciful and controversial. Competition for funds was also fierce. Schoolcraft and Squier became rivals over funding, publicly casting doubts on one another's scholarship.<sup>179</sup>

Perhaps the best case for the connection between the needs of Manifest Destiny and politically expedient archaeological theories is the fact that alternate perspectives did

---

<sup>177</sup> John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua*, Volume II (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1854), 283.

<sup>178</sup> Dippie, 252.

<sup>179</sup> Dippie, 237-263.

not gain a foothold in the popular debate until after the U.S. War with Mexico. The heyday of Mound Builder-Aztec connections was the 1830s and early 1840s, when figures as diverse as Samuel Morton, Joseph Smith, and John Delafield were writing.<sup>180</sup> John Lloyd Stephens's suggestion that there was a connection between contemporary Mexicans and the builders of Copan and Palenque caused reviewers to frown in 1841.<sup>181</sup>

But the practical problems of absorbing southern territory soured the taste for expansionism by 1846, when Northerners and Whigs protested the entry of the U.S. into war with Mexico.<sup>182</sup> The intractable problem of slavery and its regulation, erupting anew through the Wilmot Proviso in 1846, only intensified in the 1850s. Even Southerners expressed mixed opinions about the acquisition of Cuba in that decade.<sup>183</sup> In these areas the natives could not so easily be removed, and the presence of Hispanic and mixed-race people could not be explained away.

However questionable the suppositions of the infant discipline of archaeology about early America, they reveal a great deal about the mindset of the early republic in the 1830s and '40s. Scholarly and popular archaeology connecting the "white" mound builders and the ancient aborigines of Latin America triumphed during the age of

---

<sup>180</sup> According to Robert Silverberg, "[T]he legend of the Mound Builders achieved its apotheosis when a major religious creed was founded upon it by Joseph Smith and made lasting by his successor, Brigham Young" (Silverberg, *Mound Builders of Ancient America*, 96).

<sup>181</sup> See for example "Stephens' Central America," *Arcturus* 2, no. 9 (August, 1841): 152 ff.

<sup>182</sup> For resistance to U.S. participation in the Mexican War, see Robert Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 270-300. In 1846 Ralph Waldo Emerson famously confided to his journal, "Mexico will poison us." In a similar vein, John C. Calhoun declared, "Mexico is to us the forbidden fruit—the penalty of eating it would be to subject our institutions to political death." (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1845-1848* [Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912], 206; John C. Calhoun, Speech on the War Appropriation Bill, Senate, 9 February 1847, *The Essential Calhoun: Selections from Writings, Speeches, and Letters*, edited by Clyde N. Wilson [New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000], 132.)

<sup>183</sup> Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 171-184; "The Cuba Question," *DeBow's Review* 7, no. 6 (December, 1849): 540; "Cuba and the United States: The Policy of Annexation Discussed," *DeBow's Review* 14, no. 1 (January, 1853): 65.

Manifest Destiny, as the United States gobbled up vast tracts of Texas and Mexico. Developed as the U.S. forcibly removed Indians from their lands, the idea that white Americans were reacquiring territory that had been savagely appropriated by red men in the distant past remained popular as long as it served a political need. Only when the hazards of southwestern expansion became manifest in the late 1840s did new theories begin gaining ground.

Sometimes the relation of origins debates and land ownership is writ small rather than expressed in grand politics. Just as Timothy Flint's *Francis Berrian* suggests some of the ways a hoped-for relationship between the U.S. and Mexican republics were subject to doubt and anxiety, a novel of 1829 foregrounds issues involved in interpreting America's original inhabitants. The themes of history, antiquity, and proprietorship were treated in *Tokeah, or, the White Rose* by Austrian immigrant Charles Sealsfield (né Carl Anton Postl).<sup>184</sup> In this fascinating, prescient novel written just three years after *Francis Berrian*, and the year Jackson proposed Indian removal, Sealsfield attempts to reconcile Indian legitimacy and the inexorability of white dominance. *Tokeah* is set in the North American Southeast, in territory that has recently passed from French and Spanish ownership into U.S. hands, and depicts a universe in which whites and Indians live in worlds of divergent customs and loyalties, the map of one world overlaid upon the geography of the other. Although the distinctiveness of various tribes plays a crucial role in the plot, the outline of the Indian world is inscribed with only vague boundaries: their empire stretches from Canada to Mexico and beyond. The whites are much more aware of crossing national borders; it is they who give names to the landmarks the Indians refer to only as "the big river" and "the saltlake."

---

<sup>184</sup> Charles Sealsfield, *Tokeah, or, the White Rose* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Carey, 1829).

Charles Sealsfield's transatlantic output was prodigious, but reliable information about his background remains elusive: his identity as Carl Postl did not emerge until after his death. Born in 1793 and ordained a priest at 21, he left Europe in 1823 and arrived at New Orleans and began publishing works, including novels and books of travel in both German and English (*Tokeah* was subsequently issued in an expanded version in German in 1833 under the title *Der Legitime und die Republikaner*). After the publication of *North and South; or, Scenes and Adventures in Mexico* in 1844 (originally published in 1842-3 as *Süden und Norden*), Sealsfield abruptly stopped writing, dying twenty years later.<sup>185</sup> In his own lifetime Sealsfield was compared to James Fenimore Cooper—to the latter's disadvantage—but he has since slipped into obscurity.<sup>186</sup>

The first volume of *Tokeah* depicts a white minority outnumbered by Indian society; the second, treating a period just a few years later, shows the Indians boxed into a white cosmos from which they fervently desire to escape. "The white men want only the skies and the lands of the red men," complains the title character.<sup>187</sup> An acute observer of politics, Sealsfield uses the rise of Tecumseh and William Henry Harrison's humiliating 1809 Treaty of Fort Wayne as set pieces, and includes the pirate Jean Lafitte and a clearly-recognizable but unidentified Andrew Jackson as characters.

The title *Tokeah, or, the White Rose* is suggestive of two appellations for the same character; in fact, *Tokeah* is the Miko of the Oconeas, and *Rosa* is the white infant he adopts. Having taken part in Tecumseh's abortive pan-Indian movement, *Tokeah* chafes

---

<sup>185</sup> Glen E. Lich, "Postl, Carl Anton," *The Handbook of Texas Online* ([http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/PP/fonds\\_print.html](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/PP/fonds_print.html); accessed 18 April 2009); John T. Krumpelmann, "Tokeah, The First English-Language Novel in Our Southwest," *The South Central Bulletin* 28: 4 (Winter 1968), 142-3.

<sup>186</sup> Bernhard Alexander Uhlendorf, "Charles Sealsfield: Ethnic Elements and National Problems in his Works," (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Illinois, 1920), 26.

<sup>187</sup> Sealsfield, *Tokeah* I, 23.

under white treaties over which he has had no control that shut off access to his people's native lands.<sup>188</sup> Hope for the Indian future is represented by the vigorous young El Sol, native of Mexico and chief of the Cumanches, to whom Tokeah has promised his daughter in marriage. It is in the South that the Indians will find a homeland: "'From the prairies of the Cumanchees . . . will spring the tree of liberty for the red people,'" predicts El Sol, "' . . . and the tomahawk will be buried for ever between the men of Mexico, and the Cumanches.'"<sup>189</sup>

Up to the end of the first volume, Sealsfield narrates *Tokeah* from the Indian perspective. To a contemporary reviewer in *The Critic: A Weekly Review of Literature, Fine Arts, and the Drama*, this volume contained "some very trashy writing . . . The part of the story which transpires in the Indian village of Tokeah is decidedly the poorest—for it lacks the interest of probability, and the style is burdened with mawkish attempts at sentiment, amusing only as they are ridiculous."<sup>190</sup> To modern readers, however, Sealsfield's treatment is notable for giving the Indians sympathetic characteristics. As Sherry Sullivan has written, such early nineteenth-century treatments are common but often overlooked in favor of portrayals of Indian barbarism and bloodlust. "At the very least, such literature reveals that in the nineteenth-century quest for national identity, the Indian's symbolic function was two-fold: not only as an anti-image against which Americans distinguished themselves, but also a positive image with which they sought to be associated."<sup>191</sup> Tokeah is more to be pitied than condemned for his hatred of the

---

<sup>188</sup> Sealsfield, *Tokeah* I, 106.

<sup>189</sup> Sealsfield, *Tokeah* I, 178.

<sup>190</sup> "Tokeah; or the White Rose" (review), *The Critic: A Weekly Review of Literature, Fine Arts, and the Drama* 7 (March 1829): 285.

<sup>191</sup> Sherry Sullivan, "A Redder Shade of Pale: The Indianization of Heroes and Heroines in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 57.

whites, and his majestic taciturnity is increasingly mistaken for a lack of anything important to say. As Sealsfield writes, “[H]is better feelings would have made him, under other circumstances and in a brighter sphere, a hero or benefactor to a greater nation.”<sup>192</sup>

Volume II advances the plot to 1814 and shifts to the white perspective, and Sealsfield inserts assorted justifications for white—or, more specifically, American—control of the land. In a curious scene between the Indians and an unidentified but apparent Andrew Jackson, who is preparing the defense of New Orleans, Jackson defends the conduct of the whites who are, he says, equally lawful possessors of the land as the Indians—at any rate, they are stronger. And unlike the Spanish, they did not make slaves of the Indians. Tokeah replies that the whites are spiders who have gummed up the land with their webs.<sup>193</sup> Though their fathers’ land is fairer, the Indians prefer to find less hospitable territory far from the whites. Tokeah explains,

“If the red man has a handsome woman who will not cook for him, and make his hunting shirt and his mocasins [sic], he sends her back to her father's wigwam, and takes an uglier woman, who will do for him what he wants, and will not run after the young men. Tokeah,” continued he, “has lived in the land of his fathers, and among the white men, with his people. If their horses or their cattle went across the line, they durst not go and catch them, and if they did, the whites took their lives, as if they were buffalos. If the cattle of the white men came over our lines they came and took them, and those of the red men too. Tokeah cannot live with such men.”<sup>194</sup>

Tokeah and the broken remnants of his tribe will go into exile in Mexico. In Sealsfield’s tale, the Indians choose removal rather than confrontation or accommodation.

But Tokeah never escapes the United States. Sealsfield describes his end in the penultimate chapter, where Tokeah feels himself called to return once more to his

---

<sup>192</sup> Sealsfield, *Tokeah* I, 115-6.

<sup>193</sup> Sealsfield, *Tokeah* II, 165-6.

<sup>194</sup> Sealsfield, *Tokeah* II, 163-4.

ancestral lands to exhume the bones of his mother and father by night (““The light of heaven must no more behold them—they were given unto the dark, and they must be lifted in the dark””<sup>195</sup>). Sealsfield does nothing to mitigate the horror of this scene, where the burial ground, now passed into white ownership, has been dishonored by the plough. A barking dog indicates the proximity of the white man; a rail fence domesticates the scene; and stalks of Indian corn—apt symbol of a native plant tamed by white cultivation—lie strewn on the ground.<sup>196</sup> Desperate to rescue the remains of his ancestors from desecration, the elderly Indian digs furiously in the earth with bleeding hands. Sealsfield actually renders the scene with more restraint than might be expected, and it remains an affecting, if melodramatic, image. The Indian burial ground has become a cliché of modern horror movies, but here Sealsfield insists on showing it from an Indians’ perspective. Even in death, the Indians are not safe from white encroachment.

Tokeah dies not of heartbreak but in an Indian skirmish that follows quickly on this scene—the Indians are killing each other. He is pierced through with an arrow while clutching a pitiful coffin crafted of pine bark and containing his parents’ bones. “[T]he author very judiciously places a hostile tribe in ambush, by whom he is killed in the very nick of time, just as he was found to be greatly in the way,” remarked a sarcastic reviewer in *The Ariel*.<sup>197</sup>

Sealsfield was a Jacksonian who presumably expressed his own views as he acknowledged the inevitability of U.S. dominance.<sup>198</sup> Still, he was not unaware of the cost of American ambition. The last glimpse of *Tokeah*’s title character frantically trying

---

<sup>195</sup> Sealsfield, *Tokeah* II, 188.

<sup>196</sup> Sealsfield, *Tokeah* II, 189.

<sup>197</sup> “Original Notices: *Tokeah, or the White Rose*,” *The Ariel: A Semimonthly Literary and Miscellaneous Gazette* 3, no. 1 (2 May 1829): 4.

<sup>198</sup> Lich, “Postl, Carl Anton.”

to preserve his own link to the past makes a compelling contrast with the white settlers leveling Midwestern mounds for farming and white archaeologists breaking open hidden tombs in Mexico. The last miko of his tribe tries to properly honor the bones of his parents, disinterring them by moonlight, even as white explorers throw open ancient tumuli to the searching light of day, seeking to fabricate their own histories out of the remains they disinter. Yet Tokeah's claims ultimately stretch back no further than one generation. With considerably less legitimacy, U.S. nationalists reached much further back into the past, and claimed the ancient world—and the future nation—for their own.



**THE PROCESSION.**

**Chapter 3:** Joseph Holt Ingraham's *Montezuma, the Serf; or, The Revolt of the Mexitli* was a popular pulp novel of 1845 that imagined life in Mexico a millenium before the Spanish Conquest (hence the anachronism of the horse is particularly ludicrous). The novel told the story of a slave, Montezuma, who is distracted from his rebellious activities by falling in love with a princess. By situating his novel in both a long-ago and far-away context, Mississippi author Joseph Ingraham could depict both servile rebellion and amorous relations between slaves and masters.

## Chapter 3

### What Happens in Latin America . . .

#### Literature, Latin America, and the Problem of Slavery, 1830-1852

Nowhere more strikingly than in the U.S. novels and plays of the 1830s and '40s does the usefulness of Latin American settings as a context for the discussion of slavery come into focus. Until 1852, when Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fundamentally transformed the literary landscape of the United States not only through its phenomenal and unprecedented sales figures but also through its graphic, if sentimental, depiction of slave life, fictional outlets for the presentation of U.S. slavery fell into two categories.<sup>1</sup> Plantation novels like John Pendleton Kennedy's 1832 *Swallow Barn* presented a mostly charming picture of southern life that pushed African-American characters to the margins,<sup>2</sup> while abolitionist tales like those that ran from 1839-58 in the annual series of gift books called *The Liberty Bell* produced by the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society foregrounded the conflicts of their slave characters but never reached more than a niche audience.<sup>3</sup> In an era in which even Americans might have grudgingly echoed Sydney Smith's famous challenge of the *Edinburgh Review* of 1820—"Who

---

<sup>1</sup> Lucinda H. MacKethan's essay "Domesticity in Dixie: The Plantation Novel and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" concisely explains some of the reasons *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was so revolutionary (in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, edited by Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan Van D'Elden Donaldson [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997], 223-242).

<sup>2</sup> John Pendleton Kennedy, *Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion* (Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1832). William Taylor explains that after the first blush of plantation fiction in the 1830s "there was a lull in literary planting and there was nothing quite like this first intense interest in Southern life until the eighteen fifties when *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was followed not only by a rash of 'answers' but also by a great mass of nostalgic writing about the South which was seemingly unrelated to the slavery issue." (William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and the American National Character* [Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963 (1957)], 127-8.)

<sup>3</sup> Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body from the Sentimental to the Lyric* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 24-5.

reads an American book?”<sup>4</sup>—no author aiming for a mainstream readership would intentionally alienate a sizable portion of his or her potential audience by extensively describing, much less criticizing, U.S. slavery. If American readers brooded about the possibility of slave rebellion or race war, if they were repulsed or fascinated by miscegenation, they did not encounter these set pieces in U.S. literature set in the United States.

But by relocating their situations from the U.S. South to Cuba or Peru—or even to the sixteenth-century Carolina coast under Spanish control—U.S. authors could break their silence. A Latin American background supplied fiction writers with a toy stage upon which the titillating, lurid, and shocking side of slavery could safely be enacted. In marked contrast to the circumspection with which they treated dramatic incidents and everyday realities of slave life in Virginia or Alabama, U.S. authors treated the cruel, the barbarous, and the sordid aspects of slavery and race relations in Latin America with prolix abandon. Furthermore, even ultra-southern writers who would never express thoughts outside the approved proslavery rulebook took up their pens to depict whippings, rapes, and grisly rebellions. By the 1830s Latin America was so recognizably the Other that writers discussing slavery were on safe ground when they set their plays and novels there.

---

<sup>4</sup> Sydney Smith, *Edinburgh Review* 65 (January 1820): 79-80. This query, a cliché now, was a cliché even in the 1830s when *The Southern Literary Messenger* opened a review of *Calavar*, “Who reads an American book? was tauntingly asked some years since, by the Edinburg [sic] or Quarterly Review,—we do not recollect which,—nor is it important to know.” (“*Calavar*,” *The Southern Literary Messenger* 1, no. 6 (February 1835): 315. In an essay that appeared on [www.common-place.org](http://www.common-place.org), Joanna Brooks points out that Smith’s challenge was issued in a review of a self-satisfied, self-promotional review of American accomplishments called *Statistical Annals Embracing Views of the Population, Commerce, Navigation, Fisheries, Public Lands, Post-Establishment, Revenues, Mint, Military and Naval Establishments, Expenditures, Public Debt and Sinking Fund, of the United States of America* (1818) (Joanna Brooks, “Who Reads an Early American Book?” [www.common-place.org](http://www.common-place.org) 9, no. 3 [April 2009]).

Yet if fiction made possible subversive, or at least unguarded, critiques of U.S. slavery, it does not follow that authors and readers were unaware of them, or that the impact of these texts was minimal. The antebellum period was an era in which novels and plays increasingly grappled with social problems. British and American literature of the 1840s and '50s depicted women striving for autonomy, workers seeking opportunity, poor people struggling for survival.<sup>5</sup> Debates about contemporary problems gained resonance by being associated with compelling (if fictional) characters and exciting (if frequently sentimental) situations. Lincoln's apocryphal remark to Harriet Beecher Stowe—that she had started the Civil War through her fiction—does suggest the power literature was understood to have in forming opinion and fomenting change.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible to trace the indirect route by which American authors came to recognize the advantages of the literary displacement of an explosive subject into a foreign context. American authors first responded to the attractions of Latin American backgrounds because they desired to enter the international literary game when European writers seemed to be holding all the cards. The anxiety expressed by Thomas Jefferson in his 1787 *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which he angrily responded to the Abbé Raynal's charge that "l'Amerique n'ait pas encore produit un bon poëte,"<sup>7</sup> had grown to a

---

<sup>5</sup> In the U.S., Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is perhaps the ultimate type of the social problem novel, of which the works of Charles Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, and Elizabeth Gaskell provide just a few British examples. Theater also provided a venue for the exploration of the targets of antebellum social reform: consider, for example, the melodramas *Ten Nights in a Bar Room* (Timothy Shay Arthur, 1854) and *The Poor of New York* (Dion Boucicault, 1857). Jennifer Rae Greeson does an excellent job situating *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in a global context in *Our South: Geographic Fantasy and the Rise of National Literature* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 169-92.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel R. Vollaro, "Lincoln, Stowe, and the 'Little Woman/Great War' Story: The Making, and Breaking, of a Great American Anecdote," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2009), 18.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Richmond, Virginia: J.W. Randolph, 1853 [1787]), 70. This quote of Abbé Raynal is known almost exclusively from Jefferson's citation to a particular edition of *L'Histoire philosophique et politique*. As a matter of fact, Jefferson acknowledges in a footnote that in later editions Raynal "removed his censure from that part of the new world inhabited by the Federo-Americans" (72). But apparently Jefferson's indignation outlived Raynal's repudiation of the slur.

chorus by the 1820s and '30s, when U.S. intellectuals fretted about the absence of writers good enough to be read in Europe. Novels and plays would serve as ambassadors to the rest of the globe and, further, would help Americans understand themselves. “To write from a people, is to write a people—to make them live—to endow them with a life and a name—to preserve them with a history forever,” declared southern novelist William Gilmore Simms in 1844.<sup>8</sup> Literature was capable of containing that most evanescent of substances, the distilled essence of the American character, in a form that could be exported for worldwide consumption.

One impediment to the proliferation of American letters was U.S. copyright law, which seemed purposely designed to prevent new writers from earning a living by their craft. Although the American Copyright Club (formed in 1843 by William Cullen Bryant and Cornelius Mathews when they were not writing poems and stories about the ancient Americans) helped encourage a sense of literary patriotism, publishers who wanted the opportunity to exploit English imports proved a more effective lobby against copyright restrictions than struggling authors who argued in their defense.<sup>9</sup> During the antebellum period, cheap editions of English novels flooded the American market, and European

---

<sup>8</sup> William Gilmore Simms, “Americanism in Literature,” in *Views and Reviews in American Literature: History and Fiction* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Walker Howe’s *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 635; Edward L. Widmer, *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 99. See also William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 382-93.

pirates printed American works without fear of legal retribution.<sup>10</sup> Many authors, discouraged by poverty, turned to professions other than writing.<sup>11</sup>

Although their intention was to put their nation on the literary map, many writers of the early nineteenth century felt compelled to follow European formulas. Unfortunately for them, the favored fictional genre in the 1820s and '30s was romanticism, and writers were judged not on innovation but on how closely they could approximate the style of Sir Walter Scott.<sup>12</sup> That U.S. writers of the early republic took Scott as their model is not surprising: these years corresponded with the zenith of the influence of his signature style of historical fiction, the romance. Furthermore, Scotland, like the U.S., grew rangy in the shadow cast by England, and defined itself against an English model. The Scottish Common Sense philosophers who had contributed so much to the yearning for independence in the period of the American Revolution were known to Scott; indeed in the cases of Adam Ferguson and William Robertson, they were his teachers.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Pirated American literature was also abridged without the authors' consent and presented in low-cost paperback editions in England. *The Novel Newspaper, Volume V* was "exclusively composed of the works of transatlantic authors, and those of no mean reputation" (n.p.) and included works by Charles Brockden Brown, James Kirke Paulding, and Robert Montgomery Bird. (*The Novel Newspaper, Volume V* [London: J. Cunningham, 1840].)

<sup>11</sup> As it happens, many moved into politics. Robert Montgomery Bird, who had outlined a series of eight novels on Latin American themes, abandoned writing, first seeking the Whig nomination to Congress as a representative of Delaware in 1842 and then angling for a post with the Smithsonian Institution. A hundred years before the federal government would fund Depression-era writers and artists through the Works Progress Administration, literary figures like Washington Irving, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne and James Russell Lowell turned up in government positions that ranged from ambassadorships to humble office jobs. Meanwhile, a partisan press flourished, rewarding loyal editors and writers. In short, the relationship between politics and the project of nationalism went beyond the often-repeated call for a national literature. (Curtis Dahl, *Robert Montgomery Bird* [New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963], 29-31; Howe, 635; Widmer, *Young America*, 72; 76.)

<sup>12</sup> Contemporary settings did not please reviewers. "[O]ur author has made a mistake . . . in fixing the period of his story so near our own times," complained the *North American Review* in its critique of Timothy Flint's *Francis Berrian*. ("Critical Notices—*Francis Berrian*," *The North American Review* [January 1827]: 211.)

<sup>13</sup> George Dekker, *The American Historical Romance* (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 74. Mark Noll discusses the influence of the Scottish

And then there was Scott's master plot (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in an 1820 review of Scott's work, said his subject was always the same): the conflict between progress and reaction.<sup>14</sup> Whether he treated the Stuarts and the Hanoverians in *Waverley* or the Saxons and the Normans in *Ivanhoe*, Scott always told the same story, namely what was gained, and what was lost, as the forces of the future vanquished the forces of the past. The future always triumphed, but Scott acknowledged the disappointments of the losers. At its worst, Scott's ability to sympathize with the defeated fills his prose with an easily-mocked, maudlin nostalgia, inspiring admiration for what Mark Twain dismissed as "dreams and phantoms . . . decayed and swinish forms of religion . . . decayed and degraded forms of government . . . silliness and emptiness, sham grandeurs, sham gauds, and sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society."<sup>15</sup> At its best, however, the romance captures something of the complexity of social change, and the value of the venerable and unique in a market society where all is raw and tasteless. Admittedly the United States did not possess a conveniently-documented past of the antiquity of Scotland, but in the Market Revolution period it struggled with forces of change that seemed even more wrenching, arbitrary, and abrupt than those unleashed upon the contemporary Highlands.<sup>16</sup>

Calling for Americans to follow in Scott's footsteps, Rufus Choate (1799-1859), a Whig Congressman from Massachusetts, delivered an oration in 1833 insisting that New

---

Enlightenment thinkers in *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Dekker, 8; 35.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), *Life on the Mississippi* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1917), 375.

<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of this period as one of wrenching disruption and anxiety, see Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York and Oxford, 1991).

England furnished the materials for “a Series of Novels like the Waverly Novels.”<sup>17</sup> Why not fictional treatments of King Philip’s War or the Battle of Lexington, he proposed, which would bring the days of the past to thrilling life? Fiction could fire the imagination and forge a sense of identity better than academic history. Comparing Scott’s oeuvre to the Iliad and the Odyssey, Scott called for nothing less than an American epic.<sup>18</sup>

Although he did not follow Choate’s suggestion of focusing on New England, James Fenimore Cooper, “the American Scott,” was the first to recognize the potential of setting a romance in the New World.<sup>19</sup> But in this period many reviewers overlooked the romance’s thematic concerns and focused instead on more superficial conventions of setting and situation. The crumbling castles, feudal lords, picturesque peasants, and courtly dialogue that formed Scott’s stock in trade were all notably lacking in the United States. “But where are your materials for the higher order of fictitious composition? What have you of the heroic and the magnificent?” asked W.H. Gardiner in *The North American Review* of 1822.

Here are no ‘gorgeous palaces and cloud capped towers;’ no monuments of Gothic pride, mouldering [sic] in solitary grandeur; no mysterious hiding places to cover deeds of darkness from the light of the broad sun; no cloistered walls, which the sound of woe can never pierce; no ravages of desolating conquests; no traces of the slow and wasteful hand of time.<sup>20</sup>

Gardiner’s lament appeared in a review of Cooper’s Revolutionary-era *The Spy*, and he answered his own question by insisting that the U.S. past did contain suitable

---

<sup>17</sup> Rufus Choate, “The Importance of Illustration New England History by a Series of Romances like the Waverly Novels,” in *Addresses and Orations of Rufus Choate* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Press of John Wilson and Son, 1878), 1-39.

<sup>18</sup> Choate, 36, 11.

<sup>19</sup> Dekker, 34.

<sup>20</sup> W.H. Gardiner, “*The Spy, a Tale of the Neutral Ground*” (review), *The North American Review* July 1822: 252-3.

materials for romance in chronicles of the early days of European settlement, the wars with the Indians, and the revolution.<sup>21</sup>

But setting romantic fiction in sixteenth-century Latin American fit the bill even better. Just as early nineteenth century archaeologists claimed Mexico and Peru for “America,” writers of American fiction eagerly colonized land settled by the Spanish. The most enthusiastically reviewed romantic fiction written by Americans concerned the cavaliers and courtly manners of the Conquest. When Robert Montgomery Bird produced his novel *Calavar; or the Knight of the Conquest* in 1834, eight years after the publication of *Francis Berrian*, the *North American Review* reported triumphantly, “If there is any portion of modern history, fertile in romantic and exciting interest, is that of the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards.”<sup>22</sup> And five years later, in 1839, on the publication of *The Damsel of Darien*, William Gilmore Simms’s novel about Balboa’s discovery of the Pacific, *The Casket* gushed,

We rejoice that our native novelists are beginning to illustrate the history of America. There is no better field than the early doings of the Spanish adventurers, nor one more full of romance, and at the same time instructive. . . . [O]ur history is crowded with materials of unrivalled value, and which, in the hands of some mighty genius, may yet make our continent as celebrated as the brown hills of Scotland, so often immortalized by the pen of Scott.<sup>23</sup>

According to the *American Quarterly Review*, Robert Montgomery Bird was the first author to recognize the possibilities of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico as a subject for romantic fiction in *Calavar*.<sup>24</sup> Bird (1806-1854) was a Philadelphia doctor whose

---

<sup>21</sup> Gardiner, 255.

<sup>22</sup> “*Calavar: or the Knight of the Conquest*,” *The North American Review* January 1835: 233.

<sup>23</sup> “*The Damsel of Darien*,” *The Casket* 15, no. 5 (November, 1839): 239.

<sup>24</sup> “To this day, the spectacle of the Spaniards looking from the mountain ridges, down upon the city of Montezuma, inflames our imagination; and we sigh, when we think of the young Guatimozin, a prisoner, touching the dagger of Cortes, and beseeching him to send him after his people.

literary output provides a rich mine of material that demonstrates how Spanish-American contexts could be used as settings in which to explore ideas of U.S. nationalism. He wrote fiction while still in medical school and was published in the *Philadelphia Monthly Magazine* in 1827, giving up his medical career a year later.<sup>25</sup> Although his most famous novel, *Nick of the Woods*, is set in Kentucky, he used Spanish-American backgrounds repeatedly in both novels and plays.

Bird was not a casual student of Spanish-American history. He spoke Spanish and conducted careful research, and the scrupulous historian William Prescott acknowledged his accuracy in *The Conquest of Mexico*.<sup>26</sup> In account books for 1831 and 1832 he noted purchases of Johann Baptist von Spix's *Travels in Brazil; South American Travels; the Voyages of Columbus*.<sup>27</sup> Ambitiously planning to use Spanish America as the setting for future pieces, he planned a trip to Mexico and South America for the spring of 1833 and carried a letter of introduction to the U.S. Commissioner in

---

"Upon the rich field, of which we have thus taken a cursory view, Dr. Bird has been the first to adventure." (*Calavar; or, the Knight of the Conquest*," *American Quarterly Review* 32 [December, 1834]: 380).

Actually, Robert Charles Sands (1799-1832), an early associate of William Cullen Bryant, had chosen a Latin American setting for a masterful short story called "Boyuca" six years earlier. Appearing in a "beautifully printed and tastefully adorned yearly volume" called *The Talisman* in 1828, "Boyuca" evokes a credible horror-story atmosphere and engages issues of the ethics of human intervention into the mechanics of destiny. In this story Ponce De Leon and a younger *conquistador*, Perez, arrange with a witch to take them to the fountain of youth. The characters' errancy into the wilderness, through a landscape alive with snares and predators, anticipates the blundering progress of characters from Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown to Conrad's Marlow into an ethical terrain they cannot possibly understand. Despite its obscurity, Sands' tale is a neglected jewel. (Robert C. Sands, *The Writings of Robert C. Sands in Prose and Verse, with a Memoir of the Author*, Volume I [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835], 20).

<sup>25</sup> Curtis Dahl, *Robert Montgomery Bird* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1963).

<sup>26</sup> Clement Edgar Foust, *The Life and Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1919), 55; Richard Moody, *Edwin Forrest: First Star of the American Stage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 234.

<sup>27</sup> Foust, *The Life and Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird*, 52-3.

Mexico, although he reached no further south than the mouth of the Mississippi, where an outbreak of cholera convinced him of the wisdom of turning around again.<sup>28</sup>

Among the figures of American letters, Bird is not a giant. Nonetheless, his popularity is evidenced by his works' multiple editions, including English ones. "The general opinion of the public, judging not solely from the sale of his works in our cheap form (which in itself is a good criterion), has stamped its approbation on our judgment, that as a writer of both novels and historical romance, he is inferior only to Sir Walter Scott," enthused the London editor of a cheap anthology of abridged fiction called *The Novel Newspaper*. Bird's work appeared in this English digest alongside other new American work, all of it free of copyright.<sup>29</sup>

In *Calavar* (1834) Bird tells the story of a young knight who accompanies Cortes on his attempt to retake Tenotchtlan after it is lost by the Spaniards, on their calamitous retreat from the city on the *Noche Triste*, and on their final, seemingly providential victory over the Aztecs when a depleted band of three thousand Spaniards and Tlascalan allies overcame an army of 50,000 Aztecs in the valley of Otompan. From the same events with which the historian William Hickling Prescott would construct his triumphant 1843 *The Conquest of Mexico*, Bird assembles a tale of conquest haunted by doubt. A cloud of uncertainty broods over the Spanish scramble for domination; the self-assurance of the soldiers, most of them veterans of the wars with the Moors, is scratched thin in the deserts of Mexico. Knocked from his pedestal, Cortes is not so much inspiring as manipulative, less devout and prescient than superstitious, shrewd, and lucky. Though not the main character, Calavar himself, a grizzled veteran of the battle of Granada,

---

<sup>28</sup> Foust, 55-6.

<sup>29</sup> *The Novel Newspaper, Volume V* (London: J. Cunningham, 1840), n.p.

figures as a haunting presence, pursued by ghosts of the people he betrayed. His repeated cry “Miserere mei, Deus!”<sup>30</sup> echoes as a plea for forgiveness for sins committed in the name of God. Even his nephew, Don Amador de Leste, the novel’s protagonist, retreats to Spain at the end of the novel, chastened by the warfare in which he has engaged.

The sourness of *Calavar* hints at how the American perception of Mexico has slipped from the cautious optimism of Timothy Flint in 1826 and sets up implicit comparisons with the English colonial project in North America. Rather than introducing the rudiments of English freedom to the New World, the Spanish establish systems that will ensnare the Indians in superstition. Bird has the Spanish soldier De Morla recognize the republican instincts of the Tlascalans, a tribe of Indians who flee their subjection to the Aztecs and voluntarily ally themselves with the Spanish. DeMorla says ruefully, “For my part, I think them rogues to love *us*, their truest enemies, better than their domestic rivals, the people of Tenochtitlan. Wo betide them, who help us to conquer their foes, when their foes *are* conquered!”<sup>31</sup> He predicts, with some evident shame, that the Spanish will turn them into slaves as soon as their usefulness as soldiers has passed.<sup>32</sup>

Bird uses the platform of the novel to comment on contemporary affairs, but only occasionally. In the middle of *Calavar*’s first volume, Bird inserts his own philosophy. “Religion and liberty have both come to us as diseases;” he writes, “and the propagation of them throughout the lands of the heathen and the slave, is yet a measure of pain and peril, because we have not considered, or not yet learned, how to address ourselves to infirmity.” Just as the French Revolution overflowed the banks of “security and peace”

---

<sup>30</sup> His words (“Have mercy on me, God!”) echo “Miserere nobis” (“Have mercy on us”) in the Order of the Mass in Latin.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Montgomery Bird, *Calavar; or, The Knight of the Conquest: A Romance of Mexico* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1834) I, 216. Italics original.

<sup>32</sup> Bird, *Calavar* I, 223.

in a deluge of blood, the religious fever of the Spanish exploded into the “moral epidemic” of fanaticism. The Indians, their instincts for civilization held back “[w]ithout the aid of iron and domestic animals,” encountered the Spanish, whose Christianity was polluted with superstition, and the result was tragedy. Here Bird speaks with more sympathy than scorn, but he suggests that neither the Spanish nor the Indians were equipped to handle the power that fell into their hands.<sup>33</sup>

But the overall effect of the book is not a forceful *j'accuse* directed against the Spanish. Despite its concerns about slavery, freedom, and tyranny, Bird does not consistently use Mexico of the Conquest as an allegory for the early-nineteenth century U.S. His evident purpose is to show that a credible romance can be assembled from American materials. The materials are credible enough, but Bird lacks the skill to turn them into a transcendent whole. The effect he achieves, unfortunately, is of an amateur theatrical of improbable plot, stilted dialogue, and wooden acting performed in a production unaccountably lavished with gorgeous scenery and exquisite costumes. As a scene painter, Bird need apologize for nothing: though his own travels never took him south of New Orleans, he achieves, for example, a striking picture of the silver city of Zempoala gleaming in the moonlight.<sup>34</sup> Even as a choreographer his efforts are credible: his description of the *Noche Triste*, in which Cortes's army must retreat along the streets of the night-blackened city of Tenochtilan, at last encountering the disastrous destruction

---

<sup>33</sup> Bird, *Calavar I*, 205, 206.

<sup>34</sup> “The party issued from the wood upon what seemed a fair waving plain, dotted, in certain places, with clumps of trees, and doubtless, in other spots, enriched with plantation of maize and bananas. In the distance, from a dark and shadowy mass, which might have been a lofty grove or low hillock, and whose gloom was alike broken by the glare of insects and the flash of many flambeaus, arose three lofty towers, square and white, and glittering in the moonbeams as if covered over with plates of silver.

“‘Zempoala!’ whispered an hundred voices, as these gleaming fabrics came fairly into view.” (Bird, *Calavar I*, 106.)

of the causeway that cuts off their escape, has the power to move the reader.<sup>35</sup> But Bird's dialogue has a studied quality, as if he is trying so hard to render the courtly idiom of the cavaliers that he forgets to give his characters anything meaningful to say. The plot, as most contemporary reviewers pointed out, consists of a series of mistaken identities and coincidences so preposterous as to strain all credulity.<sup>36</sup> Most problematically, Bird never affords a compelling psychological study of the knight Amador's passage to disenchantment with the Conquest: things happen, and Amador decides to leave Mexico.

Despite their observations about the outlandishness of the plot, most contemporary reviewers praised *Calavar*, either wholeheartedly or with only slightly tempered enthusiasm. What they applauded was not so much the revisionist presentation of the Spanish Conquest, with its implicit suggestion of the superiority of the English, Protestant settlement of North America. Rather, with nearly one voice, the critics celebrated Bird's choice of an American setting for a romance in the template of Sir Walter Scott. "Many of our writers have insisted, that the scenery and history of the regions of this hemisphere abound in materials for romance, not at all inferior to any that the old world has to show;" opened the notice in the *North American Review*, "but the author of this work has done still better; he has given us a practical illustration of the

---

<sup>35</sup> "He reached the third and last ditch; it was bridgeless, like the others, and, like the others, a theatre of disorder and massacre. The pillar of fire, here, revealed its figure but luridly and faintly, through the thick mists and the cannon-smoke, sluggishly driving over the lake; but he thought he could trace, in the distant gloom, in front, the outline of those rugged hills, which lie along the western borders of the lake. He turned his face backwards to the city; a tempest of yells—the pagan shouts of victory, and the last cries of Spaniards to God,—came mingling on a gust, that waved the distant flame to and fro, like a sword of fire in the hands of some colossal fiend. A bolt of ice smote through his bosom; and when he plunged into the sluice, and, rising on the opposite bank, drove the sharp spurs into the flanks of his charger, no man, of all the army, fled with more craven horror than himself" (Bird, *Calavar* II, 229-30). The man described is Hernan Cortes.

<sup>36</sup> Reviews critical of the plot improbabilities include "Calavar," *The North American Review* 40, no. 86 (January 1835): 255-6 and Edgar Allan Poe, "Calavar; or The Knight of the Conquest," *Southern Literary Messenger* 1, no. 6 (February 1835): 315.

argument, which reflects credit on his own ability, and does no dishonor to the literature of this country.”<sup>37</sup>

Bird produced one more romance set in Mexico, *The Infidel* of 1835, before becoming disheartened by his inability to make a profit and abandoning the project of writing his once-contemplated series of eight Latin American novels. But the southern novelist William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870) picked up the thread. Within the parameters of the romance structure, he began using the Latin American setting to comment on realities not usually discussed in fiction by southern novelists. If Bird, a Delaware native who lived in Philadelphia, glanced at the issues of slavery and freedom in *Calavar*, Simms, a South Carolinian, treated them more directly. In his fiction with Spanish-American settings, Simms renders an extraordinary vision of slavery, threatening and explosive, more extraordinary because he is a Southern author writing at a time when most of his contemporaries maintained a defensive, proslavery posture when they spoke about it at all.

Born outside the easy, well-to-do world of Charleston he desperately wanted to enter, Simms penned panegyrics to the southern way of life throughout his career. He wrote not as an outsider with a clearness of vision but an outsider eager for approbation. His prodigious activities included authorship of dozens of novels, speeches, and essays, as well as editorship of the *Southern Quarterly Review*.<sup>38</sup> In 1839 Simms published the first of his books with a Spanish-American setting, *The Damsel of Darien*. The novel

---

<sup>37</sup> “*Calavar*,” *The North American Review* 40, no. 86 (January 1835): 232. This review cites Scott directly on 255. Among other reviews making explicit comparisons with Scott, see “Literary Notices: *Calavar*,” *Knickerbocker* 4, no. 6 (December 1834): 489, and Edgar Allan Poe, “*Calavar; or The Knight of the Conquest*,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 1, no. 6 (February 1835): 315.

<sup>38</sup> Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought, Volume II: The Romantic Revolution in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1927), 119-130.

focuses on the late Conquest period and Balboa's successful search for the Pacific, what Simms (and the Spanish) referred to as the Southern Sea. Despite the fact that Simms said that to follow European models was "to enslave the national heart" and claimed that "it is a sort of patriotism, amounting almost to a duty, that the American author should confine himself exclusively to the boundaries of his own country,"<sup>39</sup> several efforts featuring south-of-the-border backgrounds appear in Simms's extensive oeuvre. Admittedly, Simms often wrote about the colonial period, and territory that was south of the border at the time of the events described had already been incorporated into the United States. Simms was nothing if not prolific, and perhaps more prolific than exacting in his craftsmanship. Obscure now, he was heralded in his own day as a major figure of American letters by Edgar Allen Poe, among others.<sup>40</sup> Simms relied on considerably less primary research than did Bird, finding much of what he needed in a secondary source, Washington Irving's *The Voyages of the Companions of Columbus*.

Where Bird was unable to break out of the straitjacket of courtly dialogue to reveal realistic personalities, Simms succeeds in making his Spanish characters more human—but to a man they are narrow-minded, craven, and superstitious. Their lack of empathy for their fellow creatures particularly affects their treatment of the Indians they enslave. Only his protagonist in *The Damsel of Darien*, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, while no paragon, has enough human kindness to pity the natives of Santo Domingo, where the novel opens. These Indians have been doubly abused, first robbed of their land and then

---

<sup>39</sup> William Gilmore Simms, "Americanism in Literature," *Views and Reviews in American Literature: History and Fiction* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 2; Simms, "The Epochs and Events of American History, as Suited to the Purposes Art in Fiction," *Views and Reviews*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Edgar Allen Poe in *The Broadway Journal* (4 October 1845) cited in John Caldwell Guilds, Introduction, William Gilmore Simms, *The Simms Reader* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 26.

forced into the system of *repartimiento*, in which they must render labor to their European overlords.

Balboa loves the scornful maiden Teresa. His hated rival for her affections is Jorge Garabito, who administers the land of its absentee owner. His harsh treatment of the Indians establishes his villainy. Sensing no particular benefits in preserving the human property of his offshore employer, Garabito exploits the Indians mercilessly, eager for immediate profit rather than the preservation of long-term investment.<sup>41</sup> Lest the reader overlook the U.S. parallels three hundred years later, Simms notes that Garabito's position, with its opportunities for abuse, is "not unlike that of an overseer in our own country."<sup>42</sup> Even defenders of U.S. slavery acknowledged that overseers—especially Northern ones—did not always have the best interests of the slaves at heart, but Simms goes out of his way to draw the parallel here.

While Balboa is making his preparations for his exploration after a route to the Southern Sea, the Spanish settlement is convulsed by fear of a possible rebellion by the legendary Caonabo, "the cassique [sic] of one of the most valorous of all the Haytian tribes."<sup>43</sup> If Simms expected his readers to recognize intimations of contemporary overseers in long-ago Spanish slave drivers, he knew they might make even more explicit connections with descriptions like this:

There were hundreds of fastnesses among the mountains of Hispaniola, which the feet of the invaders had never yet explored, and into the recesses of which, no opponent could be found sufficiently courageous to follow a fearless band who valued liberty more than life. But the warrior [Caonabo] had no hope that looked to his own people. Yet he was not utterly without hope of

---

<sup>41</sup> William Gilmore Simms, *The Damsel of Darien* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1839) I, 61.

<sup>42</sup> Simms, *Damsel* I, 67.

<sup>43</sup> Simms, *Damsel* I, 192.

vengeance, at least for the wrongs which they had suffered. In flying from Santo Domingo, he did not propose to fly from the Spaniard.<sup>44</sup>

Simms' invocation of the island from which Caonabo set out on his mission of retaliation would have sent a shiver down the backs of his southern readers, for whom "Santo Domingo" would have stood in metonymically for the Jacobin bloodbath of half a century earlier. The Haitian rebel willing not only to defend his stronghold but to pursue his tormentor to the ends of the earth: here was a figure to trouble the slumbers of the U.S. South, a terrorist to be discussed in hushed tones, not a figure for a novel.

How then did Simms manage a fictional depiction of such a touchy subject? Simms was a full-throated advocate of slavery and the Southern way of life.<sup>45</sup> Yet he introduced this terror into a work of fiction almost for gratuitous effect. Indeed, his presentation of the possibility of servile revolt is almost casual, occurring halfway through the first volume but not finally suppressed by Balboa until halfway through the second. Evidently Simms trusted that he could present the motivations and mechanics involved in a slave revolt without so intimidating Southern readers that they boycotted his fiction.

Simms accomplishes this feat by making the Spanish a decided Other. He begins by rejecting Irving's backhanded slap to the *conquistadores* who, according to *The Voyages of the Companions of Columbus*, were chivalrous and urbane with their fellows and only cruel to the unavenging and weak (i.e. the Indians). No, Simms says, their rascality extended to everyone; he excepts only Columbus himself from censure.<sup>46</sup> He is unabashed about retailing secondhand bigotry: Ferdinand, he writes, lusted for glory, but

---

<sup>44</sup> Simms, *Damsel I*, 184.

<sup>45</sup> Charles S. Watson, *From Nationalism to Secessionism: The Changing Fiction of William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993).

<sup>46</sup> Simms, *Damsel I*, 13-14.

“the Jew clothesman predominated in his nature;”<sup>47</sup> the Spanish adopt from the natives their desire for repose, while gold makes them slothful and annihilates their valor;<sup>48</sup> they employ the *auto de fe* as a “common agent of Spanish bigotry and crime.”<sup>49</sup> Spanish colonialism, writes Simms, is a “heartless tyranny that destroys where it cannot enslave;”<sup>50</sup> he notes that the Indian population of Hispaniola has declined to 80,000 from more than a million at the time of the Spanish arrival.<sup>51</sup> As a final indication of just how different are the Spanish from U.S. southerners, with their fastidiousness about race, Simms has Balboa reject the haughty, treacherous (but white) Teresa in favor of the loyal Indian woman Careta, the damsel after whom *The Damsel of Darien* is named.

Simms goes even further in depicting the patient bloodlust of slaves in his “historical nouvelle” of 1842, *Lucas de Ayllon*.<sup>52</sup> This piece of fiction begins with a raid on what is now the Carolina coast by the Spanish in 1520. Lucas De Ayllon, engaged in a thriving trade in slaves among the Indian population, lures the tribal leader Chiquola and his queen, Combahee, onto his ship. The latter manages to throw herself into the ocean and swim to the canoes of her subjects, who rescue her. Chiquola, denied this opportunity, jumps into the sea far from shore without hope of survival and drowns. But his widow Combahee sets her heart on revenge. She waits months until de Ayllon’s ship is wrecked and he is washed ashore; then she captures him and burns him at the stake.

---

<sup>47</sup> Simms, *Damsel* I, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Simms, *Damsel* I, 100; 99.

<sup>49</sup> Simms, *Damsel* I, 244.

<sup>50</sup> Simms, *Damsel* I, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Simms, *Damsel* I, 61.

<sup>52</sup> *Lucas de Ayllon: A Historical Nouvelle* appears in W. Gilmore Simms, *The Wigwam and the Cabin* (New York: Redfield, 1859). John Caldwell Guilds and Charles Hudson date it to 1842 in *An Early and Strong Sympathy: The Indian Writings of William Gilmore Simms* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

Simms scholar John Caldwell Guilds speculates that this tale “may well be the earliest slave-ship narrative in American literature” and points out that the depiction of experiences on board anticipate *Benito Cereno*, Herman Melville’s post-*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* masterpiece, by more than a decade.<sup>53</sup> Simms makes his slave trading villain Spanish, and inserts into the narrative the usual reproaches about the Spanish cruelty and greed for gold. The enslaved people are Indians, not Africans. But his setting is, after all, the Carolina of which he was a partisan, and Simms undergirded *Lucas de Ayllon* with enough universal truths about the horrors of slavery, the longings of slaves for liberty, and their thirst for vengeance that it is still somewhat shocking that it was published by someone so eager to say what Carolina wanted to hear. Here is Chiquola, bound on the deck of the slave ship, perceiving a route of escape: “[His eyes,] when he had concluded his unobtrusive examination of the vessel, were turned upon the shore, with the expression of an eager joy. His heart spoke out its feelings in the flashing of his dilating and kindled eyes. He was free. That was the feeling of his soul!”<sup>54</sup> The irony of fate that brings de Ayllon back into the power of Combahee at the end of the story is portrayed not as horror but as the working of “an overruling and watchful justice” with even nature cooperating in retribution against the slaver, the breakers seizing “upon the doomed ship, as the blood-hounds seize upon and rend the expiring carcass of the stricken deer.”<sup>55</sup> (The bloodhounds, it need hardly be pointed out, unconsciously anticipate the most famous scene in the dramatized version of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, when Eliza crosses the ice-choked Ohio River to escape her pursuers.)

---

<sup>53</sup> Guilds, *The Simms Reader*, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Simms, *Lucas de Ayllon*, 453.

<sup>55</sup> Simms, *Lucas de Ayllon*, 468.

The thirst of slaves for freedom, the patience and deliberation with which they might plan to secure it and take vengeance on those who deprive them of it, are hardly the usual concerns of proslavery authors. In general, Simms's work does not suggest a struggle to utter repressed home truths about slavery. But in this "nouvellette" and in some of his essays he explicitly declares that the glory of fiction is in expressing what cannot be expressed in other formats. History itself, though concerned with facts, can paint a skewed picture of reality because of what it leaves unsaid. "It is the true purpose of fiction to supply [history's] deficiencies, and to correct her judgments," he writes.<sup>56</sup> In this particular tale, a Conquest-era, Latin American setting allows him to comment on slavery in a fashion he would not have dared to follow if writing about the United States.

But Latin America also provided a context in which the less violent but no less shocking amorous relations of slaves and citizens could be presented. The pulpier the fiction, the more prurient the possibilities—provided the setting was offshore. One of the more colorful examples is the work of Joseph Holt Ingraham (1809-60), a Maine native transplanted to Mississippi who revered the slave society of his adopted home with the zeal of a convert (a few months before his death he published an epistolary response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* called *The Sunny South* told through the letters of a Northern governess.)<sup>57</sup> A writer of formidable output (in 1846 Ingraham claimed authorship of more than eighty novels and an income of \$3000 per annum<sup>58</sup>), his short story "A Legend of the Mountain of Burning Stone" appeared in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1839 and in a much-padded novelistic version called *Montezuma, the Serf; or the Revolt of the*

---

<sup>56</sup> Simms, *Lucas de Ayllon*, 430.

<sup>57</sup> Robert W. Weathersby, II, "Joseph Holt Ingraham," *Lives of Mississippi Authors, 1817-1967*, edited by James B. Lloyd (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), 249-252.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 182.

*Mexitili* six years later.<sup>59</sup> Ingraham's tale imagines the foundation of the Aztec dynasty a thousand years before the Conquest through the union of a princess and a net-maker. The novel's title designates Montezuma a serf and describes an economic system in which vassals are attached to the land and owe military service to their feudal lords. But the members of this degraded class consider themselves slaves and so refer to themselves, particularly resenting the *droit de seigneur* assumed by the nobles who lord it over them. Ingraham's slaves do what U.S. slaves were feared to do: they plot rebellion with positively Garrisonian rhetoric. In the novel-length version of the tale, one slave leader points out that a million slaves need not submit to a mere thirty thousand nobles: "They have no right over our lives and liberties. Let us, then, assert them, and break those chains that shackle us. As for me, I am resolved to be free. The first blow will soon be struck. The time is ripening; and, then, when you hear me call upon you—rise, freemen!"<sup>60</sup>

Resolution arrives not in a bloodbath but a shower of rose blossoms: the slave and the princess fall in love. Given the dime-novel nature of the prose, the eroticism is more flimsily veiled than in fiction with higher literary aspirations. Snowy bosoms heave and fall, eyes flash with defiance, breath comes rapid. The princess deceives her father by sneaking her slave beloved into her boudoir night after night (for earnest conversations only, of course). Love between people of unequal degree is a staple of fiction through the ages ("Cupid is a true democrat," Ingraham writes<sup>61</sup>), but the author goes out of his way

---

<sup>59</sup> [Joseph Holt Ingraham], "A Legend of the Mountain of the Burning Stone: A Story of the First Montezuma," *Southern Literary Messenger* 5, no. 12 (December 1830): 781-787; [Joseph Holt Ingraham], *Montezuma, the Serf; or, The Revolt of the Mexitili: A Tale of the Last Days of the Aztec Dynasty* (Boston: H.L. Williams, 1845).

<sup>60</sup> Ingraham, *Montezuma*, 25.

<sup>61</sup> Ingraham, "Mountain," 784.

to insist on Montezuma's status not simply as lowborn but as a slave—a seemingly deliberate choice considering the setting is clearly fanciful. But it is this setting that allows Ingraham to present something truly unspeakable—an affair between a female noblewoman and her enslaved lover, which invites readers to luxuriate in contemplation of forbidden relationships of domination and submission.<sup>62</sup> Here the master/slave relationship is not explicitly defined by race, although the possibilities of racial amalgamation were clearly on Ingraham's mind: in an 1841 novel called *The Quadroone* a “[m]aiden of a race accursed and outcast” finds “*true love* to me is but *dishonour*.”<sup>63</sup> (And again, the backdrop for this story was not and could not be the U.S.—although it was New Orleans. It took place in 1769.)

In a highly original argument in *The Making of Racial Sentiment*, Ezra Tawil suggests that frontier romances of the 1820s and '30s by James Fenimore Cooper, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and Lydia Maria Child anticipate the racial politics of the 1850s by providing a language in which new ideas about race could be expressed. Fictional treatments of relationships between Euro-Americans and Indians, particularly those set in the colonial period, provided a less confrontational way to discuss relations between whites and blacks. And within the format of the novel, with its concerns of love, family, and inheritance, American authors could explore new concepts of the

---

<sup>62</sup> Unlike in Hollywood movies of the Hays Code-era, the lovers do not suffer for their forbidden passion in the end: Montezuma, passing a test to recover a rare jewel, wins the princess's hand in proper marriage.

<sup>63</sup> [Joseph Holt Ingraham], *The Quadroone; or, St. Michael's Day* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841). The quoted material is not Ingraham but is taken from the epigraph by William Cutter, and contains its own implications of masochism:

“For me to love is infamy.  
Heaven-born love—that links the virgin heart  
To its own noble mate—is not for me,  
Maiden of a race accursed and outcast.  
Alas! *true love* to me is but *dishonour*;  
And, ere it bud, must be outrooted,  
E'en if the heart come with it.”

implications of racial difference. Working within the frontier romance structure, Tawil suggests, novelists demonstrated the inexorability of nature and the impermanence of culture in defining what it meant to belong to a particular racial group. While Indians were the ostensible subjects of Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* and Child's *Hobomok*, slavery was always an "offstage voice."<sup>64</sup>

Tawil's argument might apply in a related way to the use of Spanish-American characters and settings as a less hazardous context for discussing racial and religious relations that characterized the United States. Simultaneously, the distance of a Latin American backdrop or a Conquest-period setting could provide opportunity for all kinds of experimentation. Writers could portray native peoples who sat on jaguar thrones or battled for control of the Inca Empire with more complex shadings than what was possible within the type of the North American savage (noble or otherwise), and could indict Catholics more for their foreignness than for their Catholicism. Most strikingly during a period of virulent proslavery apologias, authors like Bird and Simms could make subversive presentations of slavery by using South American settings. Sometimes these Conquest-era fictional settings could be linked even more directly to contemporary events.

*Calavar* and *The Infidel* were not the first of Bird's literary efforts featuring Latin American settings; by the time he completed his novels he had already collected extensive research on Latin America and employed this material in preparing a script for a playwriting contest. In November 1828 he noticed a squib in the weekly newspaper *The Critic* announcing that actor and producer Edwin Forrest, "feeling extremely desirous

---

<sup>64</sup> Ezra Tawil, *The Making of Racial Sentiment: Slavery and the Birth of the Frontier Romance* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

that dramatic letters should be more cultivated in my native country, and believing that the dearth of writers in that department is rather the result of a want of proper incentive, than of any deficiency of the requisite talents” proceeded to offer a \$500 prize to “the author of the best Tragedy, in five acts, of which the hero, or principal character, shall be an aboriginal of this country.”<sup>65</sup> (Editor William Leggett’s *The Critic* was particularly enthusiastic about the nationalistic potential of the theater: “As an instrument for the formation of national character, the stage might be made to work a very important influence on society.”<sup>66</sup>)

Edwin Forrest, exactly Bird’s age, had already been singled out as a national prodigy, having made his New York premiere as Othello before his twenty-first birthday and, according to the *New-York Mirror*, “while we were complaining that our stage was lighted only by the borrowed luminaries of Europe, a star has arisen in our own hemisphere, which promises, ere long, to be hailed as the cynosure of the dramatic horizon.”<sup>67</sup> Forrest was to make a career of defending homegrown plays, native heroes, and domestic acting styles against those of “borrowed luminaries.” His audiences rallied to his call for national honor, most notoriously in the 1849 Astor Place Riot. His audience tussled in the streets with that of the English Shakespearean William Macready in a brawl over rival portrayals of Macbeth, Macready’s performance subtly shaded and Forrest’s forceful, direct, and loud. The militia and police fired into the unruly crowd and

---

<sup>65</sup> “Varieties,” *The Critic: A Weekly Review of Literature, Fine Arts, and the Drama*, 22 November 1828: 4.

<sup>66</sup> “The Drama. Park. Giordano,” *The Critic: A Weekly Review of Literature, Fine Arts, and the Drama*, 22 November 1828: 62.

<sup>67</sup> “Edwin Forrest, the American Tragedian,” *The New-York Mirror* 4, no. 31 (24 February 1827): 245.

killed twenty-two people, with retaliatory violence injuring some hundred more, making the incident the second most serious riot in New York City history.<sup>68</sup>

As Bruce A. McConachie points out, Edwin Forrest's nationalism had a strong flavor of Jacksonian democracy: his persona was bombastic, hypermasculine, even misogynistic, and opposed to a European acting style dismissed as fussy, dandified, and effete. He appealed to workingmen as a good fellow, and favored roles in which his character rose from obscurity to defend the people against oppression; yet the vehicles in which he appeared were always mounted to draw attention to him at the expense of the rest of the acting company, and generally presented him as leading a rabble that did not know how to act in its own best interests—in this he was a perfect type for Andrew Jackson, the man of the people who had the tendency to rule like an autocrat.<sup>69</sup>

Although Bird did not win the playwriting contest in 1828, his second effort, *The Gladiator*, featuring the rousing part of the rebel slave Spartacus, was more successful, winning Forrest's competition in 1831. Despite its classical subject, Bird took pride in its status as a thoroughly native product: "The managers of the Arch St. Theatre were Americans, all the chief performers were Americans and the play as written by an American."<sup>70</sup> Forrest went on to play Spartacus more than a thousand times before 1854.<sup>71</sup>

When Forrest's contest was held again in 1832, Bird again won, this time submitting a play with an American setting—Latin American. His play was *Oralloossa*,

---

<sup>68</sup> *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, Kenneth T. Jackson, editor (New Haven and London: Yale University Press; New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1995), 1007.

<sup>69</sup> Bruce A. McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre & Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 69-118.

<sup>70</sup> Robert Montgomery Bird, 24 October 1831, quoted in Moody, 233.

<sup>71</sup> Moody, 234.

*Son of the Incas*, set shortly after the conquest of Peru, a period *The New-York Mirror* claimed was familiar to every reader.<sup>72</sup> Although *Oralloossa* offered a variation on the *Gladiator* plot by centering on an Inca leader rallying his people against Spanish oppression (surefire with American audiences), and opened to strong reviews,<sup>73</sup> with several of its speeches singled out for praise (two scenes were reproduced thirteen years later in an elocution textbook called *The American Speaker*<sup>74</sup>), *Oralloossa* achieved nothing like the wild success of Bird's *Gladiator*.<sup>75</sup>

In choosing Conquest-era Peru for his play *Oralloossa*, Bird may have been drawing on a familiar source, August von Kotzebue's *Die Spanier in Peru oder Rollas Tod* (1796), which had been translated into English both by the American playwright William Dunlap and, much more famously, by William Brinsley Sheridan under the title *Pizarro* (1799). The central role in *Pizarro* is the valiant, self-sacrificing Rolla, leader of the Incas—a role also associated with Edwin Forrest, who appeared in productions of both the Dunlap and Sheridan translations of Kotzebue.<sup>76</sup> The Spanish *conquistador* is

---

<sup>72</sup> “Literary Notices: Oralloossa,” *The New-York Mirror* 10, no. 14 (6 October 1832): 106.

<sup>73</sup> A review of the script in “Literary Notices: Oralloossa” in *The New-York Mirror* 10, no. 14 (6 October 1832): 106 is particularly enthusiastic, calling it “replete with beauties of the highest order; abounding with passages of the most passionate and nervous poetry, with fine touches of nature, having a plot skillfully complicated and evolved, and characters well contrasted and well sustained.” *The Mirror* was somewhat more measured in its reception of the stage production two months later (“Park Theatre,” *The New-York Mirror* 10, no. 24 (15 December 1832): 190.

<sup>74</sup> John Frost, *The American Speaker: Containing Numerous Rules, Observations, and Exercises, on Pronunciation, Pauses, Inflections, Accent and Emphasis; Also, Copious Extracts in Prose and Poetry, Calculated to Assist the Teacher, and to Improve the Pupil in Reading and Recitation* (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowpertwait, & Co., 1845), 426-431.

<sup>75</sup> Bird wrote a second play with a Spanish American setting, *The Broker of Bogota* (1834). Edwin Forrest praised it as being his play most likely to endure (“*The Broker of Bogota* will live when our vile trunks are rotten,” he predicted in a letter to Bird). Alone among Bird's later plays, which dealt with nationalistic themes, it concerned a father tragically refusing to forgive his son's transgressions until it was too late. *Broker* was Bird's favorite among his plays (David Grimsted, *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850*, [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968], 168). But today the situations seem contrived and the characters exaggerated. Setting the play in colonial Bogota seems an arbitrary decision made to allow for stilted dialogue in free verse. As tragedy, it is a bore. In comparison, *Oralloossa* has a kind of crazy grandeur.

<sup>76</sup> Moody, 60, 64.

depicted as a brutal, heartless thug (Las Casas himself appears as a character to condemn his behavior to the Indians) whose trusted lieutenant, Alonzo, has defected to the Indian side. Alonzo wins the heart of Rolla's beloved, Cora, the daughter of the Incas, but Rolla nobly preserves the life of Alonzo and Cora's infant—while sacrificing his own—in the climactic battle scene. The battle between the Spanish and the Peruvians forms the backdrop for the central triangle of the Indians Rolla and Cora and the Spaniard Alonzo, who in assisting the “People who never wronged the living Being their Creator formed” has “not warred against my native land, but those who have usurped its power.”<sup>77</sup>

Now almost entirely forgotten, *Pizarro* was the second most popular play on the London stage in the eighteenth century and remained popular in both England and America in the nineteenth, performed as late as 1878.<sup>78</sup> (When it was presented in the social hall in Nauvoo, Illinois in April 1844, it was the first play staged in a Mormon theater, with Brigham Young in the cast as an Inca priest who called down fire from heaven to light the altar.<sup>79</sup>) Four contemporary books were published in England raising concerns about its moral or political implications, and in what is perhaps the ultimate badge of its legitimacy, it was burlesqued numerous times, including in C.J. Collins's *Pizarro; A Spanish Rolla-King Peruvian Drama*, Leicester Buckingham's *Pizarro; or,*

---

<sup>77</sup> Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Pizarro; A Tragedy in Five Acts* (London: James Ridgway, 1799), III iii: I i.

<sup>78</sup> Julie A. Carlson, “Trying Sheridan's ‘Pizarro,’” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* (Fall-Winter 1996), 359; Michael Caine, “Sheridan's ‘Pizarro,’” *Times Literary Supplement* 26 July 2006. Caine mentions that when *Pizarro* was given a staged reading in 2006 by the National Theatre in London to accompany a production of Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, its exaggerated rhetoric and contrived situations exposed it as a curiosity.

<sup>79</sup> Jeremy Ravi Mumford, “The Inca Priest on the Mormon Stage: A Native American Melodrama and a New American Religion,” [www.common-place.org](http://www.common-place.org) 5:4 (July 2005). It was also performed in the Governor's Palace in Santa Fe during the U.S. War with Mexico on November 21, 1846 with \$150 worth of tickets sold. Elvira was played by “Miss Edward W. Shands, and Cora by Miss William Jameison, both of the Rangers.” (Richard Smith Elliott, *The Mexican War Correspondence of Richard Smith Elliott*, edited and annotated by Mark L. Gardner [Norman & London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997], 117. Italics original.)

*the Leotard of Peru*, and C.W. Taylor's *Pizarrobus: Or, Who Shot Rollabus?*<sup>80</sup> What accounts for the popularity of a play about seventeenth century Peruvians and their Spanish conquerors in the eighteenth and nineteenth century United States and England?

*Pizarro*'s theme of challenging tyranny sold well on both sides of the Atlantic, and using Spanish invaders as the heavies against an aboriginal people repeatedly described as "innocent" was a safe choice for both American and English audiences—perhaps preparing the way for audiences who would side with a put-upon Metacom/Metamora against the traitorous English colonists in countless popular plays about King Philip's War.<sup>81</sup> Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Pizarro*'s adapter for the English stage, had stopped writing plays after his 1780 election to the House of Commons, and English audiences were both excited about his return to the theater and the political overtones of his new work. Into his translation of Kotzebue, Sheridan interpolated passages from his most successful speech in Parliament, in which he spoke powerfully about the oppressive colonial policies of England in India.<sup>82</sup> At the opening night performance in London in 1799, as fear of a Napoleonic invasion ran high, the Prime Minister acknowledged the patriotic rhetoric of *Pizarro*.<sup>83</sup>

Composing a variation on such a well-known product might be seen as an act of sheer presumption, and Robert Montgomery Bird's effort could not equal the success of Sheridan's drama. In *Oralloosa*, his version of the Pizarro story, Bird retains Kotzebue's

---

<sup>80</sup> Myron Matlaw, "'This is Tragedy!!!': The History of *Pizarro*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 43, no. 3 (October 1957): 289; Matlaw, "Persiflage on the Nineteenth-Century Stage," *Educational Theatre Journal* 11, no. 3 (October, 1959): 216-7.

<sup>81</sup> See Jill Lepore's *In the Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998). Forrest's other great role was *Metamora* in the hit play of the title by John Augustus Stone.

<sup>82</sup> Julia A. Carlson, "Trying Sheridan's *Pizarro*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Fall-Winter 1996: 359.

<sup>83</sup> Matlaw, "'This is Tragedy!!!'" 289.

characters—at least in their rough outlines—but keeps little of the Kotzebue/Sheridan plot (which Kotzebue had made up anyway). But what he adds, in the context of 1832 race relations in the United States, is fascinating. First, he moves the plot forward in time, to some fifteen or twenty years after the Conquest, after the Spaniards have subdued the Peruvians and submitted them to the system of *encomienda*, or forced tribute. Oralloossa, the son of the previous Inca Atahualpa (the Rolla character, his name lengthened by five additional letters and his role padded out with considerably more lines, played by Forrest) is still the main character, facing off against a corrupt Pizarro. But Oralloossa’s sometime ally (the Alonzo character, here called Almagaro) is the mixed-race offspring of a *conquistador* and an Inca woman. Neither entirely trusted by the Spanish, with whom he is officially allied, nor the Indians, Almagaro is torn between competing desires, alternately joining the Inca and the Spanish sides. Finally, the Cora part in Bird’s play is Ooallie, Oralloossa’s sister and Almagaro’s lover. Almagaro’s love for her sways him to the Peruvians, but his attraction to the power of the Spanish leads him to betray her (“Why weigh the value of a poor maid’s life/Against the golden balance of a crown?”).<sup>84</sup>

The play opens with the arrival of Vaca de Castro, a representative of the Spanish monarch, concerned that Pizarro is losing his position as first among the competing *conquistadores* (Pizarro has killed Almagaro’s father in a power grab, and now Almagaro is gunning for revenge). But of equal concern is the fear of Indian rebellion: how secure are the Spanish in their control of the local population? Anxious about “[t]he pagans rising from their servitude,” de Castro asks about “the Indians, —/Their mountain

---

<sup>84</sup> Robert Montgomery Bird, *Oralloossa IV* iii in *The Life and Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird*, edited by Clement E. Foust (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1919).

risings?” Francisco de Alcantara, Pizarro’s uncle, reassures him that “our slaves [are] submissive and contented.” Oralloossa, rightful heir to the Inca throne, indeed had prepared an insurrection.

Millions of brown barbarians join’d his standard,  
And fear beset us in our citadels:  
Scarce could our strongest garrisons resist him;  
And, with his war-word ringing in our ears,  
Extermination for the Whites, he rush’d  
Like a swoll’n torrent, roaring from the hills  
Upon our fear-throng’d city.<sup>85</sup>

But the danger has past, de Alcantara assures de Castro, because Oralloossa died and the Indians were left leaderless.

This identification of the Indians as “brown barbarians,” this racialization of a people their enemies in Sheridan’s *Pizarro* refer to only as “heathens,” and innocent ones at that, this grim evocation of incipient conflict between slaves and masters, are new with *Oralloossa* in 1832. The period in which Bird was writing was not marked, as at the time of Sheridan’s version, by fear of Napoleonic invasion; rather, it was still reeling in the wake of the Nat Turner Rebellion, in which the slave leader Nat Turner similarly called for the extermination of the whites in rural Virginia in August, 1831. The Nat Turner Rebellion catalyzed both strongly repressive regulations to suppress revolt and the proslavery movement, which insisted on the benefits of slavery. Bird was certainly aware of the Turner Rebellion—it occurred while he was working on *The Gladiator*, and he mentioned it in his private diary, reacting to the indiscriminate massacre of whites with condemnation and noting the contrast between his own hero and Nat Turner.<sup>86</sup> By

---

<sup>85</sup> Bird, *Oralloossa*, I i. Italics original.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Harris, “A Young Dramatist’s Diary: The *Secret Records* of R.M. Bird,” *Library Chronicle: University of Pennsylvania* 25 (Winter 1959): 16-17. Quoted in Brent D. Shaw, *Spartacus and the Slave Wars: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 22-3.

the third act Bird has conjured up an atmosphere thick with treachery and paranoia. “We have been slumbering on a volcan’s brink [sic],” says Almagaro.<sup>87</sup>

Undated notes and drafts of *Oralloossa* in the archive of the University of Pennsylvania Library reveal that Bird considered various positions for the “Extermination for the whites” speech in the text (in one draft it appears in two places), assigning it to various characters, apparently to gauge the effect. In some versions the rumor of Oralloossa’s planned revolt is a fabrication of Almagaro to weaken Pizarro’s power; in other drafts the conspiracy is real.<sup>88</sup>

Within this context, and despite his ambivalence about the nobility of a slave rebel, Bird provides a complex and compelling portrait of slave psychology. Despite the assurances of de Alcantara, Oralloossa is not dead. He lives in the viceregal palace in the guise of Pedro, slave to Pizarro. Playing the role of trusted *chargé d’affaires* for the viceroy involves particular indignities. As Pedro, Oralloossa is assigned a most unsavory task: Pizarro has taken prisoner a Coya, daughter of the Incas, and wishes to make her his mistress. He gives Oralloossa a chest of jewels to win the Coya’s love. “What, for her love!” exclaims Oralloossa. “Is she not then your slave?”

“Let her not think so,” begs the besotted Pizarro. Oralloossa quickly realizes that the Coya for whom he has been asked to play pimp is his sister, Ooallie.<sup>89</sup> Bird’s insight in imagining this situation—the humiliation of a male slave forced to act as go-between in the sexual submission of his sister, the concupiscent master who demands not simply sexual submission but love—is remarkable. No doubt variations of this scene, at once

---

<sup>87</sup> Bird, *Oralloossa* III 4.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Montgomery Bird, Ms. Collection 108, box 6, folders 187 and 189, Robert Montgomery Bird Papers, University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Philadelphia.

<sup>89</sup> *Oralloossa* II 1.

horrific and matter-of-fact, played itself out on countless real-life plantations in the antebellum United States, but could seldom be so frankly represented in literature. The extraterritorial setting made it possible.

Life in the palace does give Oralloossa access to useful secrets. He is able to pick up such valuable information as literacy and the recipe for gunpowder (an interesting detail, as Nat Turner also mentions experimenting with its manufacture).<sup>90</sup> He awaits the moment he can throw off the guise of a servant and assume his rightful status as a leader. He lives for the shedding of Spanish blood and the destruction of the Spanish city. When his dreams of revenge are finally thwarted, and he acknowledges that he must surrender his natural feelings of self worth, he concedes:

I was an Inca once, and should be yet;  
That was a dream: I was a man, and should be;  
But that was madness. Like the fool, that lies  
On earth and rags, and dreams his soul inhabits  
The golden-canopied chambers of a palace,—  
So lay I on my bleak and flinty floor,  
And built me gorgeous nothings . . .<sup>91</sup>

The role of Oralloossa must have been a challenging one to play; certainly it would have demonstrated Forrest's virtuosity if he could carry it off convincingly. Oralloossa cringes before Pizarro, rebukes his sister, fulminates in soliloquies. He prevaricates, he hesitates, he changes his mind and shifts his strategies. Feeling always superior to the base-born Iberians before whom he must kowtow, proclaiming his loyalty to Spain and his belief in Christianity even as he tries to subvert the Spanish regime, the tormented Oralloossa embodies what W.E.B. Du Bois will call double consciousness. Almagaro, son of a Christian father and Indian mother, would seem to have more cause

---

<sup>90</sup> The gunpowder, despite its appearance in Act I, does not explode in Act III. It certainly seems possible that Bird had read Thomas Gray's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (Richmond: Thomas Gray, 1832), 6.

<sup>91</sup> Bird, *Oralloossa* V 2.

for dramatic schizophrenia, but it is Oralloossa who, forced to assume the guise of a slave, rages with humiliation at his servitude and betrayal by his own people. At the end of the play, traduced by Almagaro, who had promised to help him recover his throne, he murders his betrayer near the corpse of his sister Ooallie. His words give no hope of racial rapprochement. “Thy blood is mixed with mine,” he cries, not because both he and Almagaro literally both share Peruvian blood, but because he kills Almagaro and then dies himself; their mingled blood runs together on the stage.<sup>92</sup>

What did audiences make of this drama of a royal prince made into a slave? Did they make the connection between U.S. slavery and the fictional world of *Oralloossa* that seems so transparent now? Did Bird intend these contemporary overtones? It appears neither author nor audiences were unaware of them. Certainly the racial identity of the Peruvians was apparent. The epilogue of the play refers to the Incas as “brown children of the sunbeam.”<sup>93</sup> One reviewer remarked on the incongruity of fair-skinned actress Mrs. Barrett playing Ooallie: “How comes it, however, that she is so ‘passing fair?’ her brother Oralloossa is certainly a little dingy . . .”<sup>94</sup>

While other evidence related to the conception and reception of *Oralloossa* is scanty, telling clues survive for Bird’s earlier play, *The Gladiator*, also with a set piece of servile revolt. While anxiously awaiting the premiere of *The Gladiator* in 1831, Bird wrote the following paragraph among his private musings. It is usually excerpted to

---

<sup>92</sup> Bird, *Oralloossa* V 8.

<sup>93</sup> “Communication: Chesnut Street Theatre,” *U.S. Gazette*, 12 October 1832: n.p., Robert Montgomery Bird, Robert Montgomery Bird Papers, Ms. Collection 108, box 7, folder 200, University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Philadelphia.

<sup>94</sup> “Theatrical,” reprinted from the *Boston Commercial Gazette* in *The Pennsylvanian* (?), n.d., n.p., Robert Montgomery Bird, Robert Montgomery Bird Papers, Ms. Collection 108, box 7, folder 200, University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Philadelphia.

highlight Bird's racism and apprehension about servile rebellion.<sup>95</sup> Racist Bird certainly was,<sup>96</sup> but when quoted at length, his meditations have a different emphasis:

Our theatres are in a lamentable condition, and not at all fashionable. To write for, and be admired by the groundlings! villains, that will clap most, when you are most nonsensical, and applaud you most heartily when you are most vulgar! that will call you "a genius, by G . . . ," when you can make the judicious grieve, and "a witty devil," when you can force a woman to blush! Fine, fine, fine, fine. But consider the freedom of an American author. If *The Gladiator* were produced in a slave state, the managers, players, and perhaps myself into the bargain, would be rewarded with the Penitentiary! Happy States! At this present moment there are 6 or 800 armed negroes marching through Southampton County, Virginia, murdering, ravishing, and burning those whom the Grace of God has made their owners—70 killed, principally women and children. If they had but a Spartacus among them—to organize the half million of Virginia, the hundreds of thousands of the states, and lead them on in the Crusade of Massacre, what a blessed example might they not give to the world of the excellence of slavery! what a field of interest to the playwrights of posterity! Some day we shall have it, and future generations will perhaps remember the horrors of Haiti as a farce compared with the tragedies of our own happy land! The *vis et amor sceleratus habendi* will be repaid, violence with violence, and avarice with blood. I had sooner live among bedbugs than negroes.<sup>97</sup>

Bird here slips from frustration to cynicism to deep irony to fear and finally to what appears to be simple racist hatred. The frustration arises from his awareness that as an American author writing for popular audiences he cannot tell the truth about slavery: it is a horrifyingly dangerous enterprise, promising profit but concealing the real probability of destruction. Bird understands slavery as evil not because it victimizes slaves but because it threatens masters and white people generally. But the stupidity of the groundlings, who wish only to be entertained, and their unwillingness to recognize how

---

<sup>95</sup> See for example Brent D. Shaw, *Spartacus and the Slave Wars: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2001), 22-3.

<sup>96</sup> Bird is best known for his novel *Nick of the Woods*, about an apparently peaceful Quaker who, like some perverse white supremacist superhero, disguises himself as a vengeful Indian hunter at night. See Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating & Empire-Building* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 147-51.

<sup>97</sup> Bird, "The Secret Records," transcribed in Richard Harris, "A Young Dramatist's Diary: *The Secret Records* of R.M. Bird," *Library Chronicle* (University of Pennsylvania), Winter 1959: 16-17.

they themselves slumber “on the volcan’s brink” proscribe what he can say. Bird lacks the “freedom” to depict slavery’s horrors directly. He must present them through metaphor.

Nineteenth century art and music indulged in what Charles Sellers, in a particularly memorable phrase, referred to the “romantic orgy of self-indulgent evasion.”<sup>98</sup> As a way of denying the soulless reality of marketplace economics, Americans of the Market Revolution whitened the sepulcher of capitalism with the chaste and godly through their taste for hymns, sentimental poetry, and gothic architecture. On the other hand, they were hardly strangers to the subtleties of reading art as allegory, particularly where slavery was concerned; Hiram Powers’s fabulously popular 1844 nude statue of *The Greek Slave* and John Greenleaf Whittier’s 1843 poem “The Christian Slave” drew parallels between Turkish and American bondage.<sup>99</sup> At least one reviewer recognized *The Gladiator*’s contemporary relevance. In *The Brooklyn Eagle* in 1846, Walt Whitman remarked,

This play is as full of ‘Abolitionism’ as an egg is of meat. It is founded on that passage of Roman history where slaves—Gallic, Spanish, Thracian and African—rose against their masters, and formed themselves into a military organization, and for a time successfully resisted the forces sent to quell them.<sup>100</sup>

A final strong connection between rebellious Incas and U.S. African Americans should be mentioned.<sup>101</sup> Besides Edwin Forrest, another notable interpreter of Rolla, the

---

<sup>98</sup> Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York and Oxford, 1991), 375.

<sup>99</sup> See for example Vivien M. Green, “Hiram Powers’s ‘Greek Slave:’ Emblem of Freedom,” *The American Art Journal* 14, no. 4 (Autumn 1982): 31-39.

<sup>100</sup> Walt Whitman, “The Gladiator,” *The Brooklyn Eagle* 26 December 1846: 2.

<sup>101</sup> My thanks to Beate Hein Bennett for bringing Ira Aldridge to my attention.

Oralloossa figure in *Pizarro*, was the “African tragedian” Ira Aldridge.<sup>102</sup> It was in this role that he made his debut in 1822 in an all-black production of the play in New York.<sup>103</sup> Aldridge’s biographers Herbert Marshall and Mildred Stock did not hesitate to propose that “Aldridge must have identified the conquered Peruvians with his own conquered and enslaved people.”<sup>104</sup> Aldridge performed for white audiences in London, but in the U.S. he typically appeared at black theaters like New York’s African Grove—not part of the circuit of entertainments generally patronized by white audiences the way Harlem Renaissance nightclubs would be a hundred years later, but not entirely unknown, either.<sup>105</sup>

On the other hand, Bruce A. McConachie argues that audiences for the kinds of dramas Edwin Forrest favored—which featured underdogs battling a corrupt system—probably were seeing parallels with their own wage slavery, not identifying with their brothers of color. When they cheered a bondman’s revolt, they cheered the destruction of government by the elite. They were good Jacksonians, and they applauded Forrest, their surrogate and favorite actor, when he appeared in roles that featured him stripped to the

---

<sup>102</sup> William Dunlap, painter, theater manager, and author who had assayed a translation of *Pizarro* in 1800, included a character quite possibly modeled on Aldridge in his 1828 *A Trip to Niagara*. Job Jerryson, the waiter at the hotel where the English travelers stay, explains to their maid that he moonlights as an actor: “If you would like to see our theatre, I can give you an order. I am one of the managers. We rehearse every club night—the Shakespeare Club—and there is my friend Tom Dickson, the young coloured gentleman next door, we rub up—I would say—we brighten our memories of a morning, as we rub up the brass knobs and knockers at the street door.” Jerryson is keenly aware of his prerogatives as a free person of color, chiding the maid, “We have no masters here! . . . That may do for whites of the old country; but not for gentlemen and ladies of color, in America.” He certainly identifies with the characters he plays, suggesting that there is no reason to assume “noble Othello” was not one of his ancestors. (Oral Sumner Coad, *William Dunlap, A Study of His Life and Works and of His Place in Contemporary Culture* (New York: The Dunlap Society, 1917), 219, 224; William Dunlap, *A Trip to Niagara; or, Travellers in America* (1828), I i; Dunlap I i; Dunlap II i.)

<sup>103</sup> Recalled by Aldridge in his 1849 *Memoir*, cited by Jonathan Dewberry, “The African Grove Theatre and Company,” *Black American Literature Forum* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 131.

<sup>104</sup> Herbert Marshall and Mildred Stock, *Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), 39.

<sup>105</sup> In England Aldridge was not made to appear on segregated stages; he performed at Covent Garden and Sadler’s Wells as well as now-obscure theatres like the Royalty, the Coburg, and the Surrey. See “An African Roscius,” *National Era* 6, no. 266 (5 February 1852): 21.

waist like a prizefighter, battling tyrannical masters.<sup>106</sup> After all, the same working-class audiences—not otherwise sympathetic to Indian removal—roared their approval for Forrest’s denunciations of the white man in his role as *Metamora*. And even Whitman admitted the “groundlings” seemed to particularly relish anything delivered in a “loud mouthed ranting style” and “the tearing of every thing to shivers.”<sup>107</sup>

McConachie’s argument, however, partakes of a surprising degree of snobbery, suggesting that, because of their working class affiliation, Forrest’s claque could not see beyond its own narrow interests. Although McConachie suggests that Forrest’s roles shared a common denominator of working class patriotism, the character of *Oralloossa* does not fit this category easily.<sup>108</sup> What motivates him is less love of his people than furious personal indignation and ambition, and when his duplicitous uncle tries to steal his thunder he actually plots with the Spanish to have his revenge on his Peruvian enemies. Moreover, in *Oralloossa* Bird insists on the racial specificity of the Peruvians, who are not simply set apart by their lack of Christianity, literacy, or European civilization, but by the shade of their complexions. De Castro, the royal visitor determined to suppress the slave rebellion in *Oralloossa*, refers to his “authority to rule” like a proper tyrant, but his enemies are explicitly characterized as “brown assailants;” there is no overlooking the fact that this slave rebellion has been carried out by dark-skinned forces.<sup>109</sup> However much the “slavery” of the Peruvians seems like an

---

<sup>106</sup> Bruce A. McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre & Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 69-118.

<sup>107</sup> Walt Whitman, “The Gladiator,” *The Brooklyn Eagle* 26 December 1846: 2.

<sup>108</sup> Ginger Strand makes a similar argument about *Oralloossa* as a noble patriot hero in “‘My Noble Spartacus:’ Edwin Forrest and Masculinity on the Nineteenth-Century Stage,” *Passing Performances: Queer Readings of Leading Performers in American Theater History*, Robert A. Schanke and Kim Marra, editors (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 22.

<sup>109</sup> Bird, *Oralloossa* IV i.

ambiguous sign, there is no mistaking their color, particularly in a period increasingly attuned to racial difference.

In the U.S. of the 1830s there were real rebels like Oralloossa, and rumors of others. Most terrifying of all, perhaps, after Nat Turner, was David Walker, who published *An Appeal in Four Articles, together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829). Walker wrote in the time-honored American tradition of the jeremiad, in which he mourned slavery as an evil blot that stained American society. Surely God would punish a people who did not recognize in their slaves their common brotherhood in Christ. Yet his was a bitter call for vengeance as he predicted the calamities awaiting a nation that profited from the traffic in human souls and the spilling of human blood: if God stayed the hand of punishment, the slaves might act in their own behalf, and with impunity. “[M]y object is, if possible, to awaken in the breasts of my afflicted, degraded and slumbering brethren, a spirit of inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and wretchedness in this Republican Land of Liberty! ! ! ! !” wrote Walker.<sup>110</sup>

Spanish America figured into Walker’s argument: here was proof that God’s wrath would not slumber forever. Once the envy of the other nations of the earth, Spain and Portugal had been reduced to irrelevance.<sup>111</sup> “[One] can easily recognize the judgments of God among the Spaniards. Though others may lay the cause of the fierceness with which they cut each other’s throats, to some other circumstance, yet they

---

<sup>110</sup> David Walker, *Walker’s Appeal, in Four Articles: Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America* (1830), Preamble.

<sup>111</sup> Walker, Article III.

who believe that God is a God of justice, will believe that SLAVERY is the principal cause.”<sup>112</sup>

Walker, an educated free black man living in Boston had died under mysterious circumstances in 1830, but his provocative tract lived after him, particularly after the Boston abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison began discussing it in *The Liberator*, which he proposed sending to influential residents of the South in the mid-1830s. It took little to persuade Andrew Jackson’s postmaster general, Amos Kendall, to intercept copies of Walker’s inflammatory work that were sent through the U.S. mails. Despite the fact that these “incendiary” and “seditious” materials were addressed to whites, and most slaves were illiterate, the call to revolt was too charged a sentiment to be circulated freely.

American novelists generally seemed no more inclined to foreground slavery in their fiction than Amos Kendall was to distribute critiques of it through the mail. Abolitionist literature was a different story, but its agenda was considerably different and its market obviously smaller. Lydia Maria Child, for example, wrote a series of short stories for an abolitionist publication called *The Liberty Bell*, including “The Quadroons” (1842) and “Slavery’s Pleasant Homes” (1843) depicting exploitative relations between white owners, black slaves, and their mixed-race offspring. (In 1851 Harriet Beecher Stowe launched her novel serial installments in a similar publication, *The National Era*, before its notoriety allowed it to cross over into the mainstream.) But both northern and southern novelists hoping to avoid controversy and appeal to a national audience tended to keep their discussion of slavery bland and polite, and slaves in minor roles.<sup>113</sup> These

---

<sup>112</sup> Walker, Preamble.

<sup>113</sup> Jean Fagan Yellin, *The Intricate Knot: Black Figures in American Literature, 1776-1863* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), 16.

mainstream depictions of slavery are in stark contrast to the situations depicted in Latin American settings.

By contrast, European novelists surveying the American scene of the 1830s and '40s felt none of this constraint. Slavery often figured as the very pivot of the plot of their U.S.-situated fiction. Three of the most well-known visitors of the period, better known for their travel accounts, also wrote novels in which slavery appeared with all its wretchedness. Their narratives turn on the vexed issues of abolition, torture, miscegenation, and slave rebellion. Frances Trollope, whose much-hated but much-read bestseller *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) sold thousands of copies, anticipated *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by fifteen years in her virulent abolitionist effort *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* (1837, reissued under the title *Lynch Law* in 1857 after the publication of Stowe's novel). Harriet Martineau's more measured and less sensational travel account *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838) did not win the popularity of Trollope's work, but her novel *The Hour and the Man* (1841) matched Trollope's in abolitionist fervor: it was a piece of fiction that presumed to represent the rebellion of Touissant L'Overture in Saint Domingue. Finally, Gustave de Beaumont, the traveling companion of Alexis de Tocqueville and co-author of his *Du Systeme Penitentiaire aux Etats-Unis, et de son Application en France* (1833) produced *Marie; ou, L'Esclavage aux Etas-Unis, Tableau de Moeurs Americaines* in 1835, a novel that featured a white man in love with a light-skinned woman of color. None of the three books, which give centrality to the theme of slavery, achieved wide readership in the

United States (*Marie* was not translated into English until 1958, and only *The Hour and the Man* was published in the U.S. or widely reviewed at the time of its publication).<sup>114</sup>

U.S. fiction particularly avoided discussion of slave revolt. The exception to the general rule is Richard Hildreth's 1836 *The Slave or Memoirs of Archy Moore*, which Hildreth published as a first-person slave narrative. In the novel two victimized slaves shoot an overseer in cold blood and establish a fugitive colony with some other runaways. Though they are subsequently captured, Archy manages to escape to the North where, rather than being "conscience stricken" by his role in the overseer's murder, he lives secure "with that lofty feeling of manhood vindicated . . . which animated the soul of the Israelitish hero."<sup>115</sup> But Hildreth's work is the exception that proves the rule. He printed it himself since no publisher would touch it (some 7000 copies were sold)<sup>116</sup>, and it was ignored by reviewers except where it was condemned for "sustaining and impelling dangerous excitement."<sup>117</sup>

In the United States, servile insurrection could easily be imagined as race war, its horrors engulfing not only the slave South but the free North. In his *Liberator* editorials William Lloyd Garrison painted slavery as a national crime, and imminent slave revolt as a national problem.<sup>118</sup> His editorial on Nat Turner's rebellion, published in *The Liberator* on September 3, 1831, just a few weeks after it occurred, suggests how easily the incident could be painted in lurid colors:

---

<sup>114</sup> See "Literary Notices: *The Hour and the Man*," *The Knickerbocker* 17, no. 2 (February 1841): 160-2; "Miss Martineau's Later Writings," *The Christian Examiner* 32 (May 1842): 190-204.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted in Evan Brandstadter, "Uncle Tom and Archy Moore: The Antislavery Novel as Ideological Symbol," *American Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (May, 1974): 174. The plot synopsis is from Brandstadter.

<sup>116</sup> Brandstadter, 168, 167.

<sup>117</sup> From the review in the *Boston Atlas*, quoted in Brandstadter, 168.

<sup>118</sup> Robert H. Abzug, "The Influence of Garrisonian Abolitionists' Fears of Slave Violence on the Antislavery Argument, 1829-40," *The Journal of Negro History* 55, no. 1 (January, 1970): 15-28.

The first drops of blood, which are but the prelude to a deluge from the gathering clouds, have fallen. . . . You have seen, it is to be feared, but the beginning of sorrows. All the blood which has been shed will be required at your hand. . . . Wo to this guilty land, unless she speedily repent of her evil doings! The blood of millions of her sons cries aloud for redress!<sup>119</sup>

Even moderate Americans feared such rhetoric would inflame the enslaved populace and took steps, both legal and extralegal, to silence it. As a way “to repress agitation, [and] to allay excitement,” the House of Representatives in 1836 voted to table all anti-slavery petitions without printing or even referring to them.<sup>120</sup> The so-called “gag rule” in the House was echoed in the Senate.<sup>121</sup> Park Benjamin’s *American Monthly Magazine*—not specifically associated with any political faction<sup>122</sup>—deplored the overt silencing of antislavery petitions in Congress not because the action infringed on Americans’ liberties but because, contrary to the rule’s intent, it would be even harder to contain audible protest.<sup>123</sup> In 1840 Representative William Cost, dissatisfied by the fact that the 1836 rule had to be renewed at each session of Congress, pushed for the permanent rejection of antislavery petitions.<sup>124</sup>

Among nervous citizens, even in free states, reactions against inflammatory rhetoric could be just as severe and even blunter: in Cincinnati in 1836, anti-abolitionist

---

<sup>119</sup> William Lloyd Garrison, “The Insurrection,” *The Liberator* 3 September 1831.

<sup>120</sup> From the proposed resolution of Henry Pinckney, quoted in Robert Ludlum, “The Antislavery ‘Gag-Rule:’ History and Argument,” *The Journal of Negro History* 26, no. 2 (April 1941): 206.

<sup>121</sup> Daniel Wirls, “‘The Only Mode of Avoiding Everlasting Debate:’ The Overlooked Senate Gag Rule for Antislavery Petitions,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 27 (Spring 2007): 115-138.

<sup>122</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 618-20.

<sup>123</sup> “It is a matter of record that as long as petitions were silently received and referred to the Committee on the District of Columbia—where they went to sleep, and were heard of no more—no danger was ever perceived as likely to result from them; it was scarcely known abroad that such petitions were ever presented. But the moment that the demon of mischief put it into the heads of the Calhouns and the Wises to insist upon the rejection of these petitions, there has been a perpetual and ever-augmenting agitation, until the worst peril that can threaten the country seems imminent.” “Miscellanies,” *American Monthly Magazine*, February 1838: 195.

<sup>124</sup> Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 81-2.

mobs destroyed the printing press in James G. Birney's establishment.<sup>125</sup> A year later, in Alton, Illinois, a vigilante group threw the printing press of abolitionist Elijah P. Lovejoy into the river and then murdered him.<sup>126</sup> If it was impossible to stop the printing of inflammatory texts, it might be possible to prevent their being read: in the years after 1831 all slave states but Maryland, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Arkansas declared it a crime to teach slaves to read or write.<sup>127</sup>

But these proscriptions could be safely evaded in the production of U.S. fiction as long as Latin American slavery was the ostensible subject. Veiled comments about nineteenth-century slavery and race relations set in Latin America at the time of the Conquest were twice removed from contemporary realities, both geographically and temporally. The romantic setting of the Spanish Conquest both allowed U.S. authors to compose fiction in the dominant style of the 1820s and '30s and to make comments about contemporary U.S. slavery while doing so. The pastness of the Conquest setting, besides seeming tailor-made for the fashionable genre of romance, made even potentially volatile subjects like revolt less immediate.<sup>128</sup>

But by the late 1830s and 1840s the romance was, if not falling out of fashion, certainly competing with other forms of fiction, primarily novels treating social problems

---

<sup>125</sup> Allan Nevins, *The Evening Post: A Century of Journalism* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), 171.

<sup>126</sup> Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought, Volume Two, 1800-1860: The Romantic Revolution in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. 1927 [1954 Harvest Book Edition]), 237.

<sup>127</sup> David Reynolds, *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 91-2.

<sup>128</sup> Even in abolitionist literature as late as 1860, referring to recent violence was problematic, and historical distance was useful. In *The Slave's Rebellion* Adeleke Adeeko notes that Harriet Jacobs had wanted to include John Brown's raid in her slave narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1860) but her editor, Lydia Maria Child, considered the incident too fresh. Child suggested she replace it with her memories of the repercussions of the more historically remote Nat Turner rebellion in her North Carolina community. (Adeleke Adeeko, *The Slave's Rebellion: Literature, History, Orature* [Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005], 24.)

and everyday situations.<sup>129</sup> Meanwhile novelists of the so-called American Renaissance—Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allan Poe—pioneered developments in themes, storytelling, and effect that bore a recognizably American imprint.<sup>130</sup> But even as American literature matured in the 1840s and '50s, and writers began producing work native in style as well as in setting, they continued to set their works in Mexico, Peru, and Cuba. In particular, explosive issues like slave uprisings routinely sprang from the pages of literature set south of the border. Authors continued to benefit from the liberation discovered by Bird and Simms that allowed them to talk in fiction and drama about real or dreaded situations that were unique to the New World but not unique to the United States. Otherwise unspoken concerns about U.S. slavery could be uttered about Latin America because the context made them seem far away.<sup>131</sup>

Some writers dared to approach the realities of their own time simply by moving the location of their fiction offshore without simultaneously drawing the veil of history. A decade after the Panama Congress, Latin America was considered so different from the United States as to make temporal displacement unnecessary. America's "tropical regions" reflected a mirror image of the United States, where sober Protestants might be

---

<sup>129</sup> In "The Romance Ferment after *Waverley*," G. Harrison Orians says "The romance ferment may be said to have died down after 1833, although the active faith of novelists and short story writers was for years little affected." (G. Harrison Orians, "The Romance Ferment after *Waverley*," *American Literature* 3, no. 4 [January, 1932]: 431.)

<sup>130</sup> The classic study of this period remains F.O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1941). See also Perry Miller's *The Raven and the Whale: The War of Words and Wits in the Era of Poe and Melville* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1956). For a more recent study, see Edward L. Widmer's *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>131</sup> In *To Wake the Nations*, Eric Sundquist reads Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* of 1855 as a "kaleidoscope of figurative displacements" (151). Melville uses the story of a revolt aboard a Spanish slaver discovered by an unwitting Massachusetts sea captain as an allegory for New World slavery. (Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* [Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993]). But this kind of displacement of considerations of U.S. slavery onto Latin America has a much older history.

tempted to cavort in a land of voluptuous spring. Both unnatural and perhaps a little dangerous, Latin America beckoned seductively. Clearly ordinary rules did not apply. As early as 1833 the *American Monthly Review* described the Caribbean in language that sounds like an advertising prospectus of a century later:

While they are shivering over the fire in our frightful January or February days, they should remember that within seven or eight days' sail from New York, there is a land where eternal summer reigns, where the balmy gales come loaded with the perfume of the rose, the geranium and the orange; where the dance and the song echo through the halls of frescoed palaces, and the carnival masquer trips it as merrily as did of yore the cavalier of light-hearted Venice; where the Catholic church displays her ritual, and the representative of a monarch holds his glittering court.<sup>132</sup>

Most travel accounts were less flattering. Central and South America—despite their aboriginal antiquity—appeared raw and unfinished to American visitors. Governments were shaky and leaders unstable. Authors of fiction fell back upon these descriptions constantly. “[Y]ou know the proverb all along this coast—‘Corrupt as Lima.’ It but bears out your saying, too; churches more plentiful than billiard-tables, and forever open—and ‘Corrupt as Lima,’” complains a Peruvian ruefully in “The Town-Ho’s Story” in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1851).<sup>133</sup>

Perhaps the primary trope for distinguishing contemporary North and South America was religion: the Protestant U.S. was orderly, logical, and law-abiding; Catholic Latin America was venal, emotional, and messy. *Rosamond: or, a Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of an American Female under the Popish Priests, with a Full Disclosure of their Manners and Customs, in the Island of Cuba* (1836) provides a good example of the way the foreignness of Latin America was presented in religious terms.

---

<sup>132</sup> “Coplas de Don Jorge Manrique, translated from the Spanish,” [review], *American Monthly Review* 4, no. 5 (November, 1833): 382.

<sup>133</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick, or, The Whale* (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1988), 249. My thanks to Mark Noonan for pointing out this reference.

While anti-Catholicism was expressed in American letters before the Jacksonian period, it increased markedly in virulence after 1830 when, thanks to growing immigration from countries with large Catholic populations, nativists began to perceive Romanism as more of a threat to American values.<sup>134</sup> The anti-Catholic frenzy enveloped many Americans, even those a considerable distance from the mainstream: when Joseph Smith displeased his Mormon followers they greeted him with jeers of “tyrant—pope—king—usurper,” and the black abolitionist David Walker was not above deploring that Haiti was “plagued with that scourge of nations, the Catholic religion; but I hope and pray God that she may yet rid herself of it, and adopt in its stead the Protestant faith.”<sup>135</sup>

As Richard Hofstadter points out in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, anti-Catholic tracts had a strong flavor of xenophobia, offering a nightmarish vision of nations where Catholicism reigned and conjuring foreign conspiracies reaching out to strangle American democracy.<sup>136</sup> “The influence of religious systems depends greatly on national characters,” wrote the Reverend Andrew A. Lipscomb in the pamphlet *Our Country: Its Danger and Duty* published by the American Protestant Society in 1844.<sup>137</sup>

. . . [Popery] suits certain nations, if indeed falsehood and corruption can be said to suit any community. It finds in the indolent Italian—it finds in the lasciviousness of Southern Europe—it finds in the ignorance and barbarity of South America—ready sympathy and cheerful acquiescence. American mind is altogether different. It is bold, fearless, and inquisitive. It is impatient of dictation. It has been trained to think for itself.<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>134</sup> David S. Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), 180.

<sup>135</sup> Joseph Smith, quoted in Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 160; Walker, Article II.

<sup>136</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 19-21.

<sup>137</sup> Andrew A. Lipscomb, *Our Country: Its Danger and Duty* (New York: The American Protestant Society, 1844), 83.

<sup>138</sup> Lipscomb, 83.

In the aptly-titled *Romanism Incompatible with Republican Institutions*, another production of the American Protestant Society, the author “Civis,” having limned a portrait of American society turned passive, naive, and superstitious, challenged his readers, “[A]re we willing to become what South America now is?”<sup>139</sup>

Particularly popular expressions of anti-Catholicism were accounts purporting to be the narratives of fugitives from cloisters and convents. In these works, often set in countries with Catholic majorities, gullible Protestants were held in captivity, mistreated and terrorized, and finally delivered safely, though somewhat the worse for wear, into American freedom at the end. These works were phenomenally successful, dwarfing the impact of more respectable titles like *Calavar* and *The Damsel of Darien*: Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures*, the giant of the genre, was possibly the most widely-read contemporary pre-1852 imprint in the U.S.<sup>140</sup> Having these narratives take place within a foreign country permitted authors to cite specific locations that could not easily be checked by American readers and quote witnesses not easily contacted for corroboration. But they also allowed authors to represent a society fully descended into the depths of superstition, corruption, and ignorance, a cautionary tale for the United States of the result of permitting the spread of Catholicism.<sup>141</sup>

Cuba proved particularly effective as a setting that allowed readers a vicarious wallow in the luxury of institutionalized decadence. Catholic Spanish America did not provide the only context in which the unmentionable could be mentioned, but it provided

---

<sup>139</sup> “Civis,” *Romanism Incompatible with Republican Institutions*, (New York: The American Protestant Society, 1845), 100.

<sup>140</sup> Hofstadter, 22. Eighteen fifty-two marked the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which overturned all previous publishing records.

<sup>141</sup> Hence George Bourne’s *Lorette* (1833) and Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures* (1836) were set in Canada, while Culbertson’s *Narrative* took place in Cuba. See Reynolds, *Waking Giant*, 171.

access to the exotic aesthetic pleasures for which sober Protestants have traditionally condemned and envied Catholics: deep-dyed velvets and gauzy silks, shadowy cloisters echoing with Gregorian chant, guttering tapers, attar of roses and clouds of incense. “Anti-Catholicism has always been the pornography of the Puritan,” Richard Hofstadter declared memorably.<sup>142</sup>

While titillation was clearly the main goal of these sordid tales, their political agendas became clear as they sketched the danger Catholics posed to the republic through their rote instruction, lock-step indoctrination, and sophisticated strategies for brainwashing and mind control. *Awful Disclosures*, for example, filled pages with the methods of convent instruction, where ludicrously ignorant nuns filled their charges with misinformation, denied pupils access to the scriptures in textual form, and punished any deviance from received wisdom.<sup>143</sup> The Church hierarchy proved no less ruthlessly efficient in its control of adult men and women. Besides being a notorious locus of seduction, the confessional served as the last link in a chain of command that stretched from the Vatican to the bishops to the priests and finally to the laity.

*Rosamond* did not ascend the giddy heights of notoriety reached by *Awful Disclosures*, but it was popular, first appearing in serialized form and then as a book, with a second edition issued only weeks after the first to satisfy reader demand.<sup>144</sup> As fiction, the work is decidedly a hack job, written with very little sense even of how to build up to

---

<sup>142</sup> Hofstadter, *Paranoid Style*, 21.

<sup>143</sup> The Roman Catholic de-emphasis of scripture reading is not a Protestant fabrication; Catholics hold tradition to be perhaps equally important. The novelist Mary Gordon recalled: “Brought up as a Roman Catholic in the 1950s, I did not grow up reading the Bible. We weren’t forbidden Scriptural reading, but it was certainly discouraged: that was something Protestants did. Protestants, who didn’t realize the danger of individual interpretation, the rich safety of ex cathedra pronouncements, worked out by a body of ordained men over centuries of inspired time.” (Mary Gordon, *Reading Jesus: A Writer’s Encounter with the Gospels* [New York: Pantheon Books, 2009], xii.)

<sup>144</sup> Susan Griffin, “Awful Disclosures: Women’s Evidence in the Escaped Nun’s Tale,” *PMLA*, January 1996, 93.

and sustain the frisson of its scattered salacious episodes. Long, discursive passages provide a historical overview of the tradition of clerical celibacy as well as an extract from the *Encyclopedia Americana* about the island of Cuba.<sup>145</sup> Culbertson's editor, one Samuel B. Smith, "late a priest in the Church of Rome," intrudes clumsily to dilate on her descriptions or to assert the truthfulness of her most unlikely claims, citing their very improbability as proof over their veracity: "These details altogether are so grouped by the simple hand of plain truth, as no artist could design, no genius could invent," he marvels as Culbertson describes being dressed in priestly garb with her eyebrows and cheeks darkened with chalk in order to be spirited to the bedside of her lover.<sup>146</sup>

Despite such claims, Culbertson's narrative draws extensively from the common midcentury stereotypes of Cuba, trading in descriptions of "the ball room, the masquerades, the gambling tables, and the tea-parties."<sup>147</sup> Citations to Captain J.E. Alexander's *Transatlantic Sketches* corroborate Culbertson's testimony ("What respect can a clergy be held in, when they are too often bold and eager gamblers! From mass, they go to the cock-pit; and from the cock-pit to mass; and sometimes delay the mass to see the end of a fight."<sup>148</sup>) Indeed, her account is to be taken not as a scandalous exception but as an indictment of a whole society: Smith notes, "She represents not the licentiousness of a single priest, but the general depravity of a whole country."<sup>149</sup> Culbertson's captivity begins with her straying from the strict upbringing of her New England Protestant family, first marrying a lieutenant in the U.S. army against her

---

<sup>145</sup> Rosamond Culbertson, *Rosamond: or, a Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of an American Female under the Popish Priests, with a Full Disclosure of their Manners and Customs, in the Island of Cuba* (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Company, 1836), 91ff.

<sup>146</sup> *Rosamond*, 119.

<sup>147</sup> *Rosamond*, 7.

<sup>148</sup> A citation to this passage appears in *Rosamond*, 86.

<sup>149</sup> *Rosamond*, 10.

parents' wishes and moving with him to New Orleans, where he dies of yellow fever.

"The French manners are very free," she remarks, as she describes her descent from respectability after meeting a well-off merchant and becoming "the mistress of his house without the rites of matrimony."<sup>150</sup> Next she marries a seemingly reputable man from Kentucky, who takes her to Louisville, goes through her money, and treats her cruelly. Escaping from him, she returns to New Orleans, where she meets an old acquaintance *en route* to Cuba, and joins her.

I had been there but a few days, before I became acquainted, through one of my female friends, with a Spanish priest, named Manuel Canto, and commonly called Father Canto, who belonged to St. Francisco convent. Through an interpreter, he made me an offer to take me under his protection; and I consented to live with him, not knowing, at the time, that he was a Priest.<sup>151</sup>

Canto sets her up in a house and has her instructed in "the *Champara* language, which is a sort of Creole Spanish, half Spanish and half African,"<sup>152</sup> and a fitting metaphor for the mongrel existence to which he introduces her—luxurious and penitential, clerical and secular, promiscuous and repressive. The picture she paints of Cuba is of all-pervasive hypocrisy where everything is performance. The use of costumes and scenic effects characterize the churches no less than the secular realms; both partake of a rancid theatricality. "I saw many crosses and images of the Virgin Mary and the saints, but it looked to me all like a show, until I was brought by the Lord to this Christian land," explains Culbertson about her final return to the U.S.<sup>153</sup> Clergymen appear during the day looking "deathly pale" with shaved heads and priestly garments; at night they don "a citizen's dress" and a wig, apply rouge to their cheeks, and set out for

---

<sup>150</sup> *Rosamond*, 45.

<sup>151</sup> *Rosamond*, 68.

<sup>152</sup> *Rosamond*, 68.

<sup>153</sup> *Rosamond*, 191.

“theatres, masquerades, and gambling-houses.”<sup>154</sup> The laity appears piously in church wearing “*sacred black-dresses*” which are promptly exchanged for “their usual tasty dresses” as prelude to attendance at places of amusement.<sup>155</sup> When Canto has to travel, he takes Culbertson along with him as a companion, also engaging “an *Alcowater*,” (which Culbertson helpfully translates as “a pimp”) to travel with them and disguise the true nature of their relation.<sup>156</sup>

The corruption of secrecy and intrigue pervades the justice system as well. In Cuba, according to Culbertson, crimes against persons and property no less than clerical misdeeds are hushed up rather than prosecuted: when arguments turn violent in gambling dens, she says, the soldiers simply remove the bloody evidence and activities proceed without any interruption. “The only notice taken of the act, by the company present, is, that every one places his forefinger across his lips, shuts his teeth, and blows a long stilling hiss; as much as to say—‘*never mention it.*’”<sup>157</sup> Culbertson describes a gruesome invasion of her home in which robbers stab her and tear an earring from her earlobe while her neighbors simply close their shutters against her screams.<sup>158</sup> The most lurid revelation of *Rosamond* concerns the efforts of a priest who, in exchange for a hefty payoff, wins a reprieve for a gang of Spaniards, Frenchmen, Italians, and Portuguese who have been kidnapping black slaves and grinding them up for sausage meat.<sup>159</sup>

Rosamond Culbertson’s narrative echoes a venerable American genre. Indeed, her title gives a clue to another inspiration for this class of literature: her *Narrative of the*

---

<sup>154</sup> *Rosamond*, 72.

<sup>155</sup> *Rosamond*, 140. Italics original.

<sup>156</sup> *Rosamond*, 97. Italics original. “Beard” would seem to be a more apt slang term describing this man’s function.

<sup>157</sup> *Rosamond*, 87. Italics original. Culbertson’s editor adds in a note, “This same bloody disposition is conspicuous wherever Popery domineers.”

<sup>158</sup> *Rosamond*, 78-81.

<sup>159</sup> *Rosamond*, 188-189.

*Captivity and Sufferings* owes a great deal to the narratives of Indian captivity, like Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative of Captivity and Restoration*, that had been so popular in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>160</sup> Again an unprotected female is subjected to the terrors of a hostile culture, threatened with various depravities and hardships, and released at the end. Both Culbertson's *Narrative* and Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative* can be read less specifically as an account of captivity to a particular race of people than an account of the soul's subjection to sin and its ultimate redemption.

Not coincidentally, the captivity narrative is, finally, another way of talking about slavery. Culbertson is a sex slave. Although it is highly unlikely that she wrote with any abolitionist intention, she would not be the first author to represent slavery within the kidnapping-and-captivity context of sexual bondage. The theater historian Heather Nathans posits that Robert Montgomery Bird's 1828 *The City Looking Glass* includes the character of a white woman sold into an undesired union "as a substitute for the city's [Philadelphia's] free blacks, who, like her, were victimized by unscrupulous villains and who also lacked legal protection and recourse."<sup>161</sup> In any event, the carnivalesque inversion of white slavery was conceivable only in a topsy-turvy world like that south of the U.S. border.

Still another work that depicted contemporary Latin America as an upside-down version of the contemporary U.S. was Timothy Savage's *The Amazonian Republic* (1842), the account of an American sailor's residence among a female-dominated Indian tribe in remotest Peru. One of only seven "fantastic-voyage utopian novels which

---

<sup>160</sup> For a discussion of this relationship, see Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, "'The Redeemed Captive' as Recurrent Seller: Politics and Publication, 1707-1853," *The New England Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (September 2004): 341-367.

<sup>161</sup> Heather Nathans, *Slavery and Sentiment on the Nation's Stage, 1787-1861: Lifting the Veil of Black* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 70.

appeared in America between 1802 and 1851,”<sup>162</sup> this curiosity exemplifies many of the uses for which south-of-the-border settings were employed: it allows its author to engage issues of relevance in Jacksonian America on safe ground, by displacing them to South America.<sup>163</sup> Published early in the decade that would conclude with the Seneca Falls Convention and the Declaration of Sentiments, *The Amazonian Republic* imagines a society without barriers for women that allows them freedom to realize their potential for triumph as well as folly.

After the narrator dismisses the current travel literature of Lima in five introductory paragraphs—the canals and people of color, the besotted priests and crumbling infrastructure (“But who has not read of Lima?”), he turns to something new.<sup>164</sup> Attempting to penetrate the hitherto undocumented regions of the valley of the Amazon, he is rescued from a tribe of bloodthirsty cannibals by a tribe of—Amazons. The republic to which they convey him is a parody of the U.S., with both its virtues and faults help up for inspection. *The Amazonian Republic* contains a virtual catalogue of then-current concerns: prison reform, temperance, the influence of the penny press, the expansion of the franchise, speculation and debt. The novel is written from a decidedly Whiggish perspective, deploring the wayward influence of democracy. “The right of universal suffrage,” Savage’s narrator explains, “. . . permits our vagabonds and ruffians, as well as the hordes of ignorant emigrants [sic] who come to our shores, to hold the balance of power, to the terror or disgust of those who have an interest in the country

---

<sup>162</sup> Joel Nydahl, in the introduction to Timothy Savage, *The Amazonian Republic* (Delmar, NY: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1976 [New York: Samuel Colman, 1842]), v.

<sup>163</sup> As late as 1855, *Putnam’s Monthly* seriously entertained the possibility that there may have been a tribe of female warriors in the valley of the Amazon (“The Amazons of South America,” *Putnam’s Monthly* 3, no. 33 [September 1855]: 252-261).

<sup>164</sup> Savage, 5.

whose productions they neither beg nor steal.”<sup>165</sup> But the political satire is decidedly gentle, and the specific reforms invoked are always vague.

*Rosamond* and *The Amazonian Republic* demonstrate that geographical difference worked as well as historical distance in rendering a discussion of taboo topics acceptable. Even in the present, it was unimpeachably established that Latin America in no way resembled the United States. Therefore, books published in the U.S. could present even the inflammatory subject of slave rebellion so long as it featured Spanish-American characters or took place offshore. (Recall that it was Harriet Martineau’s novel of San Domingue, rather than Trollope’s or Beaumont’s fictions set in New Orleans, that Harper and Row chose to publish). For example, while literary treatments of the Nat Turner revolt were hushed up in 1831, within a few weeks of the Spanish slave ship *Amistad* being discovered off the coast of Long Island under the control of its African rebel crew in August, 1839, a play appeared at the Bowery Theatre called *The Long, Low, Black Schooner*. While little survives of this “Nautical Melo-Drama” except its playbill, the exclamation point-scattered sheet, with its list of characters and scenes, probably gives a pretty fair idea of its contents: “The slaves, led by Zemba Cingues, force the hatchway! Mutiny and Murder! . . . Inez [daughter of the ship’s captain] the captive of Zemba Cingues—Her terrible doom . . . “No you don’t,—the Yankees are on board of you—Boys and all, here they come!”<sup>166</sup>

---

<sup>165</sup> Savage, 157.

<sup>166</sup> Playbill from the Bowery Theatre (New York, New York), September 4, 1839 (Courtesy of the Harvard Theatre Collection) <http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/library/misc/hvd.bowery.html> accessed 10 November 2009. Iyunolu Folayan Osagie says definitively that “Like other *Amistad* performances of the nineteenth century, the play has not survived.” (Iyunolu Folayan Osagie, *The Amistad Revolt: Memory, Slavery, and the Politics of Identity in the United States and Sierra Leone* [Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2000], 72.)

*The Slaver: A Tale of Our Own Times*, a novelette that appeared in *Graham's Magazine* in three installments in 1847, seemingly demonstrates the outermost limit to which it was possible to present slavery in a mainstream publication (as it happened, one that featured light literature aimed primarily at a female audience).<sup>167</sup> With enough plot developments to fill a work twice or three times as long, *The Slaver* features not one but two slave rebellions, one onboard a slave ship and one on a plantation, complete with attempted rape (as well as two shipwrecks, two marriages, and a duel). The author, "A Son of the Late Dr. John D. Godman," insists on an up-to-date context for his tale (or relatively up-to-date; it is set in 1835). While fiction writers who go back to the sixteenth or seventeenth century "have a more widely extended field for the play of their imaginations," he writes, they lose in the process the immediacy of a story set in the present. But significantly, while the author eschews the distancing device of a period setting, he moves his story offshore, to the island of Cuba, where the African slave trade was acknowledged to continue. The events he describes are as near as the shores "of the same ocean, that laves with its salt waters the shores of our own happy land," and the slaver of the work's title is in fact one Charles Willis, a U.S. citizen, but the Latin American setting provides scope for the kind of events not usually presented in North American settings.

Willis's profession is frankly presented as despicable, but perhaps as much for its lack of respectability as its inhumanity. (Willis is untroubled by the slaves' plight. After a run-in with a man-of-war, "several of her men, and a number of the negroes, who had

---

<sup>167</sup> *Graham's Magazine*, published in Philadelphia, presented primarily "tales that were a bit sensational, dealing with love, American adventure, the Orient, and so on, along with poetry, a little travel, and entertaining book reviews." Edgar Allan Poe was its literary editor for a short period. (Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930], 544-55; quote from 546.)

suffered from their compact position, had been killed. Willis was so rejoiced to find his masts safe that he did not mind the other damage . . . ”)<sup>168</sup> The squalid conditions of the factory and slave ship are duly presented, but Willis himself is cast as no worse than the classic bad boy of sentimental fiction, disowned by his rich family and determined to go to the devil until he falls in love with a good woman whom he saves from the aforementioned attempted rape. (“[S]truggling violently in the grasp of two huge, swarthy, and half naked negroes, armed with machetas, or sugar-knives, [was] a young girl, in white . . . their aim did not seem to be murder.”)<sup>169</sup>

While Godman keeps the clichés about Cuba to a minimum—there is a scene in a gambling house but not at a cockfight, and fewer prayers to the Holy Virgin than are common in this type of literature—the author presents enough details to estrange his story from the U.S. experience. It is clear, for example, that the sugar plantation where the rebellion occurs is not a model of U.S. efficiency and benevolence. The plantation owner has left it insecurely supervised. Furthermore, the slaves, by virtue of being African natives, are clearly wilder and more vengeful than those, like the slaves in the U.S., reared in the condition of servitude. Willis finds the overseer bound “and gagged with his own whip . . . [he] said the only reason they spared his life was because the Obi man wanted to have a grand Feteesh that evening, and offer him up as a sacrifice.” The American Willis has no difficulty taking matters in hand. “Accustomed to deal with refractory negroes, [he] soon restored order on the plantation.”<sup>170</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup> *The Slaver: A Tale of Our Own Times*, by a Son of the Late Dr. John D. Godman, *Graham's Magazine* 31, no. 1 (July, 1847): 7.

<sup>169</sup> *The Slaver*, 8

<sup>170</sup> *The Slaver*, 9.

The author, “A Son of the Late Dr. John D. Godman,” was Stuart Adair Godman<sup>171</sup> (1822-53), a Cincinnati by birth who grew up in Baltimore and led a peripatetic and somewhat feckless youth, trying on the professions of doctor, lawyer, merchant, and sailor before he turned twenty-one. But in his twenty-first year he married and settled down in South Carolina, where he purchased a small newspaper, the *Laurensville Herald*.<sup>172</sup> Anointed by *Graham’s* a successor to Cooper and “one of the best, if not the best writer of Nautical Romances now living,” *The Southern Literary Messenger* eulogized him on his death as “a martyr to the cause of Southern Letters.”<sup>173</sup> Yet in *The Slaver* his attitude toward slavery is inconsistent to say the least. The horrors of the middle passage figure, but the hero is also allowed an exculpating speech:

‘T is true, I have been guilty of bringing negroes from Africa to this island. But wherein am I thereby more guilty than you? Do you not eagerly buy them as soon as landed; and so hold out the temptation to bring them? ‘T is also true, that on the high sea I did, with force and death, resist ‘her Britannic Majesty’s vessel’. Were moral right to prevail for once, her captain would be in my situation; for by his intervention the slaves that I would have brought here, to live in comfort to a good old age, will now be condemned to hard and short lives, as apprentices, in Brazil.<sup>174</sup>

In fact, what appears inconsistent in this presentation of slavery may be an accurate representation of the antebellum period’s clumsy compromises and overreaching justifications, to wit: slavery is bad, but so are other labor systems; slave trading is a dirty business, but the profits of slave labor are clean enough; slave rebellions threaten

---

<sup>171</sup> Godman’s first name was variously spelled “Stuart” (on the title page of his 1852 novel *The Ocean-Born*), “Stewart” (in a profile that appeared in *Graham’s* in 1852) and “Steuart” (in his obituary in *The Southern Literary Messenger* in 1853).

<sup>172</sup> Charlton H. Wells, M.D., “Eminent Young Men.—No. II: Stewart Adair Godman,” *Graham’s Magazine* 40, no. 5 (May 1852): 464-67; “Editor’s Table,” *The Southern Literary Messenger* 19, no. 8 (August 1853): 518.

<sup>173</sup> “*The Ocean Born*” (review), *Graham’s Magazine* 42, no. 3 (March 1853): 362; Charlton H. Wells, M.D., “Eminent Young Men.—No. II: Stewart Adair Godman,” *Graham’s Magazine* 40, no. 5 (May 1852): 467; “Editor’s Table,” *The Southern Literary Messenger* 19, no. 8 (August 1853): 518.

<sup>174</sup> *The Slaver*, 6.

the institution, but arise from African troublemakers rather than American-born bondsmen.

But consistency was not apparently of much concern to this author, nor to his readers, who according to *Graham's* "warmly received" the story.<sup>175</sup> The Cuban setting allows the presentation of an it-can't-happen-here perspective. In ways that would be developed much more extensively by apologists for slavery in the 1850s, Godman suggests that the precariousness of the slave system in Haiti, Brazil, and Cuba proved nothing about the risks slavery posed in the United States. Through better organization and more merciful treatment, the U.S. South had conquered the potential hazards of the system. The South was safe. Spanish America had always been different.

After the Compromise of 1850 the possibility of maintaining the silence about slavery became more difficult. The Fugitive Slave Act and the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* opened the floodgates of anti-slavery literature. In quick succession appeared Frederick Douglass's *The Heroic Slave* (1853), William Wells Brown's *Clotel* (1853), and Martin Delany's *Blake* (1859). Herman Melville's haunting *Benito Cereno*, published in installments in *Putnam's Magazine* in 1855, concerns an American sea captain who fails to understand that the Spanish slave ship he encounters in the open sea is under the control of the slaves.<sup>176</sup> Southerners raged that the works of Stowe and her successors stirred up hostility and disturbed the national peace.<sup>177</sup> Further, by airing the nation's differences, they damaged the reputation of the United States in the eyes of the

---

<sup>175</sup> "Editor's Table," *Graham's Magazine* 36, no. 6 (June 1850): 418. Here Godman is identified as "T.A. Godman."

<sup>176</sup> Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*, *Putnam's Monthly* 9 (1855): 353-367; 459-473; 633-644. For an excellent analysis of *Benito Cereno*, see Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>177</sup> See Joy Jordan-Lake, *Whitewashing Uncle Tom's Cabin: Nineteenth-Century Women Novelists Respond to Stowe* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005), xvii.

world.<sup>178</sup> In response, Southern authors aggressively marketed “anti-Tom” fiction that, no less than the object of their criticism, moved the institution of slavery and the enslaved character out of the wings and onto center stage.

But in the pre-*Uncle Tom* days of the 1830s and ‘40s, the need for nationalists to avoid frank discussion of subjects like the mistreatment and sexual exploitation of slaves, the threat of rebellion, and the possibility of amalgamation was considered imperative. Under these constraints, Latin America served as the perfect screen on which to project the secret fears and fantasies of the antebellum United States. Here was an area that shared its colonial past, its mix of Europeans, indigenous peoples, and African slaves—but a very different place, whose very lack of definite shape lent it to all sorts of imaginings. Setting novels and plays in Latin America allowed a thorough exploration of the unthinkable to hide in plain sight. In her study of the way artists from the U.S. represented the Latin American landscape during this period, the art historian Katherine Emma Manthorne describes Latin America in its relation to the United States as “its surrogate or underground self.”<sup>179</sup>

At the same time, the Otherness of Latin America, whether explicitly declared or implicitly assumed, served as a distraction from the growing sectionalism of the period. The superiority of the U.S. to Latin America was a unifying bond stretched over the fracture between North and South. The fragility of that bond, however, was apparent to anyone paying attention. Two speeches given within a year of each other—one by the

---

<sup>178</sup> For an abolitionist response to the charge that “‘Uncle Tom has done us a world of mischief abroad,’” see [Gamaliel Bailey], “Uncle Tom Abroad,” in *The National Era*, 24 March 1853: “[T]here is nothing in the work itself calculated to do harm to *American* character or institutions, and . . . we can see no indications in any quarter that our country has fallen in the estimation of the people of the Old World.”

<sup>179</sup> Katherine Emma Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance: North American Artists Exploring Latin America, 1839-1879* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 34. The phrase seems to come from Edward Said.

novelist William Gilmore Simms in Alabama and the other by the politician Daniel Webster in Massachusetts—illustrate the way Latin America was held up as an example of real difference, to remind citizens of the U.S. how much they had in common. At the same time, Simms and Webster uneasily attempted to define the characteristics of the entire nation in terms of their own particular sections. Their characterizations anticipate the regional inflections Northerners and Southerners would use in talking about themselves through Latin America in the late 1840s and 1850s.

In December, 1842 the novelist William Gilmore Simms was invited to Tuscaloosa to give an address before the Erosophic Society of the University of Alabama, then only eleven years in existence.<sup>180</sup> The “university” where he spoke was at the time little more than a few slave-built structures housing a total student population of fewer than one hundred perched on the Alabama frontier, the ragged selvedge of the Cotton Kingdom, where it must have been quite a coup to secure the presence of the well-known author.<sup>181</sup> Curiously, considering its setting, Simms chose as his theme “national permanence,” at once a denial of the inexorable imperative of expansionism and a condemnation of it. After dutifully acknowledging the ability of the early Tuscaloosa pioneers to wrest order out of chaos, and to quickly adorn their rude new settlement with the institutions of civilization, Simms proceeded to define the U.S. character as defined by its love of home. He did not understand home as something an American carries with

---

<sup>180</sup> William Gilmore Simms, *The Social Principle: The True Source of National Permanence, An Oration, Delivered before the Erosophic Society of the University of Alabama, at its Twelfth Anniversary, December 13, 1842* (Tuscaloosa: Published by the Society, 1843).

<sup>181</sup> “The University of Alabama: History of UA,” <http://www.ua.edu/history.html>, accessed 5 December 2009; Charles S. Watson, *From Nationalism to Secessionism: The Changing Fiction of William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 31.

him or her, like a turtle its shell: he meant one's native soil, and he insisted that it was their devotion to that soil that made Americans who they are.

What was the source of this devotion, Simms asked. He found it in the English origin of the early colonists. Not so very long before, three powerful nations, England, France, and Spain, had contested for the rights to the North American continent, but two had utterly failed. Why was English the language of the United States rather than the "sonorous language of the one nation, or the courtly dialect of the other"?<sup>182</sup> Why were U.S. churches not filled with the "gorgeous and imposing rites of their peculiar religion"?<sup>183</sup> The three nations crossed the Atlantic, said Simms, in quest of different ends, the French and Spanish for gold, or slaves, or conquest, but the English only for a home.

The French and Spanish had failed in their quest not because their designs were too grand but because their goals failed to unify the colonists. On the other hand, the English social principle, shared and acknowledged from Vermont to South Carolina, was this "domestic feeling," this commitment to the "humble processes of comfort."<sup>184</sup> In the last days of the colonial period, it was this common feeling that made South Carolina protest the closing of the port of Boston, and made New England support Carolina's demand for choosing its own civil and military officers. "The Social Principle" fused together the colonies without government backing or money, indeed in the very absence of these resources.<sup>185</sup> A man's homestead was "*his own . . . his little peculium*," said

---

<sup>182</sup> Simms, *Social Principle*, 15.

<sup>183</sup> Simms, *Social Principle*, 15.

<sup>184</sup> Simms, *Social Principle*, 15.

<sup>185</sup> Simms, *Social Principle*, 10.

Simms, using the Latin word for private, as opposed to common, property.<sup>186</sup> The Declaration of Independence, he argued, was more concerned with “the repose and security of society, rather than . . . that elementary principle of human equality, which the instrument begins with declaring.”<sup>187</sup>

What makes Simms’ oration such a curious text is its nostalgic invocation of English colonies once united, despite their apparent differences, by a common love of home. Simms was not a casual student of history; he had finished a textbook on the history of South Carolina only two years earlier, and used Revolutionary-period settings for many of his novels and plays. But in *The Social Principle* he seems to be visibly struggling to use history to deny the rise of sectionalism, flying in the face of evidence that the American Dream has always been a fragmented one at best. His central argument, that it was love of home that united the English colonists and differentiated them from their Spanish and French peers, seems particularly improbable. Could he really argue that Carolina’s early settlers, many of them plantation owners priced out of Barbados, were looking only for a home, or that assorted Englishmen (and they were of course mostly men, not family groups) who touched land at Jamestown were driven by aspirations so different from those of the Spanish *conquistadores*? For that matter, the peripatetic Pilgrims of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, although clearly seeking a safe haven, were hardly tied to the place of their birth. Nor was this contradiction lost on Simms’ contemporaries: in a review of the speech the *Southern Quarterly Review* noted dryly, “Had the ruling passion of our ancestors been the love of home, they would have

---

<sup>186</sup> Simms, *Social Principle*, 18. Italics original.

<sup>187</sup> Simms, *Social Principle*, 13.

remained where they were.”<sup>188</sup> Simms’s very choice of word for the private property to which all English settlers were so peculiarly devoted—their “little *peculium*”—is likewise freighted with its association to the English cognate “peculiar,” applied to that institution that was stirring up sectional controversy.

“The 1840s proved to be a crucial decade for Simms,” writes his recent biographer Charles Watson, for Simms was moving from national allegiance to ardent sectionalism.<sup>189</sup> Where at the beginning of the decade he was insisting on a common heritage for all the United States, by the end he would be increasingly committed to Southern nationalism. In 1849 Simms would become the editor of *The Southern Quarterly Review*, the South’s answer to New England- and New York-based journals like the *North American Review*. Even the idea of a common English ancestry for the original thirteen colonies would be questioned: increasingly Southerners like Simms insisted that they were the descendants of chivalrous, generous Anglo-Normans, as opposed to the cold-hearted and calculating Anglo-Saxons who begat the unscrupulous Yankee strain of tinkers and peddlers.<sup>190</sup>

Some six months after Simms delivered his address on the Alabama frontier, Daniel Webster, fresh from serving as U.S. Secretary of State, delivered a far more notable oration on Breed’s Hill on the Massachusetts coast—the 1843 Bunker Hill

---

<sup>188</sup> “*The Social Principle; the True Source of National Permanence,*” *Southern Quarterly Review* IV: 7 (July 1843), 242.

<sup>189</sup> Charles S. Watson, *From Nationalism to Secessionism: The Changing Fiction of William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 55.

<sup>190</sup> William Gilmore Simms, “The Morals of Slavery” in *The Pro-Slavery Argument; As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States* (Walker, Richards & Company, 1852), 282. See also Ritchie Devon Watson, *Normans and Saxons: A Southern Race Mythology and Intellectual History of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

oration.<sup>191</sup> Eighteen years earlier he had given a speech at the groundbreaking ceremony; now the 221-foot granite obelisk was complete. Here sixty-eight years earlier the first shots of the American Revolution were fired, a year before the goal of separation from England was articulated in the Declaration of Independence.

Webster's theme was that America's past was all Americans' common property. Even before recognizing President Tyler and the governor, Webster acknowledged the variety of people that had contributed to the completion of the shaft. When the depression of the late 1830s had stalled fundraising, he pointed out, mechanics as well as wealthy philanthropists, women as well as men had funded the progress of the work and claimed the glorious history it celebrated. Then Webster inserted a curse.

Woe betide the man who brings to this day's worship feeling less than wholly American! . . . Union, established in justice, in patriotism, and the most plain and obvious common interest,—union, founded on the same love of liberty, cemented by blood shed in the same common cause,—union has been the source of all our glory and greatness thus far, and is the ground of all our highest hopes. This column stands on Union.<sup>192</sup>

Webster's words recalled his Second Reply to Hayne of South Carolina during the period of the nullification crisis thirteen years earlier.<sup>193</sup> Yet Webster implicitly denied the intent to provoke, preferring instead to find a common identity among the colonists of the area that became the United States. Nonetheless, his characterization, consciously or not, privileged the New England stereotype over the Southern: the settlers of North America, he recalled, came looking for liberty and made sure it applied everywhere; came in

---

<sup>191</sup> Generations of American school children were subjected to the 1825 oration as an exercise in public speaking. See for example Mabel F. McKee, "Three Examples of Motivation," *The English Journal* 9, no. 8 (October 1920): 459. Along with Washington's Farewell Address, the 1825 and 1843 orations were published together by Macmillan in 1915, presumably for the use and edification of students.

<sup>192</sup> Daniel Webster, "The Completion of the Bunker Hill Monument," *Washington's Farewell Address and Webster's Bunker Hill Orations* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), 78.

<sup>193</sup> "Liberty and Union, now and for ever, one and inseparable!" *Register of Debates in Congress*, 21<sup>st</sup> Congress, First Session, 27 January, 1830, 80.

family groups, bringing a love of home, and, in words that must have waved a red flag before any Southern listeners or readers, facility for “arts and manufactures” and a “middle class” sensibility.<sup>194</sup> Webster attempted to fit Sir Walter Raleigh halfheartedly and unsuccessfully into this paradigm and acknowledged that there may have been variances between the settlers of New England and Virginia, “but only enough to create a pleasing variety in the midst of a general family resemblance.”<sup>195</sup>

Before becoming detained in the mire of equivocations, Webster clambered onto firmer ground by detailing how such insignificant differences paled beside those between the Spanish and the English colonists. As opposed to the individual initiative that had settled North America, he said, it was state enthusiasm, disciplined by military force, that had made possible the conquest of the Spanish colonies. Settlers came lusting for gold, “not produced by industry, nor accumulated by commerce, but gold dug from its native bed in the bowels of the earth, and that earth ravished from its rightful possessors by every possible degree of enormity, cruelty, and crime.”<sup>196</sup> Three hundred years later, Webster claimed, the differences were still visible in the contrast between an industrious, liberty-loving people in the United States who “govern themselves by reason”<sup>197</sup> and a collection of countries south of the border held together by force and characterized by ignorance and disparity of wealth.

Webster avoided reference to Roman Catholicism as a symptom—or cause—of South America’s failure to advance. Expressions of anti-Popery would have been touchy in Charlestown, the city in which the Bunker Hill Monument was raised: nine years

---

<sup>194</sup> Webster, “The Completion of the Bunker Hill Monument,” 85.

<sup>195</sup> Webster, “The Completion of the Bunker Hill Monument,” 87, 89.

<sup>196</sup> Webster, “The Completion of the Bunker Hill Monument,” 91.

<sup>197</sup> Webster, “The Completion of the Bunker Hill Monument,” 96.

earlier the notorious arson of the Charlestown Convent had sparked a series of anti-Catholic riots and demonstrated the extent of Protestant paranoia, and presumably many of the “uncounted throng” present at the dedication that day were in fact Catholic immigrants and their children who would have resented a characterization of the United States as a Protestant nation.<sup>198</sup> Nonetheless, Webster focused on the ways Latin America fell short of the U.S. ideal. His words of 1843 contrasted jarringly with those of an oration he delivered eighteen years earlier on the same spot, in honor of the beginning of the monument’s construction. Then he had looked on the new republics full of hope:

. . . in our day there has been, as it were, a new creation. The southern hemisphere emerges from the sea. Its lofty mountains begin to lift themselves into the light of heaven; its broad and fertile plains stretch out, in beauty, to the eye of civilized man, and at the mighty bidding of the voice of political liberty the waters of darkness retire.<sup>199</sup>

In 1843 the light of republicanism guttered in South America:

Yonder is a volcano, flaming and smoking, but shedding no light, moral or intellectual. . . . The city is filled with armed men; not a free people, armed and coming forth voluntarily to rejoice in a public festivity, but hiring troops, supported by forced loans, excessive impositions on commerce, or taxes wring from a half-fed and a half-clothed population.<sup>200</sup>

Both Webster the northerner and Simms the southerner, casting about for a unifying principle in the face of growing sectional differences that would only intensify over the next decade and a half, realized the value of contrasting a superior United States—free, rational, home-loving—with an inferior Latin America, held back by force and bigotry. Even as other regional differences widened, the idea that the English settlers had in them something that made them different from, and superior to, their Spanish (and French) contemporaries, would continue to operate in the 1840s and ‘50s. Nationalists in

---

<sup>198</sup> Webster, “The Completion of the Bunker Hill Monument,” 76.

<sup>199</sup> Webster, Bunker Hill Oration, 17 June 1825, 62.

<sup>200</sup> Webster, “The Completion of the Bunker Hill Monument,” 96-7.

both the U.S. North and the U.S. South would still define themselves against a foil of credulous, tyrannical, chaotic Latin America with its adulterated racial composition. But as the United States moved closer to civil war, the language in which the North and the South expressed their respective comparisons with Central and South America would fall on the ear with noticeably regional accents.

Present in the audience at the dedication of the Bunker Hill monument in 1843, specifically acknowledged by Webster, was William Prescott, a Massachusetts judge of great local renown who had made a fortune for himself. Sixty-eight years earlier his father, Colonel William Prescott, had built a “redoubt” and commanded the fort against the soldiers of the king. Webster did not mention Prescott’s 47-year-old son, William Hickling Prescott, although the latter had also garnered a bit of fame. He was quietly making a name for himself as a historian, having published *The History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella* in 1837. The summer of Webster’s oration, Prescott was getting ready to publish his second book, which would bring him an international reputation and allow him to easily eclipse the fame of his father and grandfather. That book, *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*, applied the romantic conventions of fiction to the writing of the past to stunning and indelible effect. It was immediately recognized as an immortal work of American history, though its subject was not the United States. But like the fiction writers he admired, Prescott would comment on the United States even as he wrote about Latin America.



**Chapter 4:** William Hickling Prescott depicted Cortes's conquest of Mexico in the glowing tints of romantic fiction, and many of his readers rushed to enlist in the U.S. War with Mexico in order to participate in the "Second Conquest." Prescott himself grew increasingly glum about the war. "We ride on conquering and to conquer, as you see, right up to the very halls of Montezuma" he wrote R.C. Winthrop 30 May 1847, "and many, I should think from the positive manner they speak of them, expect to find the palace of the old Aztec still standing."

*William Hickling Prescott*  
*Daguerreotype by Albert S. Southworth,*  
*Southworth & Hawes, ca. 1850-55.*  
*Courtesy of George Eastman House,*  
*International Museum of Photography and Film.*



"Like Cortez, finding myself isolated and abandoned; and again like him, always afraid that the next ship or messenger might recall or further cripple me—I resolved no longer to depend on Vera Cruz or home, but to render my little army 'a self-sustaining machine,'" wrote Scott, comparing himself to his *conquistador* predecessor. Carl Nebel's illustration for George Wilkins Kendall's 1851 book *The War between the United States and Mexico, Illustrated* shows General Winfield Scott entering the central square of Mexico City.

## Chapter 4

### Re: Conquest

#### William Hickling Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico and History of the Conquest of Peru, 1843-1848*

In February 1846 the *American Whig Review* took notice of a new novel, *Montezuma, The Last of the Aztecs*.<sup>1</sup> A curious conflation of the romance-of-the-Conquest and the veiled anti-Catholic genres, *Montezuma* depicted an Aztec priest who conspires with Cortes in the overthrow of native Mexican rule.<sup>2</sup> Its author, Edward Maturin, had dedicated it to the historian William Hickling Prescott (1796-1859), whose *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* had taken the U.S. by storm three years before and whose scrupulous research had provided invaluable background for the novelist (with a dedication to Prescott that typically collapsed the distinction between the U.S. and Spanish America, Maturin expressed the wish that “the history of your country may long continue to be enriched by your pen”<sup>3</sup>). The *Whig Review*, along with many other reviewers, was enthusiastic.<sup>4</sup> Maturin’s choice of subject

has introduced his readers to what should be claimed by approbation, as an exclusively American field—for, in a *Literary* sense, at least,

---

<sup>1</sup> Edward Maturin, *Montezuma: The Last of the Aztecs: A Romance* (New York: Paine & Burgess, 1845).

<sup>2</sup> As the *Knickerbocker* reported in its review, in the character of Montezuma, “the spirit of resistance . . . is mingled [with] a superstitious fear that the gods of Anahuac have decreed the destruction of his people, and the subversion of his throne to the white gods. This consciousness, acting upon his religious fears, palsies every effort of his mind, and renders him the willing slave to a designing priest, who, cloaking his deep-laid plans under the holy robe of religion, by supernatural omens and dark prophecies, which as the High Priest he alone can read, seeks to make MONTEZUMA what history tells us he became, the slave to unmanly terrors, the imbecile monarch, who yielded empire and throne without one effort for their safety.” (“Literary Record—*Montezuma, the Last of the Aztecs*,” *Knickerbocker* 26, no. 6 [December 1845]: 588). Maturin’s novel can be read as an allegory for a country in the thrall of Rome. Substitute “Pope” for “High Priest” in the quote above, and one quickly perceives an expression of the nativist fear of Catholics who control access to Holy Writ among the faithful.

<sup>3</sup> Maturin, *Montezuma*, iv.

<sup>4</sup> See also “Notices of New Books: *Montezuma, the Last of the Atzecs* [sic],” *Democratic Review* 48, no. 91 (January, 1846): 76.

“The whole boundless continent is ours.”

The legendary and historical wealth of this entire hemisphere should be made ours by the bloodless conquest of the Pen. It is a duty we owe to our literature, and each pioneer in a new field should be greeted with kindness.<sup>5</sup>

The “boundless continent” quote, originally from a 1788 epilogue written by American Jonathan Mitchel Sewall to Englishman Joseph Addison’s Revolutionary-era blockbuster drama *Cato*, was something of a cliché in the mid-1800s.<sup>6</sup> Park Benjamin had appended “The Whole Boundless Continent is Ours” to the masthead of his paper *The New World* in the early 1840s.<sup>7</sup> John O’Sullivan cited the line in a February 7, 1845 *New York Morning News* editorial called “More! More! More!”—demonstrating that the rallying cry of Manifest Destiny, which O’Sullivan first called by name in the July-August issue of the *Democratic Review*, drew upon a long tradition of expansionist self-confidence.<sup>8</sup> By limiting the possession of “the boundless continent” to the “Literary sense,” *The Whig Review* in effect thumbed its nose at the ham-fisted, jingoistic expressions of Manifest Destiny employed by the Democrats, who were at that moment preparing to engage in a war with Mexico that would extend the territory of the United States by some thirty percent. Although many Whigs shrank from the idea of territorial aggrandizement, the *Whig Review* was not quite prepared to surrender all applications of Manifest Destiny.

---

<sup>5</sup> “Montezuma, the Last of the Aztecs: An Historical Romance on the Conquests of Mexico,” (review), *The American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art* 3, no. 2 (February 1846): 224. Italics original.

<sup>6</sup> Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature, Volume I* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1856), 286.

<sup>7</sup> See for example the issue of 7 January, 1843. According to *The Cyclopaedia of American Literature, The New World* was “a weekly newspaper of large size, which met the wants of the day by its cheap, wholesale republication of the English magazine literature. It was also well sustained by a corps of spirited writers which the editor drew round him in its original departments.” (Duyckinck and Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature, Volume II*, 499.)

<sup>8</sup> “Yes, more, more, more! . . . till our national destiny is fulfilled . . . and the whole boundless continent is ours.” Quoted in Edward L. Widmer, *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 51.

Episodes from the Mexican past furnished excellent sources for U.S. fiction that could be tapped without pangs of conscience. The *Whig* reviewer insisted that the “*Literary*” sense of conquest was justifiable. The vast wealth of the historical record of the first Europeans in America (although they happened to be Spanish and ventured nowhere near the area occupied by the early republic) ought to be “claimed by appropriation, as an exclusively American field.”

But the implied distinction between the bloody lust for land and the “bloodless conquest of the Pen” was not quite as clear as the *Whig Review* would have it. The reprehensible snatching of territory and the apparently acceptable seizing of ideas were not so easily disassociated. One type of conquest bled into the other. U.S. appropriation of the story of the sixteenth-century Spanish Conquest coincided with a second conquest of Mexico by the U.S. three hundred years later at Vera Cruz, Monterey, Buena Vista and finally Mexico City itself in the U.S. War with Mexico that began in 1846. That the Whig William Hickling Prescott most memorably achieved the North Americanization of these events from Spanish history is just one of the ironies of the situation.

Another is that for nearly a century after his death, Prescott was considered above the fray of vulgar politics.<sup>9</sup> “Of Mr. Prescott’s political opinions there is little to be said,” declared George Ticknor, Prescott’s friend and first biographer, in 1864.<sup>10</sup> Ticknor characterized his subject as more of a leftover Federalist than a member of any contemporary party. The biographer pointed to Prescott’s friendship with Whig Edward Everett, Democrat George Bancroft, and abolitionist Charles Sumner, figures from three

---

<sup>9</sup> This characterization, memorably expressed by John Quincy Adams, who said Prescott was the ideal historian, “who should be apparently without country and without religion,” was exploded in William Charvat’s “Prescott’s Political and Social Attitudes” in 1942. (William Charvat, “Prescott’s Political and Social Attitudes,” *American Literature* 13, no. 4 [January, 1942]: 320).

<sup>10</sup> George Ticknor, *Life of William Hickling Prescott* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864), 358.

points of the political compass, as evidence that Prescott was apolitical.<sup>11</sup> An alternate, and equally valid, interpretation might consider that Prescott was in fact deeply interested in political issues even if he was not a strident member of one particular faction. For his part, Ticknor, while filling his biography with Prescott's correspondence, avoided quoting exchanges that dealt with issues like slavery and territorial acquisition.

William Hickling Prescott was a quintessential example of a well-bred, well-read, well-informed Northerner who never raised his voice when airing his anxieties about race and slavery in public. For that matter, he was not above occasional expressions of the prevailing racist assumptions and prejudices of his age. But his researches into the history of Latin America freed him from the constraint that might otherwise have bound him and allowed him to say what would otherwise have made him enemies, or at least lost him readers. Even more, he sometimes went out of his way to draw connections between race relations and slavery in the era of the Conquest and in his own time.

In fact, Prescott's three great works, *Ferdinand and Isabella*, *The Conquest of Mexico*, and *The Conquest of Peru*, can be read as an extended meditation on the career of the early American republic, with admiration for the bravery and resourcefulness of the first settlers and disgust with the internal disagreements that propelled them toward civil strife. Prescott actually encouraged this kind of analysis: he often described situations of nation-building and conflict and then stepped out of his narrative to point out parallels with the present, particularly in relation to issues of race, slavery, and religion. Examined in this way, the reader recognizes the arc of Spanish florescence and fading, from the consolidation of Spain under the *reyes catolicos* to civil war among their contentious subjects in their far-flung colonies, as prefigurations of the achievements and

---

<sup>11</sup> Ticknor, 359.

potential perils of the United States. Prescott's mood, as evidenced by his literary memoranda and correspondence, reflected a similar darkening as the implications of U.S. expansionism become apparent between the early 1830s and the early 1850s.

Despite his protestations that he "dealt with political discussions only when they related to events and persons at least two centuries old,"<sup>12</sup> Prescott kept up-to-date with current events. In 1852 he wrote to an English friend

. . . A book has come out here lately which has made a good deal of noise, from the picture it gives of slavery in our Southern & Western States, by a lady, the wife of a Calvinist clergyman, who lived many years among these people. I have myself read rather more than a hundred pages, & found it very interesting—and I think you will find it difficult to read it with a dry eye.<sup>13</sup>

That he was moved by the injustices of slavery depicted in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did not make him an abolitionist. But even as he was writing his history of Peru in the mid-1840s, he betrayed a growing restlessness about the failure of the U.S. to address the expansion of slavery. As he charted the career of the Spanish empire in America, with its absorption of land and its effacing of native populations, his histories reflected a growing distress about the path trod by his own country.

Prescott can even be understood as a personification of the unwillingness of the Whig party to confront the issue of slavery head on, particularly as such reticence became increasingly difficult in the 1850s.<sup>14</sup> His brooding disenchantment with the mechanics of

---

<sup>12</sup> The quote is a paraphrase of Prescott from by his friend George Ticknor in his 1864 biography. (Ticknor, *Life of William Hickling Prescott*, 335.)

<sup>13</sup> William Hickling Prescott to Lady Mary Lyell, 12 May 1852, William Hickling Prescott Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. The letter goes on, "It gives a lively picture of our lawless manner in the Far West, and though there is a good deal too much negro talk in the volumes, I suppose both you & your mother, as well as your brother—now that he is an ex-minister—may read them with interest.—You know you belong to the Abolitionist party."

<sup>14</sup> The failure of the Whig Party to take a stand on slavery contributed to its collapse, but was not solely responsible for it. It was similarly hobbled by its inability to resolve the tensions between immigrant Catholics and native Protestants. See David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1976), 225-65.

conquest and the ability of slave power to withstand opposition surface forthrightly in his work between 1843 and 1847—but not so forthrightly that they troubled readers with opposing political views. His graceful, seductive prose allows his critiques of contemporary slavery to be overlooked.

A final irony is that just as Prescott wrote at a particular moment when the United States seemed to be fulfilling the destiny anticipated by its earliest explorers and, more troublingly, repeating some of their errors, his reading audience interpreted his work in the evolving climate of the breathless Second Conquest of Mexico, finding in his history precedents that he himself would not have sought. They ignored the devotion to “principle” espoused by the *conquistadores* and identified too readily with their quest for plunder. But Prescott’s readers also cultivated some of his tolerance and argued, in the sense of the word most gratifying to historians, with some of his conclusions.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans have become conversant with the history of the Spanish in America through William Hickling Prescott’s masterpiece, *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843), and its successor, *The History of the Conquest of Peru* (1847).<sup>15</sup> In the journal *Hispania*, John E. Eipper credits Prescott with legitimating the study of colonial Latin America in the U.S. Academy and for identifying the central texts in its canon.<sup>16</sup> In a 2009 edition of selections from Prescott, J.H. Elliott acknowledges Prescott’s limitations—over many of which he had no control—but concludes he turned many of them into sources of strength, “reducing the story to an epic drama with poetic

---

<sup>15</sup> During his lifetime, Prescott took his success to the bank. C. Harvey Gardiner estimates that he grossed \$100,000 from his books during his lifetime. (C. Harvey Gardiner, *Prescott and His Publishers* [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959], 243. Gardiner also speculates that the sale of four thousand copies of *Mexico* between its debut in December 1843 and April 1844 “possibly represented the largest sale of an historical work in the United States in an interval of four months.” (C. Harvey Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott: A Biography* [Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1969], 214.)

<sup>16</sup> John E. Eipper, “The Canonizer De-Canonized: The Case of William H. Prescott,” *Hispania* 83, no. 3 (September 2000): 416, 423.

and melancholy overtones, [and making] it unforgettable for generations of readers.”<sup>17</sup>

The flowery prose can seem overblown today—all of “Prescott’s forests have a tendency to be ‘verdant’ rather than green”—but his work has an undeniable dramatic power and visual impact.<sup>18</sup>

Although Prescott’s histories are quintessential products of their time, they are still in print. He anticipates trends in history that would not fully develop for another century: long before the social history of the 1960s and ‘70s, he attempted to include the common people as agents in his narrative.<sup>19</sup> Though lacking the cliometrical tools that attempt to tell the story of voiceless groups, he created space on his stage for Indians and women.<sup>20</sup> He never heard of the cultural turn later in the twentieth century, but he attempted to include literature as evidence (“Could not the war of Granada be much vivified by drawing the popular opinions, attachments, sufferings &c, &c of the Moors, from the old ballads? Poetry itself becomes unexceptional testimony in regard to these circumstances.”<sup>21</sup>) Like an environmental historian, he considered the role of diseases like malaria and smallpox in the Conquest;<sup>22</sup> he lamented the exploitive impact of

---

<sup>17</sup> J.H. Elliott, “An Epic in Prose,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 31 July 2009, 15. This article is an edited version of Elliott’s introduction to W.H. Prescott’s *History of the Conquest of Mexico*.

<sup>18</sup> Elliott, 15.

<sup>19</sup> David Levin argues that all the Romantic historians “agreed on the vitality of the middle class, on defining progress as movement toward popular liberty.” The role of great men was to embody the People. (David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959], 49). See for example William Hickling Prescott, *The History of the Conquest of Mexico and The History of the Conquest of Peru* (New York: The Modern Library, 1936 [1843 and 1847]), 369.

<sup>20</sup> The first books of *The Conquest of Mexico* and *The Conquest of Peru* are entirely devoted to surveys of the native civilizations at the time of the Conquest. Prescott even gives Montezuma an internal monologue in *Mexico*, 289. He indicates that Sahagun, his best source for the perspective of the Aztecs, ends his narrative before Prescott is finished with his history (Prescott, *Mexico*, 619). For the role of Spanish women in the Conquest, see *Mexico*, 584. For the role of Indian women, see *Mexico*, 593.

<sup>21</sup> From Prescott’s *Literary Memoranda*, quoted in Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 104.

<sup>22</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 164, 212, 482.

colonizers on the well-husbanded environment of the natives.<sup>23</sup> And as John E. Eipper notes, his self-conscious deployment of sources—footnotes at the bottom of the page offering contending interpretations, biographies of his predecessors set off in agate type at the end of chapters testifying to their subjectivity—“create a parallel narrative which enters into a dialogic relationship with the main text—in effect, metahistory deconstructs history.”<sup>24</sup>

Through a past overgrown with tall tales and dubious evidence, Prescott is the ideal guide: broadly knowledgeable, generous, self-assured. The grandson of a hero of the American Revolution and the son of a judge, he grew up knowing security and comfort. His confidence is clearly born of privilege; his Back-Bay Boston breeding and Harvard education seep through every syllable. He is a gentleman accustomed to being listened to and taken seriously; there is none of the pleading self importance that sometimes creeps into the writings of William Gilmore Simms, for instance. Yet for all Prescott’s *noblesse oblige*, he displays no smugness. Prescott assumes his readership shares with him a receptive rationality, an absence of prejudice or superstition. While it is true that he writes with a kind of omniscience that presumes that there is no higher type of man than a Boston Brahmin, he makes clear that he will welcome all into his library, though he may reserve the perusal of the rarest manuscripts and the consumption of the oldest sherry for men of his own class.

---

<sup>23</sup> “. . . [M]any a llama was destroyed solely for the sake of the brains,—a dainty morsel, much coveted by the Spaniards. So reckless was the spirit of destruction, says Ondegardo, the wise governor of Cuzco, that in four years more of these animals perished than in four hundred, in the times of the Incas. The flocks, once so numerous over the broad table-lands, were now thinned to a scanty number, that sought shelter in the fastnesses of the Andes. The poor Indian, without food, without the warm fleece which furnished him a defense against the cold, now wandered half-starved and naked over the plateau.” Prescott, *Peru*, 1121.

<sup>24</sup> Eipper, 419.

The reality of William Hickling Prescott is a bit more nuanced. The easy grace with which he writes, the wealth of sources he cites almost casually, betray the crabbed labor that went into the composition of his work, for William Hickling Prescott suffered from a serious visual impairment. Nearly losing sight in one eye after being struck by a crust of bread in a Harvard food fight in 1813, he experienced compromised vision for the rest of his life.<sup>25</sup> (One of the doctors he consulted was John Collins Warren, the amateur archaeologist whose pioneering studies of skulls linked the Mound Builders to the aborigines of Peru.<sup>26</sup>) He depended on a series of hired and volunteer secretaries who read aloud to him and took notes. To write, he employed a device called a noctograph, a frame strung with wires running in parallel lines and placed over a sheet of carbon paper.

His biographer C. Harvey Gardiner insists that Prescott's vision problems form a compelling legend, but the actual dragon he had to slay was not blindness but indolence and surrender to social temptations.<sup>27</sup> Although his biography is studded with references that are code for a specific kind of privilege—a grandfather in the consular service, membership in Harvard's Porcellian Club, summers at Nahant—he lived a life of rigorous discipline. As with John Milton, the blind poet who undertook the similarly ambitious task of writing a Christian epic, the breadth of knowledge he commanded and the felicity of expression of which he was capable were achieved through steady Puritan exertion.

---

<sup>25</sup> "Prescott's vision fluctuated, but not as some writers suggest. Back and forth, across the years, William's sight generally ranged from good to fair to poor, not for poor to nonexistent. Sentimentalists, prostrating themselves before man's conquest of physical adversity, have commonly selected, as though it were the only evidence, that which exaggerates Prescott's problem with his vision." (Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 86.)

<sup>26</sup> See Edward C. Atwater, M.D., "William Hickling Prescott, 1796–1859 — An Early Report of Iritis with Arthritis," *New England Journal of Medicine* 275 (1966): 1228-1232.

<sup>27</sup> "Drinker of wine, taker of snuff, attender of Club, patron of suppers, dinners, and the theater, player of cards and chess, he remained a gay young blade." (Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 60.)

Why would a historian of such a background choose as his subject the fanatical, superstitious Spanish of the era of the Conquest? Presumably not for any feeling of empathy or identification: as Peter Novick said about historians generally, in a remark that could serve as the epigram for this entire dissertation, “what one was defining oneself against was as critical for self-identification as any positive model.”<sup>28</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, who hailed from a background no less privileged than Prescott’s, suggested that what motivated Prescott was the desire for the approbation of European scholars, who would scarcely glance at history written by an American unless it showed a thorough knowledge of ancient and modern languages and drew heavily upon European sources.<sup>29</sup>

But from another perspective, Prescott selected the ideal subject for his scholarship. In his masterpiece, *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*, he partakes of the ambition and audacity of his subject, Hernan Cortes. Both *conquistador* and historian, handicapped by seemingly formidable limitations, pressed on in their quest to explore, to subdue, and ultimately to control. Both attempted something relatively untried—respectively overcoming a nonwestern empire and writing a scrupulously researched, psychologically nuanced history from an American perspective—and, working against seemingly impossible odds, both succeeded. Cortes had few resources and fewer men; Prescott was physically incapacitated and easily distracted. But Cortes redefined conquest just as Prescott revolutionized historiography. And the object of both

---

<sup>28</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 44. Quoted in John Ernest, “Reading the Romantic Past: William H. Prescott’s *History of the Conquest of Mexico*,” *American Literary History* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 232.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, Introduction, William Hickling Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Peru* (New York: The Heritage Press, 1957), xii.

men was similarly parallel: proprietorship and possession. Later encomiums of Prescott's achievement acknowledge his goal of conquest, even when they do so unconsciously. In a foreword to an annotated bibliography of Prescott imprints prepared for the Library of Congress in honor of the centennial of Prescott's death in 1859, Howard Cline, Director of the Hispanic Foundation, called Prescott "a national author whose writings in the middle of the nineteenth century formed a significant part of the expanding intellectual frontiers of the United States."<sup>30</sup> Prescott himself had a distaste for Manifest Destiny, but he practiced its intellectual equivalent.

The past of the Spanish and the Aztecs proved an ideal subject for a romantic historian for the same reason it did for historical romancers: it was studded with extraordinary situations and larger-than-life characters. In contrast, the Puritans of Plymouth and the junior entrepreneurs of Jamestown were dishwater dull. Even though orators like Daniel Webster and Rufus Choate called for epics that would display the romance of colonial New England, Massachusetts's quintessential romantic historian looked elsewhere. As Harry Thurston Peck wrote in a 1926 analysis that could almost have been published a hundred years earlier, "petty skirmishes with Indians, a few farmers defending a rustic bridge, and a somewhat discordant gathering of planters, country lawyers, and drab-clad tradesmen held few suggestions of the picturesque and, to most minds, little that was significant to the student of politics and institutional history."<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Howard Cline, "Foreword," *William Hickling Prescott: An Annotated Bibliography of Published Works* (Washington, D.C.: The Hispanic Foundation, Library of Congress, 1958), iii.

<sup>31</sup> Harry Thurston Peck, *William Hickling Prescott* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), 11.

Prescott noted his intention of writing the history of the “Spanish subject” on January 19, 1826,<sup>32</sup> only a month after John Quincy Adams made his *faux pas* with the announcement of the forthcoming Panama Congress. *The History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella* did not appear in print until more than ten years later, in 1837. Next Prescott turned to *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* in 1843 and *The History of the Conquest of Peru* in 1847. He was at work on a history of the reign of Spain’s Philip II when he died in 1859. His purpose, announced unapologetically and with great frequency, was to recover the history of the Spanish in Spain and America from their original chroniclers, whose writing was marred by silly superstition and naked political expediency. Despite his visual impairment and inability to travel, he would sift the wheat from the chaff by the most scrupulous research, procuring and comparing original sources, many of which he ordered copied from archives in Spain and Latin America.

One of the salient themes of his first effort, *The History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella* of 1837, is the role of nationalism in the emergence of Spain as a world power. A formidable enemy helped forge national purpose: the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon united not only through the marriage of their sovereigns but also through conflict with their common enemy, the Moors. “Hence the national character became exalted by a religious fervor, which in later days, alas! settled into a fierce fanaticism.”<sup>33</sup> But Prescott was similarly aware of the role of culture. As important in fostering a sense of patriotism, according to Prescott, was the popular tradition of “traditional minstrelsy” like the epic *El Cid*, which provided a superhero who stirred the imagination of “common

---

<sup>32</sup> So he noted in his diary. A penciled notation beside the entry and dated May 1847 comments, “A fortunate choice.” William Hickling Prescott, “Literary Memorandum,” 1820-1858, 19 January 1826, William Hickling Prescott Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

<sup>33</sup> Prescott, *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, The Catholic, of Spain*, I (London: Richard Bentley, 1842), 12.

people” to national identification.<sup>34</sup> The valorization of both literature and non-elite consumers of it strikes a democratic note in Prescott’s often Whiggish analysis.

Although today *Ferdinand and Isabella* remains in an obscure corner of the historiography, in the shadow cast by *The Conquest of Mexico*, the boldness of an American tackling a European subject with such evident erudition and sensitivity secured his reputation in Europe, where he was forever associated with his first effort. (When Prescott was presented to Queen Victoria in 1850, it was as the author of *Ferdinand and Isabella*.<sup>35</sup>) His friend George Ticknor made sure copies of the American treatment of the Spanish subject were placed in the hands of European authorities.<sup>36</sup>

But it was *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843) that made Prescott’s reputation timeless. Prescott divided *The Conquest of Mexico* into seven books, the concluding remarks of each book except the last devoted to discussion of the Spanish historians and chroniclers who were his predecessors. Wherever possible, Prescott consulted original sources, chiefly some eight thousand folio pages from the Royal Academy of History at Madrid and the archives of the Indies at Seville, and additional materials from numerous private collections.<sup>37</sup> His footnotes are filled with tales of sources lost for centuries and miraculously recovered.<sup>38</sup> He learned how to interpret texts

---

<sup>34</sup> Prescott, *Ferdinand and Isabella* I, 12-13.

<sup>35</sup> Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 304.

<sup>36</sup> Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 142. “Had Williams’s first title been his *Conquest of Mexico*, instead of *Ferdinand and Isabella*, his initial British reception, like that later accorded Francis Parkman’s first book, might have bordered on disaster.”

<sup>37</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 3-4.

<sup>38</sup> See for example his account of the career of the researches of Bernardino de Sahagun, which were composed as answers to his queries by Tezcucan natives writing in hieroglyphics, translated (by three sets of translators) into “the Mexican tongue,” and then translated by Sahagun himself into Spanish in the late sixteenth century. His work was then lost for two centuries, only to be recovered in the late 1700s. (Prescott, *Mexico*, 52-3.)

related to the pre-Columbian past whose “dark and doubtful nature”<sup>39</sup> still mystify scholars, reports of early missionaries like Torquemada displaying “a full measure of the bigotry which belonged to his order at that period,”<sup>40</sup> and accounts of later *criollos* like Clavigero whose “national zeal”<sup>41</sup> colored their reliability. He consulted tiresome annals where occasional gems of historical value lay buried under piles of repetitive trivia,<sup>42</sup> and reports of the fantastic and marvelous that might nonetheless contain an occasional fact. He waded through political dispatches that burnished the reputation of the conquerors, flattered the interests of the powerful, minimized the outrages committed against the subjugated.

Yet Prescott does not betray despair at the inherent frustrations of his task. Rather, without false modesty he appears quietly confident that he has “the philosophic spirit fitted for calmly weighing [their] doubts and difficulties.”<sup>43</sup> He credits the age in which he lives with a more enlightened perspective and a “purer” Christianity,<sup>44</sup> but he duly acknowledges the pioneering reformist impulse of Las Casas,<sup>45</sup> the fierce intellect and worldly wisdom of Peter Martyr,<sup>46</sup> the unimaginative but not unreliable loyalty of Bernal Diaz.<sup>47</sup> As far as he is concerned, contradictions and lacunae do not present impossible obstacles. A patient, perceptive, and disinterested mind can disentangle confused chronology, sort the important from the unimportant, distill the essence

---

<sup>39</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 34.

<sup>41</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 35.

<sup>42</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 309.

<sup>43</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 92. “Boturini was eminently qualified, by his enthusiasm and perseverance, for collecting the materials necessary to illustrate the antiquities of the country. It requires a more highly gifted mind to avail itself of them,” notes Prescott.

<sup>44</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 685.

<sup>45</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 203-9.

<sup>46</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 311.

<sup>47</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 503-5.

contained within the exaggeration. Prescott compares, weighs, interprets, and where necessary fills gaps with guesswork—but always admits when he is doing so.

In addition to this wealth of primary material, two major secondary accounts of the Conquest in English preceded Prescott's effort on Mexico. From these he hoped to set himself apart with more memorable prose and more rigorous accuracy. The first precedent was Scottish historian William Robertson's ponderous 1777 *History of America*, which was reverently regarded on both sides of the Atlantic. It was seldom referred to without being lauded for its exacting scholarship. Its success at leaping off the page and lodging in the memory, however, is perhaps best measured by its famous misquotation in John Keats' 1816 sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer." Keats compares the epiphany of reading George Chapman's supple, lively rendering of Homer's poetry to the glimpse of a new world:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.<sup>48</sup>

The problem was that it was Balboa, not Cortes, who first spied the South Sea, and the twenty-one year old Keats, who knew the Conquest from Robertson's history, had confused the two explorers who figure in his account.<sup>49</sup> In a poem that celebrates the lightning-like illumination of encountering new insights through reading, Keats's mistake is particularly damning. The scene of Balboa's great discovery to which Keats alludes

---

<sup>48</sup> John Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer." My thanks to Lenny Picker for calling this poem to my attention.

<sup>49</sup> Daniel P. Watkins, *Keats's Poetry and the Politics of the Imagination*, (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), 27-8.

overflows with both wonder and one-upsmanship, but Robertson's treatment is relatively straightforward:

When, with infinite toil, they had climbed up the greater part of that steep ascent, Balboa commanded his men to halt, and advanced alone to the summit, that he might be the first who should enjoy a spectacle which he had so long desired. As soon as he beheld the South sea stretching in endless prospect below him, he fell on his knees, and, lifting up his hands to heaven, returned thanks to God, who had conducted him to a discovery so beneficial to his country, and so honorable to himself. His followers, observing his transports of joy, rushed forward to join in his wonder, exultation, and gratitude.<sup>50</sup>

Erring in the opposite extreme was the American predecessor for Prescott's history of the Spanish Conquest, Washington Irving's 1828 *History of the Life and Voyages of Columbus* and its sequel, the 1831 *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus*. Irving, already well known (if not well compensated) for his *Sketch Book* and *Knickerbocker's History of New York*, wrote his account of the European encounter with America while employed as a translator with the American Legation in Madrid. Merry and readable, *Columbus* is as unreliable as *The Conquest of Mexico* is scrupulous. To Irving all sources were equal.<sup>51</sup> He never hesitated to retail an anecdote, not matter how farfetched or thinly supported by evidence, as long as it was engaging.<sup>52</sup> In contrast to Robertson's spare prose, Irving's text drips adjectives. Superlatives and hyperbole lay always at the top of his toolbox. In his hands, Balboa's discovery of the Pacific lacks for no descriptive detail:

---

<sup>50</sup> William Robertson, *The History of America*, (Paris: Baudry at the Foreign Library, 1828), 108.

<sup>51</sup> Claudia L. Bushman, *America Discovers Columbus: How an Italian Explorer became an American Hero* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1992), 110-112.

<sup>52</sup> Irving for example repeats the legend of Columbus and the egg, in which, asked to justify the importance of his voyage, Columbus asked his interrogators to make an egg stand on end. When they failed, he flattened one end of the egg by tapping it on the table, showing that simple solutions are not always obvious. Irving does admit the "anecdote" has "been condemned as trivial," but its popularity is "proof of its merit." (Washington Irving, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* [Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981], 165, n.)

Upon this [bald summit of the mountain] Vasco Nunez commanded his followers to halt, and that no man should stir from his place. Then, with a palpitating heart, he ascended alone the bare mountain top. On reaching the summit, the long-desired prospect burst upon his view. It was as if a new world were unfolded to him, separated from all hitherto known by this mighty barrier of mountains. Below him extended a vast chaos of rock and forest, and green Savannahs and wandering streams, while at a distance the waters of the promised ocean glittered in the morning sun.<sup>53</sup>

Not without justification did one critic dismiss Irving's work as "an enchanted falsehood," although, significantly, this criticism was published in 1856, long after Prescott forged a new way of writing about the Conquest.<sup>54</sup>

Prescott steered his bark gracefully between these two extremes, Robertson's annotated restraint and Irving's entertaining fancy. He produced texts at once dazzling in their erudition and accessible for their compelling psychological insights, pellucid descriptions, breathtaking adventure. At the same time, he told his story with copious citations and lengthy descriptions of the sources he consulted.

Yet the history Prescott wrote, for all its piled-up evidence, dutiful notes, and shimmering nineteenth-century prose, looks nothing like history written today. Prescott presumes to sift the thoughts of his characters and does not hesitate to ascribe to them a variety of motivations that make them memorable, that humanize them—but at the same time that plumb their consciousness without apology. Here is his portrait of the embarrassment of Velasquez, governor of Hispaniola, at his failure to prevent Hernan Cortes from setting out on his voyage of conquest:

Velasquez rode back to his house to digest his chagrin as he best might; satisfied, probably, that he had made at least two blunders; one in appointing Cortes to the command,—the other in attempting to deprive

---

<sup>53</sup> Washington Irving, *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 111.

<sup>54</sup> Horace Binney Wallace, *Literary Criticism and Other Papers*, quoted in John Harmon McElroy, Introduction, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, lxxxix.

him of it. For, if it be true, that by giving our confidence by halves, we can scarcely hope to make a friend, it is equally true, that, by withdrawing it when given, we shall make an enemy.<sup>55</sup>

Prescott sounds less like a historian here than—a novelist. He himself was conscious of this strategy. “I must make the mere narrative very interesting,” he noted to himself in his diary November 3, 1828 while plotting out *Ferdinand and Isabella*. “This is to be done by selecting facts that have novelty & interest, & such as will particularly display the character of the actors. Indeed it is to this dramatic effect given to history that it owes its principal charm.”<sup>56</sup> In Prescott’s prose, historical figures scheme and worry and brood and dream; they suffer remorse and anticipate pleasure exactly like the fictional creations of William Gilmore Simms or Robert Montgomery Bird.

The fiction-writer’s approach also surfaces in *The Conquest of Mexico*, which can be analyzed from the perspective of the typical courtship plot of boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl—with the girl in this case being Mexico. The manner in which the events are described, from the first encounter to the “battles and negotiations . . . retreat . . . rally and final siege,”<sup>57</sup> apply as well to sexual as territorial conquests. But in this context the siege and surrender look more like rape than romance. The boy-loses-girl section of *The Conquest of Mexico* corresponds to the *Noche Triste*, during which, while Cortes is away from the city, the zeal of the soldiers to secure their conquest leads to a reaction from the Indians, who drive them out. The final surrender of Tenochtitlan requires its destruction, so that by the end of the Spanish occupation of the city scarcely one stone is left standing on another, and the Aztecs are decimated by famine and

---

<sup>55</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 140.

<sup>56</sup> William Hickling Prescott, “Literary Memorandum,” 1820-1858, 3 November 1828, William Hickling Prescott Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

<sup>57</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 727.

disease. No marriage in the novelistic vein concludes the story: the knowledge and possession of the Spanish is achieved at the price of the horrific violation of the Aztecs.

As a matter of fact, Prescott was not a novice in the writing of fiction: in the early 1820s he and some friends from his Harvard days had released four issues of a magazine called *The Clubroom* under Prescott's editorship to which he contributed a story called "Calais."<sup>58</sup> He did not dismiss the effects of fiction. "I cannot make my history profound. I have neither the knowledge or talent for this. I can make it entertaining," he wrote in his diary in 1830.<sup>59</sup> Like the great nineteenth-century novelists, Prescott set up his scenes, unspooled his narrative, explored the psychology of his characters, and drew out great lessons. Indeed, he traveled much further back in literary history to create his history, composing what the romancers of the time rightly called "an epic in prose:" his Cortes is pious Aeneas and wily Ulysses in one.

Prescott clearly took his goal of "an epic in prose" seriously; he employed such devices as the epic simile and epic catalogue and divided his work into a series of books.<sup>60</sup> His limited eyesight even led him to resort to the technique of the ancient epic poets, that of declaiming his work aloud before it was written down. "Never take up my pen until I have travelled over the subject so often as to be able to write almost from

---

<sup>58</sup> Fred Lewis Pattee, *The Development of the American Short Story: An Historical Survey* (New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1923). Prescott then mentioned the effort in a review article called "Essay Writing" that appeared in *The North American Review* in April 1822. Pattee unequivocally credits Washington Irving, the author of *The Sketchbook*, with being the innovator of the first American short story. Irving, of course, wrote early histories of the Conquest (1828ff) upon which William Gilmore Simms built his romances and against which Prescott wrote his much more nuanced *Conquest of Mexico* and *Conquest of Peru*.

<sup>59</sup> William Hickling Prescott, "Literary Memorandum," 1820-1858, 17 May 1830, William Hickling Prescott Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

<sup>60</sup> For example, see the simile in Prescott, *Mexico*, 438. See the catalogue of Cortes' weapons and war materiel, *Mexico*, 549.

memory, not from invention as I go along,” he instructed himself in 1829.<sup>61</sup> This discipline gives his history a sonorous authority and a felicitous prose style.

Despite his devotion to primary sources, fiction and history were not for Prescott such dissimilar disciplines. A great mania for classification defined the Enlightenment and its aftermath, but the categories were not always defined as they are today. William Gilmore Simms, for example, insisted on the significant differences between two different varieties of fiction (“the standards of [romance] are as different from those of the novel, as its characteristics are,” he chided a critic who had judged his *The Damsel of Darien* for its improbabilities<sup>62</sup>). On the other hand, Simms insisted in a lecture to the Historical Society of the State of Georgia, the true historian was an artist, using all the materials of literature for his work. But he was not hindered by preoccupation with pedestrian facts.

. . . It is really of very little importance to mankind, whether he is absolutely correct in all his conjectures or assertions, whether his theory be true or false, or whether he rightly determines upon the actor or the scene. . . .

. . . We care not so much for the intrinsic truth of history, as for the great moral truths, which, drawn from such sources, induce excellence in the student.

. . . That moral truth, educed by thought from conjecture, is one wholly independent of details.<sup>63</sup>

What made Prescott’s work so extraordinary was his ability to evoke the transcendent without sacrificing the “absolutely correct.” He wrote a national myth with footnotes. Like Cortes on his journey to the heart of Mexico, he proceeded without a

---

<sup>61</sup> Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 103.

<sup>62</sup> William Gilmore Simms to James Lawson, 27 December 1839, *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, edited by Mary C. Simms Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, T.C. Duncan Eaves (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952), 153. Simms’s argument is that the romance concerns the fantastic and sublime; it is not to be judged according to the standards of the novel, which concerns itself with the plausible and the everyday.

<sup>63</sup> William Gilmore Simms, “The Epochs and Events of American History, as Suited to the Purposes of Art in Fiction,” *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History, and Fiction* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 26, 27.

map, relying only on mumbled directions and half-hidden hieroglyphics. His sources were like Cortes's Indian guides, his predecessors as fallible as the medieval fairy tales to which Cortes listened, but out of them he constructed a model for others to imitate; he conquered—indeed, defined—a discipline as Cortes conquered an empire.

From its opening book, Prescott's *The Conquest of Mexico* is clearly doing something new. Where Robertson began with the "progress of navigation among the ancients" and Irving with the "birth, parentage, and early life of Columbus," Prescott sets his scene not with Cortes departing for the New World but with the New World and its inhabitants. Long before the conventions of ethnohistory were worked out, assembling the pre-Columbian history of the natives of Mexico was no mean task. (Casting about for a term for what he was doing, Prescott wrote that his opening book on indigenous civilizations was "occupied with the antiquities and origin of a nation, as somewhat the character of a *philosophic* theme."<sup>64</sup>) He estimated that half of the labor he expended to complete the book was consumed in the sections on the natives and their origins, which make up only about a sixth part of the whole.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless he accounted for his decision to begin with the people of Mexico with a dignity and respect that should be acknowledged:

Although the subject of the work is, properly, only the Conquest of Mexico, I have prepared the way for it by such a view of the Civilization of the ancient Mexicans, as might acquaint the reader with the character of this extraordinary race, and enable him to understand the difficulties which the Spaniards had to encounter in their subjugation.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 5. On the other hand, in the introduction to a 1934 abridgement for the Junior Literary Guild, Carl Van Doren blithely justifies the excising of the material about the pre-Columbian Indian civilizations: "Although Prescott put as much into his account of Aztec life and customs as anybody in his day knew or could know, so much as since been discovered about them that his first part is no longer so valuable as it was." (Carl Van Doren, Introduction to William H. Prescott, *The Conquest of Mexico* [New York: The Book League of America, 1934], xiii.)

<sup>66</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 5.

But one may entertain the suspicion that he could be as evenhanded as he was about the native Mexicans because he had no particularly elevated opinion of their Christian conquerors. His New England assumptions are never far below the surface. Here, for example, is Prescott's paean to the success of Catholic evangelization, which manages to heap scorn on both Catholic and native religion at once:

The Roman Catholic communion has, it must be admitted, some decided advantages over the Protestant, for the purposes of proselytism. The dazzling pomp of its service and its touching appeal to the sensibilities affect the imagination of the rude child of nature much more powerfully than the cold abstractions of Protestantism, which, addressed to the reason, demand a degree of refinement and mental culture in the audience to comprehend them.<sup>67</sup>

Yet the Catholic Church, in Prescott's hands, manages to come off surprisingly well. That the principal aim of the Conquest of Mexico was the conversion of sinners Prescott never questions: he allows the reader to doubt the strategies employed in achieving this end and the effectiveness of the process, but never the sincerity of the *conquistadores*. According to Prescott, they took seriously their mission to save the heathen from damnation. "However much it may have been debased by temporal motives and mixed up with worldly considerations of ambition and avarice, it was still active in the mind of the Christian conqueror," he writes.<sup>68</sup> Cortes, it is true, tries to collect souls the way a Casanova takes lovers. No sooner does he arrive in a new town than he heads for the nearest temple, from which the idols must be stripped. But his confessor Father Olmedo counsels a more deliberate method, preparing the soil in which

---

<sup>67</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 159.

<sup>68</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 276. He credits the Puritans with attempting to legalize their conquest through legitimate purchase, but casts doubt on the ultimate Protestant justification of higher claims based on cultivation. "Yet it may be thought, as far as improvement of the soil is concerned, that this argument would afford us but an indifferent tenure for much of our own unoccupied and uncultivated territory, far exceeding what is demanded for our present or prospective support." Ibid, n. 11.

the seed of faith will be planted. The Church has many such gentle and patient missionaries, Prescott adds kindly.<sup>69</sup> Martin John Spalding (1810-1872), a Catholic priest who became Archbishop of Baltimore, had faulted Prescott for his treatment of the Inquisition in *Ferdinand and Isabella*,<sup>70</sup> but was mollified by *The Conquest of Mexico*. While still turning up instances of anti-Catholicism, Spalding vouched for *Mexico* as “a truly splendid work on a splendid subject.” Spalding found an extenuating explanation for Prescott’s lapses: “Perhaps, in composing his history, he had also an eye to business, and cast a shrewd glance at the religious atmosphere breathed by those for whom it was written.”<sup>71</sup>

In private, Prescott was seemingly amused that Catholic readers and translators could not decide if he was a generous advocate or an irrecoverable heretic.<sup>72</sup> But he protested strongly against the charge that he expressed an anti-Catholic bias. Forwarded a notice from the *Catholic Review* by Brantz Mayer, he wrote, “I shall not plead guilty to

---

<sup>69</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 217. Prescott goes on to contrast this painstaking method with the more vigorous and cruel methods of Islam: his tolerance was unfortunately not all-embracing.

<sup>70</sup> M.J. Spalding, D.D., *Miscellanea, Comprising Reviews, Lectures, and Essays, on Historical, Theological, and Miscellaneous Subjects*, Volume I (Baltimore: John Murphy & Company, 1895). 215. This review of *Ferdinand and Isabella* is undated, but evidently written shortly after the publication of the fifth edition in 1839, which the review references.

<sup>71</sup> Spalding, 250; 258.

<sup>72</sup> “I have had the satisfaction of being thanked by more than one Roman Catholic for not forcing my Protestantism more strongly on the reader. Yet the Baltimore journal thinks me a blasphemer, and the Dublin Review prays in a gentler tone ‘for my conversion from spiritual error.’ So I suppose there must be two sides to it, and that I am not quite so liberal as I thought I was.” (Prescott to Brantz Mayer, 24 July 1844, *The Papers of William Hickling Prescott, 1833-1847*, Transcribed and Edited by C. Harvey Gardiner [Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1964], 219.) “[I]t is a great satisfaction to me to learn that translations of my History are in progress in your capital, though if a prospectus which I met with in a Cuban paper is carried out, there is some metamorphosis made by the translators in my religious sentiments, and I am to talk like a good son of the Pope! I think in that case I have a right to have my Protestant heresies at least preserved in a Note at the bottom of the page in the original English.” (Prescott to Lucas Alamán, 30 March 1845, *The Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott, 1833-1847*, Transcribed and Edited by Roger Wolcott [Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925], 533.) “It is true you think I savour something of the old Puritan acid in my anti-Catholic strictures. A Roman Catholic Dublin review speaks of it as doubtful from my writings whether I am Catholic or Protestant. A Baltimore Catholic journal condemns me as a deist. The Madrid translator of *Ferdinand and Isabella* (Rector of the University of Madrid) condemns me for my hostility to the Inquisition. So I think between them all I may pass for a very liberal Christian.” (Prescott to Lucas Alamán, 30 March 1846, *Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott*, 583.)

the charge of *bigotry*. Universal toleration has always been my creed, and I have strictly endeavoured to make myself one of the age and nation of which I wrote.”<sup>73</sup>

Indeed, Prescott insists on a sort of indulgence even for Cortes’s most indefensible behavior. Prescott refuses to find anything intrinsically more inhumane in the behavior of the Spaniards than “the most polished nations of our time; by the British at Badajoz, for example,—at Taragona, and a hundred other places by the French.” The Spanish actions were certainly not worse for being motivated by religious fanaticism.

. . . It is far from my intention to vindicate the cruel deeds of the old Conquerors. Let them lie heavy on their heads. They were an iron race, who periled life and fortune in the cause; and, as they made little account of danger and suffering for themselves, they had little sympathy to spare for their unfortunate enemies. But, to judge them fairly, we must not do it by the lights of our own age. We must carry ourselves back to theirs, and take the point of view afforded by the civilization of their time. Thus only can we arrive at impartial criticism in reviewing the generations that are past. We must extend to them the same justice which we shall have occasion to ask from Posterity, when, by the light of a higher civilization, it surveys the dark or doubtful passages in our own history, which hardly arrest the eye of the contemporary.<sup>74</sup>

David Levin, in his 1959 *History as Romantic Art*, read Prescott’s assurance of human progress as typical of the mid-nineteenth century confidence that human destiny spirals upward to the culmination of Unitarianism and democracy.<sup>75</sup> Yet Prescott’s faith is as characteristic of Whig historians as romantic ones. The present is more enlightened than the past, and the future will reach a brighter civilization yet. But there is sufficient shadow to make the thoughtful reader wonder to just what “dark and doubtful passages” of the nineteenth century Prescott alludes. The study of history can evidently not only teach forgiveness for the errors of the past, but also penitence for the sins of the present.

---

<sup>73</sup> Prescott to Brantz Mayer, 24 July 1844, *Papers of William Hickling Prescott* 219.

<sup>74</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 278.

<sup>75</sup> David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), 27ff.

Like the novelists who found in Latin American settings the liberation of discussing controversial topics, Prescott also used the context of the Conquest to raise views of slavery that might have offended some of his readers. Prescott was no abolitionist. In a letter to his wife from Washington in 1828, he referred to people of color with a racial epithet (and suggested Susan Prescott share the word with their daughter). “You can hardly open your eyes without seeing a score of them. They are so civil and attentive, however, that I begin to think better of slavery,” he added.<sup>76</sup>

But fifteen years later in *The Conquest of Mexico*, the light tone is gone, as he reflects on the effects of slavery upon the enslaved rather than upon the comfort and convenience of the master. The bondage he considers is that of the Indians, but the lesson is clear for those who will heed it. In fact, he goes out of his way to relate the past to the present. Having glorified the achievements of the pre-Columbian Aztecs in governing their empire, he anticipates the objections of readers who, having read about the inferiority of their descendants, will not believe the portrait he has sketched:

Those familiar with the modern Mexicans will find it difficult to conceive that the nation should ever have been capable of devising the enlightened polity which we have been considering. But they should remember that in the Mexicans of our day they see only a conquered race . . . The difference is not so great as between the ancient Greek, and his degenerate descendant, lounging among the masterpieces of art which he has scarcely taste enough to admire—speaking the language of those still more imperishable monuments of literature which he has scarcely capacity to comprehend. Yet he breathes the same atmosphere, is warmed by the same sun, nourished by the same scenes, as those who fell at Marathon, and won the trophies of Olympic Pisa. The same blood flows in his veins that flowed in theirs. But ages of tyranny have passed over him: he belongs to a conquered race.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> William Hickling Prescott to Susan Prescott, 21 April 1828, *Papers of William Hickling Prescott*, 57.

<sup>77</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 33-4.

In this extraordinary passage Prescott responds to those that suggest it is impossible to “forget” civilization.<sup>78</sup> Modern Indians, according to those who embraced the Mound Builder myth, could not be descended from the ancient aborigines. Similarly, according to proslavery thinkers judging by the condition of American slaves, Africa must have been always and everywhere in the savage state. The onward march of civilization could not be put in reverse. To these claims Prescott stood opposed. The example of Greece was shrewdly chosen. The outrage of white slavery there would inspire American sculptor Hiram Powers to carve *The Greek Slave*, the nineteenth century’s most famous statue, in 1844, a year after Prescott wrote *The Conquest of Mexico*. The effect of The Turkish conquest of Greece was a powerful instance of how quickly the benefits of civilization could be stripped away. The brutality and hopelessness of slavery would efface them fast enough.

In taking this position, Prescott echoes eighteenth-century thinkers like the Count de Buffon more than the increasingly essentialist theorists of his own day. Buffon had argued that animals, including those of the human family, can most definitely “degenerate” while remaining part of the same species: “Nothing can be a stronger proof that they belong to the same family, than the facility with which they unite to the common stock. The blood is different; but the germ is the same.”<sup>79</sup> Both climate and quality of food can cause degeneration of animals.<sup>80</sup> But in human beings, wrote Buffon, a third factor can produce this result: slavery. “[W]e will be astonished at the degree to which tyranny can degrade and disfigure Nature; we will perceive the marks of slavery,

---

<sup>78</sup> This is not the only spot where Prescott makes this observation. See his Appendix, *Mexico*, 712.

<sup>79</sup> Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon. *Natural History, General and Particular, by the Count de Buffon*, Translated into English by William Smellie (London: Printed for A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1791 [originally published in French, 1749-1778]), volume 7, 394.

<sup>80</sup> Buffon, 395-6.

and the prints of her chains; and we will find, that these wounds are deeper and more incurable, in proportion to their antiquity . . . ”<sup>81</sup>

Although there is no evidence that Prescott had this passage of Buffon in mind as he wrote *The Conquest of Mexico* (where he was scrupulous about footnotes), the coincidence of certain words and ideas is striking, as is the way the texts diverge. If anything, Prescott gives more precedence to slavery as the cause of degeneration. Where for Buffon “the blood is different,” among Prescott’s ancient and modern Greeks “the same blood flows.” While Buffon included climate as a cause of change, Prescott’s contemporary Greek slave “breathes the same atmosphere,” and “is warmed by the same sun” as his superior ancestor. For both writers it is “tyranny” that imprints the marks of degeneration.

Still more pointed comments about slavery, and the relation of sixteenth to nineteenth century slavery, come late in *The Conquest of Mexico*. In the ultimate, “biographical” section of the book, which treats the last days of Cortes, Prescott mentions this “remarkable” clause that Cortes inserted into his will:

‘It has long been a question, whether one can conscientiously hold property in Indian slaves. Since the point has not yet been determined, I enjoin it on my son Martin and his heirs, that they spare no pains to come to an exact knowledge of the truth; as a matter which deeply concerns the conscience of each of them, no less than mine.’<sup>82</sup>

Prescott could have let this quotation stand somewhat innocuously without explication; his Southern readers might have been mollified by the fact that Cortes wrote only about Indian servitude, although Prescott noted only five pages earlier that Cortes

---

<sup>81</sup> Buffon, 398.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Prescott, *Mexico*, 677.

had attempted to plant a colony in California with “*three hundred negro slaves,*”<sup>83</sup> and his will refrains from questioning the justice of African slavery. But Prescott insists on relating Cortes’ uneasy meditations on slavery in 1547 to the U.S. slavery debate three hundred years later. Stepping out of his consideration of the past, as he did previously when he appealed for a sophisticated analysis of pre-Reformation religious enthusiasm, Prescott delivers this measured, but still critical, take on slavery: “The state of opinion in respect to the great question of slavery, in the sixteenth century, at the commencement of the system, bears some resemblance to that which exists in our time, when we may hope it is approaching its conclusion.” He compares the Dominican reformer Las Casas to the most vociferous of the nineteenth century abolitionists, with the “great mass of proprietors” corresponding to slaveholders who merely sustain the *status quo*.

In one important respect, the condition of slavery, in the sixteenth century, differed materially from its condition in the nineteenth. In the former, the seeds of the evil, but lately sown, might have been, with comparatively little difficulty, eradicated. But in our time they have struck their roots deep into the social system, and cannot be rudely handled without shaking the very foundation of the political fabric. It is easy to conceive, that a man, who admits all the wretchedness of the institution and its wrong to humanity, may nevertheless hesitate to adopt a remedy, until he is satisfied that the remedy itself is not worse than the disease. That such a remedy will come with time, who can doubt, that has confidence in the ultimate prevalence of the right, and the progressive civilization of his species?<sup>84</sup>

Prescott is unnecessarily generous to slaveholders, who by 1843 were less willing to “admit all the wretchedness of the institution” than to claim for it benefits not only for society but for the slaves themselves. And his assurance that slavery will somehow sink under the weight of its own turpitude while civilization climbs triumphantly skyward sounds more like a relic of eighteenth century thought than the suspicions of his own age.

---

<sup>83</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 672. Italics original.

<sup>84</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 678.

But perhaps Prescott's predictions about slavery are informed by a Whiggish belief in progress. Prescott had all the confidence in the onward march of society common to the Whigs.

Though Prescott did not publicly champion the Whig Party, he had no very high opinion of Democrats (or democrats). Encountering them in the close quarters of a brig bound to visit his grandfather in the Azores in 1815, the nineteen-year-old Prescott had written home that he "banished *ennui* by battling with Democrats and bed-bugs, both of which thrive on board this vessel."<sup>85</sup> Thirty-two years later he sounds scarcely more sympathetic to democracy when in *The Conquest of Peru* he calls "the good of the people . . . a suspicious phrase, usually meaning the good of the individual."<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, if Prescott's Cortes, to whom Prescott *is* sympathetic, were an American politician, he would not be a Whig to the manor born; he would be a Democrat, more Andrew Jackson than John Quincy Adams. Cortes personifies the people's will when he is able to do so, presents his own decisions as the people's choice when necessary, and bows to the will of the people against his own better judgment when he cannot avoid it. Prescott describes how, late in the Conquest, Cortes surrendered to the popular insistence that he torture Montezuma's successor Guatemozin to discover concealed deposits of treasure, knowing that torture would not unseal the lips of the Aztec emperor and would only undermine Cortes's own moral authority. Although every inch a leader, Cortes never for an instant forgets that his authority is based on the support of the soldiers and the Indian allies of the Spanish: he governs with a combination of rough camaraderie and Olympian prerogative. He does not punish if he can persuade; he does not condemn the full battery

---

<sup>85</sup> Quoted by Morison, Introduction, William Hickling Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Peru* (New York: The Heritage Press, 1957), xiii-ix.

<sup>86</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 1129.

of malefactors if he can achieve the same effect through the censure of one prominent example. Cortes derives his power from a “happy union of authority and companionship,” indulging in “freedom and familiarity with his soldiers, [but] he never allowed it to interfere with their strict obedience.”<sup>87</sup>

Prescott’s Cortes does not need instruction in wringing sweetness out of adversity. The historian describes the terrible rout of the Spaniards and their expulsion from Tenochtilan in the magnificent Book V of *The Conquest of Mexico*. Montezuma having capitulated to the Spaniards, the Aztecs turn on him and the invaders with savage fury, cutting off their escape by destroying the causeways that separate the island city from the mainland. As the soldiers frantically try to flee, the Aztecs drive them to the canals, which are full of warriors in canoes. The greedy soldiers, having loaded themselves down with stolen gold, drown in agony. The treasure they hoped to win in the Conquest is sunk beneath the waves. Horses, guns, crossbows—everything that separates Spaniard from savage—is lost in the catastrophic retreat. Cortes escapes with a mere remnant of his army and their Indian allies, taking refuge at the top of a pyramid outside the city. Prescott imagines him still restless, wakeful, faced with the likelihood that the vast project he had undertaken lies in ruins.

Yet these agitating and gloomy reflections, which might have crushed a common mind, had no power over that of Cortés; or rather, they only served to renew his energies, and quicken his perceptions, as the war of the elements purifies and gives elasticity to the atmosphere. He looked with an unblenching [sic] eye on his past reverses; but, confident in his own resources, he saw a light through the gloom which others could not. Even in the shattered relics which lay around him, resembling in their haggard aspects and wild attire a horde of famished outlaws, he discerned the materials out of which to reconstruct his ruined fortunes. In the very hour of discomfiture and general despondency, there is no doubt that his heroic spirit was meditating

---

<sup>87</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 682.

the plan of operations which he afterwards pursued with such dauntless constancy.<sup>88</sup>

Cortes is never so resourceful as when he is reduced to calamity, as when he has nothing but “shattered relics” out of which to build an empire—for he retains his power as a leader. That power is in his words.

The soldiers want to retreat to the safety of the Spanish settlement on the Mexican coast, but Cortes persuades them instead to go back to Tenochtitlan and prevail. He has no money to pay them wages, but he promises them eternal glory. Their numbers are depleted, but he convinces the Aztecs’ enemies to join their number. Soldiers come from the governor of Cuba to arrest him for insubordination, but he convinces them to join his army. This is the way a nation is constructed, Prescott suggests: people hear a compelling story, and believe it is about them.

As the little army returns to Tenochtitlan, it encounters the Aztecs in far superior numbers on the field of Otompan. Cortes rallies his band with a desperate strategy, telling them to seek out the Aztec leaders and move in for the kill. He himself with his “eagle eye”<sup>89</sup> identifies a particularly important enemy commander, and dispatches him with such ferocity that the Aztec army collapses in panic and terror. Prescott tacitly admits that the number of the enemy forces—whom the Spanish reckoned at two hundred thousand—is an exaggeration, yet without equivocation he calls the result of the contest “undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable victories ever achieved in the New World.”<sup>90</sup> He credits not simply Cortes’ rhetoric. “[T]hey had discipline on their side, desperate resolve, and implicit confidence in their commander.” They were also lucky. Cortes was

---

<sup>88</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 451.

<sup>89</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 463. Is Prescott quoting Keats here at this pivotal moment?

<sup>90</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 465.

fortunate in getting close enough, in such a crowd, to the Aztec commander whose death caused such a stampede.<sup>91</sup>

The ease with which readers overlooked Prescott's remarks on slavery and politics suggests the timeliness of his subject in the 1840s. The tale he tells suited a lusty nation with imperial ambitions. The Europeans triumph over the natives despite their inferior numbers and lack of familiarity with an exotic landscape. While superior technology, immunity to disease, and simple good fortune aid them, Prescott credits their success to strategy, tenacity, and discipline. When Cortes has nothing left but courage he remains formidable. Despite the frequent cliffhangers and hairbreadth escapes, it is his destiny to prevail and he never swerves from it. Prescott considers rhetoric and discipline as Cortes' two essential strengths. Although the careers of Prescott and Cortes would appear to share few similarities, Prescott identifies two strengths in his subject that characterize him as well. "[T]he history of the Conquest, as I have already had occasion to remark, is necessarily that of Cortes," he concludes.<sup>92</sup> Prescott would come to be associated no less completely with the history of the Conquest.

*The History of the Conquest of Peru*, published in 1847, only four years after *The Conquest of Mexico*, tells a different story. Though it followed its predecessor's template, even Prescott acknowledged that the stars of its composition had not aligned quite so perfectly, and no dramatic meteor shower accompanied its reception. There are some substantive reasons for this. As with many copies, the tracings, though firm and straight, lack the interest of the original lines. Francisco Pizarro is no Hernan Cortes. While Cortes left a record of his own actions in the form of letters to his sovereign

---

<sup>91</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 465.

<sup>92</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 681.

(dramatic and well-composed of themselves) Pizarro was illiterate, leaving a hole in Prescott's depiction of his character not easily filled. Cortes was a pioneer, always backed into a corner but improvising his way out. Pizarro succeeded Cortes, and even when he was not imitating the latter's example, his strategies appeared derivative.<sup>93</sup> Even the complex Mexican Montezuma is a more compelling figure than the Inca Atahualpa. Prescott had an easier job in assembling sources and writing his about Peru; as he mentioned in his introduction, there are more extant sources on Peru, and many of them had already fallen into his hands in his earlier researches. The sense of providential solutions to impossible problems, of eleventh-hour rescues and fortuitous coincidences that make reading *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* like reading an adventure story are lacking in *The History of the Conquest of Peru*.

Similarly, the Incas were not the Aztecs, neither in their fierceness nor their spectacular fall. The Aztecs built vertiginous pyramids crowned with gore-encrusted temples; the Incas constructed roads—practical and serviceable, but not appealing to the imagination in quite the same way. The Aztecs were vicious tyrants; the Incas resourceful bureaucrats. When cornered, the Aztecs mowed down the flower of Spanish chivalry and tossed their severed heads in Cortes's direction. When the execution of Atahualpa was proposed, he begged pitifully for his life.

But more troublingly, the central conflict of *The Conquest of Peru* concerns not the spectacular warfare of Christians against heathens but what Prescott considers unworthy squabble for power among the Spanish themselves. Real religious feeling, admittedly pushed to the extreme of fanaticism, motivated Cortes and his band of

---

<sup>93</sup> Pizarro did rely on Cortes as a "captivating model," even when conditions in Peru might have merited a more patient, politic, or accommodating approach. See Prescott, *Peru*, 1094. See also 897 and 933 for examples of his imitation of Cortes.

conquerors, Prescott insists. By contrast, Pizarro and his men made gold their goal, with the result that they fought ignobly for land, titles, slaves—anything that could be converted to gain, where their true loyalty lay. “Bigotry is the perversion of religious principle; but the principle itself was wanting in Pizarro.”<sup>94</sup> In the place of Cortes’s good Father Olmedo, counseling patience and tolerance, Pizarro’s department of conversion was headed by the ambitious Fray Vicente de Valverde. Atahualpa’s rejection of Valverde’s offer of conversion provided a convenient excuse for the Inca’s arrest. Pizarro shared the original commission to conquer Peru with one Diego de Almagro—a relationship that dissolved quickly and led to power struggles between the two men and various members of their extended families Prescott does not hesitate to call a civil war.

In *The Conquest of Peru* Prescott continues to emphasize the situations that anticipate the social conditions of his own day. It is possible to read his description of the Inca empire as an extended comment upon the U.S. at mid-century. In Peru, the aborigines encountered natural obstacles in developing their country: Peru is a strip of coastline bordered to the east by mountains. Industrious with internal improvements, the Incas terraced the hillsides to permit agriculture, and constructed canals, aqueducts, and roads, the hallmark of their empire. Their roads allowed rapid communication in an empire some 1500 miles long. If the Peru seems to anticipate the United States of the Market Revolution, in its version of Manifest Destiny it seems to do the U.S. one better. The Incas, in their acquisition of new territory, demonstrate foresight and patience: they do not gobble it down, like the Aztecs, who in the process of extending their empire create legions of the dispossessed and disaffected. The Incas’ goal is the cultural absorption of the conquered people into their empire, and to that end they move the

---

<sup>94</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 1095.

subject gods into the imperial pantheon in Cuzco (where they are effectively held hostage, a guarantee against a siege of the Inca capital). The sovereigns of the conquered nations are similarly brought to Cuzco to be instructed in the Inca ways. And the incorporation of the new people is effected through their education in the *lingua franca* of Quichua.<sup>95</sup> While Prescott's explicit comparison is with the Aztecs, who in the process of extending their reach made many enemies, easily won as allies of Cortes, there is an implicit but more immediate comparison to the policies of United States in Texas about which Prescott was anxious.

Similarly, when Prescott writes about a contented, orderly system of self-sufficient communities that operated on a cooperative model in Peru, it is possible to imagine him thinking of the experimental utopias dotting his native New England in the 1840s. But the Whig in Prescott emerges here: how were these communal Peruvians kept so content, or at least so passive? It was by denying education to everyone but the most privileged, so that there was no inducement to self improvement. Indeed, as David Levin notes, Prescott had little more respect for the "she-philosophers" of Brook Farm than his fellow historian Francis Parkman.<sup>96</sup>

In *The Conquest of Peru* the Spanish actions are held up for censure. Prescott can barely contain his disgust for this internecine conflict over gold and power in a land where both are so lavishly accessible. He deplores the senseless waste of lives in a situation where the conquerors have only recently taken control over a huge native population. He tells of soldiers murdered in the act of surrender or while recovering from wounds on the battlefield. "Such anecdotes, revolting as they are, illustrate not merely

---

<sup>95</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 771-774.

<sup>96</sup> David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), 26. The "she-philosophers" quip is Parkman's, not Prescott's.

the spirit of the times, but that peculiarly ferocious spirit which is engendered by civil wars,—the most unforgiving in their character of any, but wars of religion,” says Prescott.<sup>97</sup> Of a later conflict he writes, “It was a fearful struggle, not merely of man against man, but, to use the words of an eyewitness, of brother against brother, and friend against friend.”<sup>98</sup> Although the turn of phrase anticipates the disunion of the United States fifteen years later, Prescott presumably was not writing with second sight. Nonetheless, he understood, and dreaded, the cost of civil war.

And he makes a connection between the last and most problematic civil war in *The Conquest of Peru* and the intractable problem of slavery. In 1542, explains Prescott, Las Casas presented to the Crown his report on the evils perpetrated against the Indians. Although Prescott has been straightforward in his presentation of the evils of slavery, he presents Las Casas as inflexible, prone to exaggeration, and blind to his own hypocrisy—the abolitionist as fanatic.<sup>99</sup> Again, Prescott inserts an editorial comment reflecting directly on the 1840s:

For Las Casas was the uncompromising friend of freedom. He intrenched [sic] himself strongly on the ground of natural right; and, like some of the reformers of our own day, disdained to calculate the consequences of carrying out the principle to its full and unqualified extent.<sup>100</sup>

The result of Las Casas’s report was a system of ordinances regulating the treatment of the Indians that Prescott presents as a kind of nightmare scenario of immediate abolition. “[T]his remarkable code, which, touching on the most delicate relations of society, broke up the very foundations of property, and, by a stroke of a pen, as it were, converted a

---

<sup>97</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 1054-5.

<sup>98</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 1112.

<sup>99</sup> “This lofty morality, it will be remembered, was from the lips of a Dominican, in the sixteenth century, one of the order that founded the Inquisition, and in the very country where the fiery tribunal was then in most active operation!” (Prescott, *Peru*, 1123.)

<sup>100</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 1124.

nation of slaves into freemen.”<sup>101</sup> What interests Prescott is not the reaction of the Indians to their liberation—he acknowledges that their bondage to the Spanish was of a completely different order of rigor from what was due their Inca masters—but rather the effect on Spanish society.

The Crown sends a viceroy to enforce the ordinances, which he does, with a high-handed arrogance. The colonists, angry at the Crown’s ingratitude for their conquest of the country, furious at the loss of their slave property, and “astounded at the prospect of ruin that awaited at them,” need little incentive to turn into a mob.<sup>102</sup> Rumors fly from one city in Peru to another, and the former soldiers of the Conquest turn to Gonzalo Pizarro, younger brother of the conqueror, who seizes power. An armed confrontation between the disaffected colonists supporting Gonzalo and the viceroy’s forces results in the death of the viceroy. The rogue commander Gonzalo, assuming the title “Procurator General,” finds himself running the colony. “No such rebellion, within the memory of man, had occurred in the Spanish empire.”<sup>103</sup> Only the Crown’s recruitment of a more effective representative in the colony finally restores order. Where *The Conquest of Mexico* had ended with the farsighted and efficient government of Cortes, *The Conquest of Peru* concludes with the lid of royal authority placed uneasily on a seething cauldron of rebellion.

Prescott’s histories proved so popular with so many points of the political compass that his readers pulled an astounding variety of morals from his work.<sup>104</sup> They

---

<sup>101</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 1125.

<sup>102</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 1125.

<sup>103</sup> Prescott, *Peru*, 1163.

<sup>104</sup> For a useful discussion of Prescott’s multivariate appeal, see Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994), 42: “Prescott’s narrative stance both entertained proponents of the war and spoke

were no less able to draw connections between his discussion of ancient times and their own—some of which Prescott might have endorsed though he clearly had not anticipated them. For example, shortly after the discovery of gold in California, the *Boston Daily Advertiser* drew prophetic parallels between Prescott’s description of the mad rush to Peru in the sixteenth century and the exodus to San Francisco three hundred years later. As had been the case with the Spanish, farmers abandoned fields and debtors fled from creditors. “They had thought to dig for gold; but they dug only their graves,” Prescott had written, to which the *Advertiser* added bitterly, “Men will not grow wiser by experience, at least by any other experience than their own.”<sup>105</sup>

Other readers drew their own conclusions about comparative slavery using evidence Prescott supplied. According to Northern Whigs, the supposed savages of ancient Mexico had practiced a milder form of slavery than that which prevailed in the nineteenth-century United States. *The Berkshire County Whig* cited Prescott’s remark that no one was born into slavery in Mexico; further, slaves could own property, their families were recognized, and they were allowed to marry freemen. “If our ‘glorious republic’ would copy this law from the statues of these barbarians, slavery would soon be extinguished,” concluded the *Whig*.<sup>106</sup>

In 1847, the year of the publication of *The Conquest of Peru*, the U.S. War with Mexico suggested other parallels some readers could not ignore. *The Utica Whig* likened the atrocities of “Pizarro and his lawless band of land pirates and buccaneers” to “Mr. Polk’s military satraps and pro-consuls in the Mexican provinces of which they have

---

to the war’s large opposition, which consisted of an unstable coalition of abolitionists, conservative Whigs, and a significant number of southerners reluctant to assimilate the racially suspect populations of Mexico.”

<sup>105</sup> From *The Boston Daily Advertiser*, reprinted in *The Nantucket Inquirer*, 1 January 1849, 2.

<sup>106</sup> *The Berkshire County Whig*, 4 January 1844, 3; see also *The Berkshire County Whig*, 10 June 1847, 2.

taken possession.” Like the Spanish, the United States had seized property on slender pretexts and trumped-up charges, held hasty trials, and executed merciless judgments. In both cases, a weaker people was victimized by a stronger in the name of progress.<sup>107</sup>

Albert Gallatin, the eighty-six year old former Secretary of the Treasury and an outspoken opponent of the war, wrote in the pamphlet *Peace with Mexico*, “. . . I have faith in our institutions and in the people; and I will now ask them whether this was their mission? and whether they were placed by Providence on this continent for the purpose of cultivating false glory, and of sinking to the level of those vulgar conquerors who have at all times desolated the earth.”<sup>108</sup>

The precedent of the Conquest could serve as a warning to a headstrong U.S. In a funeral oration preached at the burial of Captain Charles Pearson in Brooklyn in July 1848, the Reverend Francis Vinton did not hesitate to condemn the war in which Pearson died. Wars on foreign soil, Vinton argued, are *de facto* wars of aggression and cannot be justified. “What has our country to gain by aggressive war?” demanded the preacher. “What is she to acquire by conquests? What but the *curse*?” The Spanish had waged a war of conquest against the Mexicans, who themselves had conquered their neighbors, and the evil cycle still continued. If the past was a clue to the future, the U.S. could expect its populace, addicted to luxury, to fall prey to military dictators.<sup>109</sup> Two days after printing the funeral oration, *The Brooklyn Eagle* castigated Vinton for his “very great and absurd errors.”<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> From *The Utica Whig*, reprinted in *The Berkshire County Whig*, 12 August 1847, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Albert Gallatin, *Peace with Mexico* (New York: Bartlett & Welford [1847]), 24-25.

<sup>109</sup> “The Obsequies,” *The Brooklyn Eagle*, 15 July 1848, 2. Italics original.

<sup>110</sup> “Mr. Vinton and the Mexican War,” *The Brooklyn Eagle*, 17 July 1848, 2.

But although Prescott's perspectives on slavery and the territorial expansion that enabled its spread stand out in plain sight, *The Conquest of Mexico* was also beloved of supporters of the Mexican War, who turned the book into a blueprint, a guidebook, a how-to manual. In 1846, every ship in the U.S. Navy had a copy of Prescott's history in its library.<sup>111</sup> Soldiers marched into the Mexican War using *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* as a traveler's guide, even writing to assure him that the descriptions of the landscape he had based entirely on secondary sources were reliable.<sup>112</sup> "Comparing my own observations with Mr. Prescott's descriptions, I cannot but be astonished at the accuracy of the latter," reflected Marine surgeon Richard McSherry.<sup>113</sup> Prescott's panoramic presentation of landscape, viewed through the eyes of the conquerors from assorted eminences, was prelude to possession of the land. Seeing and seizing were related enterprises.<sup>114</sup>

Cortes himself furnished a role model for latter-day conquerors. When the war began to bog down in late 1846, commanding general Winfield Scott urged President Polk to approve his plan to follow Cortes's route from Vera Cruz into the heart of Mexico.<sup>115</sup> Further invoking the precedent of the Conqueror, Scott wrote Secretary of War William Marcy, "Like Cortez, finding myself isolated and abandoned; and again like him, always afraid that the next ship or messenger might recall or further cripple me—I

---

<sup>111</sup> John E. Eipper, "The Canonizer De-Canonized: The Case of William H. Prescott," *Hispania* 83, no. 3 (September 2000): 420.

<sup>112</sup> Robert Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 246.

<sup>113</sup> Richard McSherry, *El Puchero, or, A Mixed Dish from Mexico* (Philadelphia, 1850), 168-69, cited by Eipper.

<sup>114</sup> Robert D. Aguirre, *Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press), 48-56.

<sup>115</sup> Allan Peskin, *Volunteers: The Mexican War Journals of Private Richard Coulter and Sergeant Thomas Barclay, Company E, Second Pennsylvania Infantry* (Kent, Ohio and London: The Kent State University Press, 1991), 4-5.

resolved no longer to depend on Vera Cruz or home, but to render my little army ‘a self-sustaining machine.’”<sup>116</sup> Raphael Semmes, a naval lieutenant who published his reminiscences in *Service Afloat and Ashore during the Mexican War*, referred to Cortes as “our great predecessor, whose descendants we had come to destroy.”<sup>117</sup> But latterday U.S. *conquistadores* were not simply following Spanish footsteps and repeating flawed actions; they interpreted their mission in the context of a more enlightened age. “I trust a better day is about to dawn on this benighted region and that another generation under a better government may abandon their idleness and popish idolatry,” Captain E. Kirby Smith, a career officer from Litchfield, Connecticut, wrote his wife.<sup>118</sup>

According to Robert Johannsen, Prescott’s account even encouraged enlistment in the army among volunteers eager to experience the adventure of conquest firsthand.<sup>119</sup> Prescott’s vivid descriptions fired the imagination with terrors as well as dreams of heroism. Rumors circulating in U.S. camps depicted the Mexicans as bloodthirsty Aztecs returned to vengeful life. One volunteer wrote:

. . . it was reported in camp today that Gen Scott had sent a detachment of 30 men under a Lieut to carry some information to Gen Taylor, and that it had been taken by Santa Anna and the Lieut killed & his heart cut out. I scarcely think the report is entitled to credit . . .<sup>120</sup>

Prescott had so popularized the idea of Mexico as a nation for conquest, linking the two words so inextricably in the imagination of the U.S., that Americans of the time acknowledged almost casually the cold reality of what the U.S. was doing, presenting the

---

<sup>116</sup> Winfield Scott to William Marcy, 24 February 1848, quoted in Allan Peskin, *Winfield Scott and the Profession of Arms* (Kent, Ohio and London: Kent State University Press, 2003), 174. Italics original.

<sup>117</sup> Lieutenant Raphael Semmes, U.S.N., *Service Afloat and Ashore During the Mexican War* (Cincinnati: William H. Moore & Company, Publishers, 1851), 393.

<sup>118</sup> Captain E. Kirby Smith to Mrs. Smith, 2 November, 1846, *To Mexico with Scott: The Letters of Captain E. Kirby Smith to His Wife* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), 68-69.

<sup>119</sup> Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, 245.

<sup>120</sup> Diary of H. Judge Moore of Greenville, SC Fairfield Volunteers, 12 February 1847, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven.

justification as if manifest: “The [Mexican] race is perfectly accustomed to being conquered, and the only new lesson we shall teach is that our victories will give liberty, safety, and prosperity to the vanquished . . . Well may the Mexican nation, whose great masses have never yet tasted liberty, prattle over their lost phantom of nationality,” declared the New York *Sun* dismissively.<sup>121</sup> “We can conquer Mexico,” declared Samuel Houston on the floor of the Senate in 1847.<sup>122</sup> “You seem to have, while describing so eloquently the *past* Conquest of Mexico, foretold the *future* one,” remarked Count Adolph de Circourt in a letter to Prescott in 1847.<sup>123</sup> If the Conquest was the type, the U.S. War with Mexico was the antitype: “Nor the chronicles of ancient wars, nor the prowess of modern achievements, furnish a parallel to the second conquest of Mexico, while the lustre that hung around the name of Cortes and his hardy adventurers, burnished by the glowing description of Prescott, becomes dimmed by the deeds of these latter days,” announced George Wilkins Kendall in one of a series of letters written home from the war.<sup>124</sup>

For the most gung-ho of the war’s supporters, the tricky question of amalgamation presented no obstacle: “Then pursue the conquest,” advised *The Philadelphia Public Ledger*. “. . . [A] good stiff authority will keep down its tyrants. Gen. Scott is the very fellow for the head of such a government. Our Yankee young fellows and the pretty senoritas will do the rest of the annexation, and Mexico will soon

---

<sup>121</sup> *The New York Sun*, 22 October, 1847, quoted in *The War with Mexico: Why Did it Happen?*, edited by Armin Rappaport, (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1964), 45.

<sup>122</sup> *Congressional Globe* (Appendix) 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session, 19 February 1847, 222.

<sup>123</sup> Count Adolph de Circourt to Prescott, 7 June 1847, *Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott*, 645.

<sup>124</sup> George Wilkins Kendall, quoted in “Some Very Just Remarks about the New Conquest of Mexico,” *The Brooklyn Eagle*, 18 November 1847, 2. See also the anonymous pamphlet “The Conquest of Mexico! An Appeal to the Citizens of the United States, on the Justice and Expediency of the Conquest of Mexico,” (Boston: Jordan & Wiley; Hill & Brodhead; Redding & Co.; Waite, Pierce & Co., 1846).

be Anglo-Saxonized, and prepared for the confederacy.”<sup>125</sup> H. Judge Moore, a volunteer from Greenville, South Carolina, similarly combined the impulse for both sexual and territorial conquest in a diary entry of February 19, 1847: “I long to see a Mexican Donna. I have been in sight of their shores so long, that I am getting very impatient for a nearer peep. I should like to go over if I could claim the promise made to Abraham that my seed should possess the land.”<sup>126</sup>

At the same time, enthusiastic supporters of the war not infrequently protested that conquest was not their purpose. “It has never been contemplated by me, as an object of the war, to make a permanent conquest of the republic of Mexico,” declared James Polk.<sup>127</sup> Even John C. Calhoun, anxious about the potential assimilation of Mexicans into the American republic and no friend of Polk, acknowledged, “Since the commencement of the war until this time, the President has continually disavowed the intention of conquering Mexico and subjecting her to our control.”<sup>128</sup> The cover of George Lippard’s lurid Mexican War potboiler *Legends of Mexico* (1847) featured a misquotation from Thomas Paine’s 1777 *The Crisis*: “We fight not to enslave, nor for conquest; but to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in.”<sup>129</sup>

Prescott’s own private memoranda and correspondence use the conquest analogy to reflect this anxiety. He was not above acknowledging the connection between his own labors and those of his subjects. Urging himself to give up his “loafing vagaries,” he

---

<sup>125</sup> From *The Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 11 December 1847. Cited in *The War with Mexico: Why Did it Happen?* Edited by Armin Rappaport (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Series in American History, 1964), 46-47.

<sup>126</sup> Diary of H. Judge Moore of Greenville, SC Fairfield Volunteers, 19 February 1847, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven.

<sup>127</sup> *Niles Register*, LXXIII, 230.

<sup>128</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 30th Congress, First Session, 4 January 1848, 50.

<sup>129</sup> In the original, the Paine quotation runs, “We fight not to enslave, but to set a country free, and to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in.” The misquotation is noted in Shelley Streeby, “American Sensations: Empire, Amnesia, and the US-Mexican War,” *American Literary History* 2001, 14.

admonished himself, “[T]he gold of Peru is not to be won by idle hands.”<sup>130</sup> But more often he wrote out of a gnawing sense of uneasiness about writing in the context of a Second Conquest. “I am sick of our domestic troubles, brought on us by unparalleled folly. And I take refuge from them in Peruvian hills, where the devildoms I read of—black enough—have at least no reference to ourselves,” complained Prescott wearily to George Sumner in May, 1846.<sup>131</sup> The distance between the two situations was shrinking, and shrinking because of the vivid and immediate manner in which Prescott portrayed his subject. Prescott watched developments in Texas and Mexico with increasing distaste between 1845 and 1848. Noting the analogy of the military and literary conquests, Prescott wrote in April 1847: “I have been carrying on the Conquest of Peru while the Government have been making the Conquest of Mexico. But mine is the best of the two, since it cost only the shedding of ink instead of blood; and if I ever get so little fame by it that is better than the dirty superfluous acres which we shall get by the other Conquest, and the still more barren glory.”<sup>132</sup> As Eric Wertheimer writes, Prescott’s ambivalence exemplifies the “contradiction between the fascination for imperial conquest and the rational political argument that found the Mexican War and Texas annexation abhorrent.”<sup>133</sup>

One way Prescott sought to resolve this conflict in his own mind was by making distinctions among Americans based on geography or class. He connected the assumed “destiny to overrun this wide continent, and swell the dimensions of a territory already to

---

<sup>130</sup> Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 218.

<sup>131</sup> Prescott to George Sumner, 15 May 1846, *Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott*, 597.

<sup>132</sup> Prescott to Lord Morpeth, 30 April 1847, *Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott*, 634.

<sup>133</sup> Eric Wertheimer, *Imagined Empires: Incas, Aztecs, and the New World of American Literature, 1771-1861* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 131.

vast for a republic,”<sup>134</sup> to Southern Democrats: “The Texas project is very distasteful to most of us in the North, and the party to which I belong view it with unqualified detestation,” he wrote apologetically to the Mexican politician and historian Lúcas Alamán in 1845.<sup>135</sup> He referred slightly to “Brother Jonathan,” a braggart whose appetite for land is insatiable, using the caricature as English visitor Frances Trollope used it in 1832, to refer to the swearing, spitting members of the rabble who go around insisting on their rights.<sup>136</sup> As early as 1846 Prescott elided section and party, with the North guided by worthy elites and the South in the hands of the great unwashed: “The Southern and Western men have a free and open bearing that contrasts with the more prim and cautious manners of the North, which still retains a slight savor of the original Puritan stock, but with more really good stuff in its composition than is to be found in any other quarter of the country,—and much more cultivation.”<sup>137</sup>

Like many Whigs, Prescott found it necessary to repudiate his own expansionist views from the pre-Mexican War period. In a celebratory review of his friend George Bancroft’s *History of the United States*, Volume III, he had opened by quoting Bishop Berkeley’s “Westward the course of empire takes its way.” He had suggested “freedom” would have been more accurate a word than “empire:” most of the nations of the New

---

<sup>134</sup> Prescott to Count Adolphe de Circourt, 10 July 1847, *Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott*, 656.

<sup>135</sup> Prescott to Lúcas Alamán, 30 March 1845, *Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott*, 533.

<sup>136</sup> See for example Prescott to George Sumner, 14 August 1845, *Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott*, 550. Frances Trollope wrote: “Jonathan will be a fine gentleman, but it must be in his own way. Is he not a free-born American?” (Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* [London: Printed for Whittaker, Treacher, & Co., 1832], I, 57.)

<sup>137</sup> Prescott to Pascual de Gayanos, 30 April 1846, *Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott*, 595. Similarly, see Prescott to George Sumner, 15 May 1846: “The South and West seem to be overrun with a dare-devil war spirit that one might expect to meet with in France, but not in a money-making democracy. . . . One would suppose that the millions of uncultivated acres inviting settlement and the hand of civilization that lie within our present limits might satisfy the most craving cupidity. And so it would have at the North, where we have sober business-like habits and the steadiness of one somewhat advanced in years. But in the Far West we are wedded to a brisk young helpmate who is like to give us enough of our gambols and who most unhappily has the control of brother Jonathan’s ménage—for the present.” (597)

World had adopted a republican form of government even when the practice of republicanism was clumsy. But when the review appeared in 1845 in a collection called *Biographical and Critical Miscellanies*, he added a footnote at the end. “The remarks in the text on ‘the extent of empire’ had reference only to that legitimate extent which might grow out of the peaceful settlement and civilization of a territory, sufficiently ample certainly, that already belongs to us. The craving for foreign acquisitions has ever been a most fatal symptom in the history of republics . . .” The annexation of Texas, he charged, violated both the Constitution and the law of justice, and set a gloomy precedent for the future.<sup>138</sup>

No such anxieties troubled the sleep of Samuel Houston of Texas. One of his justifications for the invasion and takeover of Mexican territory was that Mexico was hardly a republic at all: “Talk of the integrity of the Mexican republic! Why, it is a stain, a blot on constitutional liberty, to call Mexico a republic.”<sup>139</sup> The historical events of its war for independence were a farce beside Lexington or Yorktown. Mexican citizens, he charged, had fewer freedoms than slaves in the U.S. Under the circumstances, the second conquest of Mexico would be a release.<sup>140</sup> Or, as an anonymous versifier insisted in the Democratic-leaning *Hartford Times* in 1845,

Our southern coast is too confined,  
It must be made more roomy,  
Till “Yankee Doodle” “revels in  
The halls of Montezuma.”  
If the region lies remote,  
War will make it handy.  
Where the starry flag shall float—

---

<sup>138</sup> William Hickling Prescott, *Biographical and Critical Miscellanies* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1845), 304-5.

<sup>139</sup> *Congressional Globe* (Appendix) 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session, 19 February 1847, 220.

<sup>140</sup> *Congressional Globe* (Appendix) 29<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session, 19 February 1847, 222.

“Yankee Doodle dandy.”<sup>141</sup>

In the context of such assumptions, the attitudes of William Hickling Prescott seem remarkably broad-minded. Birth and upbringing certainly did not designate him an automatic candidate for such toleration. He came from a conservative family prominent in a conservative city.<sup>142</sup> His father had participated in the Hartford Convention at the end of the War of 1812 and never repudiated its agenda, going so far as to sponsor publication of its history in the 1830s.<sup>143</sup> Both father and son viewed the rise of the West—particularly as personified by the presidency of Andrew Jackson—with disgust and concern. They opposed Jackson’s suffocation of the Bank of the United States and his cultivation of state banks.<sup>144</sup>

But the Prescotts made room in their worldview for new people, new enterprises, and the new opportunities they presented. Certainly some of these attitudes reflect Yankee pragmatism. Whatever their attitudes about the shortcomings of the West, Prescott and his father considered a purchase of stock in a Cincinnati or Louisville bank in 1833, when Prescott wrote to George Bancroft for his counsel.<sup>145</sup> Catholics bought books, and there was no harm in an endorsement from Bishop John Hughes, whom Prescott met in New York in 1844 and who thanked him for his respectful treatment of

---

<sup>141</sup> The doggerel also contains the telling stanza “‘Yankee Doodle’s’ found a way,/They call it ‘moral suasion,’—/Another name it sometimes bears,/That is, Re-annexation:/But what you will, it is the same, and works so neat and handy,/That we will follow up the game/With ‘Yankee Doodle dandy.’” “Yankee Doodle” [reprinted from the *Hartford Times*], *The Pittsfield Sun* 18 September 1845, 1.

<sup>142</sup> Frederic Cople Jaher’s *The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago, and Los Angeles* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982) suggests that in comparison with newer cities like Chicago, Boston’s prominence began slipping in the nineteenth century. An exclusive upper class did not make room for new arrivals. Wealth remained in well-off families and was conservatively invested, limiting the capital available for innovative opportunities.

<sup>143</sup> Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 24-5.

<sup>144</sup> Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 167.

<sup>145</sup> Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 120.

Catholicism.<sup>146</sup> Prescott's attitudes might cynically be put down to some combination of shrewdness and commonplace upper-class courtesy, the roots of which did not penetrate too deep.

Yet neither is Prescott's tolerance to be taken for granted. A suggestion of just how threatening Prescott's ideas could be is found in two responses to him, one written six years after the publication of *The Conquest of Mexico* and the other shortly before Prescott's death in 1859. For both of these angry critics, Prescott's empathy cut too close to the bone; his ability to overlook difference smacked of bad taste and low morals. What offended them—in one case, Prescott's attitude toward Catholicism, and in the other, his portrait of Aztec society, shows just how far Prescott moved popular opinion from unquestioned assumptions of superiority to a greater complexity if not a greater tolerance.

Generally reviews of Prescott's works ran a narrow gamut from glowing to ecstatic. Even the European reviews, which Prescott anxiously scanned for condemnation or at least condescension, were typically laudatory. But *The Conquest of Mexico* received one outright pan published in, of all places, a hometown journal, the *Massachusetts Quarterly Review*.<sup>147</sup> The review—along with an earlier analysis of Prescott's shortcomings as a historian—was published anonymously, but was written by the antislavery sectionalist Theodore Parker, who, along with Ralph Waldo Emerson, was one of the journal's founders. According to Paul E. Teed, Parker desired to reappropriate the New England past that was increasingly applied to a national agenda that served the South. Parker believed that Prescott, by spinning a romantic fable of the Conquest,

---

<sup>146</sup> Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 214.

<sup>147</sup> [Theodore Parker], *History of the Conquest of Mexico* [Review], *The Massachusetts Quarterly Review* 8 (September 1849): 437-70.

“robbed his section and his nation of the ability to evaluate its present relationship with Mexico.”<sup>148</sup>

Prescott had said that it was necessary for the historian to judge not by the standards of the present but by the realities of the past, to imagine ignorance of future progress. A different moral standard prevailed in the sixteenth century.<sup>149</sup> It is easy to condemn the sins of the past in the light shed by the revelation of days to come, but the people of the past stumbled about in darkness. The historian must judge accordingly.

In an essay titled “Character of Mr. Prescott as an Historian,” Parker insisted that the historian’s duty is far more profound: he must judge by absolute standards, which are not bound by time. While acknowledging “the spirit of the age . . . it is also the Historian’s duty to criticize that spirit, and when a superior man rises, he must not be judged merely by the low standard of his age, but the absolute standard of all ages,” wrote Parker.<sup>150</sup> Writing history is moral education; the historian must praise the just and condemn the wicked.

And to Parker, the *conquistadores* were wicked. How did Prescott dare to excuse the actions of the conquerors? First Parker endeavored to damn the Spanish for their seizure of the natives’ land while exculpating the English. His logic was not particularly convincing.<sup>151</sup> But he was more successful in incriminating the *conquistadores* for cloaking their avarice in the guise of religious zeal, in effect making their converts pay for the privilege of conversion by surrendering gold and gemstones. Parker himself

---

<sup>148</sup> Paul E. Teed, “The Politics of Sectional Memory: Theodore Parker and *The Massachusetts Quarterly Review*, 1847-1850,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 302; 312.

<sup>149</sup> Prescott, *Mexico*, 6.

<sup>150</sup> [Theodore Parker], “Character of Mr. Prescott as an Historian,” *The Massachusetts Quarterly Review* 2, no. 5 (March 1849): 235.

<sup>151</sup> [Parker], “*Conquest*,” 455-7.

learned from Prescott's appeal to the present: "Imagine, oh gentle or simple readers, imagine the American board of foreign missionaries sending out their servants to China with such instructions, asking for 'comfortable presents' of silks, and Sycee silver, and tea!"<sup>152</sup> As an ultimate symbol of the barbarism of their proselytization, Parker describes how the new Christians were branded with a hot iron.<sup>153</sup>

But surprisingly, given Prescott's attention to his Indian subjects, Parker insists that the historian shows them no sympathy.<sup>154</sup> Wherever the Spanish and the Aztecs come into conflict, however equivalent their cruelties, Prescott always sides with the Spanish: "the Spirit of Chivalry is mightier with him than the Spirit of Humanity."<sup>155</sup> According to Parker, Prescott is particularly unchivalrous in regard to Marina, the native woman who lived with Cortes as his mistress, who acted as diplomat among the Spanish and their Indian allies, and whom Cortes eventually married off to one of his subordinates. Prescott's forgiveness of Cortes rankles Parker, who points out that while their relationship was unexceptional in Aztec society, it was a mortal sin for Cortes.<sup>156</sup> Parker does not seem to be arguing from any latent Puritanism; rather, he excoriates Prescott on the grounds of justice and humanity.

Neither do Prescott's remarks about slavery go far enough for Parker. Indeed, he takes no notice of the historian's measured homilies. For Parker, the facts are simple: native slavery paled beside the institution introduced by the "civilized" Spanish and

---

<sup>152</sup> [Theodore Parker], "History of the Conquest of Mexico" [review], *The Massachusetts Quarterly Review* 8 (September 1849): 458.

<sup>153</sup> [Parker], "Conquest," 461.

<sup>154</sup> [Parker], "Conquest," 465.

<sup>155</sup> [Parker], "Conquest," 466.

<sup>156</sup> Parker's impatience with Prescott's forgiveness of Cortes's sexual dalliances are interesting in light of the fact that Prescott's biographers suggest the historian faced temptations in this area. Gardiner's biography is full of winking asides like "[W]ho was Prescott to disappoint a lady!" (250). In 1905 Harry Thurston Peck made much of middle-aged Prescott's reminiscences of "gilded seductions" that assail youth (29).

justified by their learned divines, and Prescott tolerates their hypocrisy. Like the Massachusetts radicals who would the next year howl against Daniel Webster's accommodation to the Compromise of 1850, Parker demands, "Can it be that the commercial atmosphere of Boston had stifled the natural and nobler breath of the historian?"<sup>157</sup>

In 1849 Parker castigated Prescott for insufficient sympathy toward the Indians; ten years later Robert Anderson Wilson accused him of an excess of admiration. Wilson, a native of Cooperstown, New York and "late judge of Sacramento District, California,"<sup>158</sup> wrote two books based on the experience of his residency in Mexico between 1851 and 1854: *Mexico and its Religion* (reissued a year later as *Mexico: Its Peasants and Priests*) (1855) and *A New History of the Conquest of Mexico in which Las Casas' Denunciations of the Popular Historians of that War are Fully Vindicated* (1859). While both of his books are a confused mish-mash of received opinion, secondhand description, paranoia, and screed, the former book is written as a travel narrative and the latter more particularly as a corrective to Prescott.

Wilson confessedly based his work less on scholarly historical research than on firsthand observation of contemporary Mexicans, whom he compared to his recollections of the Iroquois in his native New York. He concluded that Indians of North and South America were the same people—and both were improvident, shiftless, and incompetent. What to make, then, of the surviving Spanish chronicles describing the works of the Aztecs and Incas? Clearly, Wilson decided, they were fabrications: "I have presumed to doubt that water ever ran up hill, that navigable canals were ever fed by 'back water,' that

---

<sup>157</sup> [Parker], "Conquest," 469.

<sup>158</sup> Robert A. Wilson, *Mexico: Its Peasants and Priests* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), i; t.p.

pyramids (*teocalli*) could rest on a foundation of soft earth, that a canal twelve feet broad by twelve feet deep, mostly below the water level, was ever dug by Indians with their rude implements . . . ”<sup>159</sup> (Wilson proposed that the few ancient remains of skill and beauty that could not be written off were relics of an earlier race, the Phoenicians this time.) The only talent the Spanish possessed was that of lying, as they retailed extravagant tales of their own accomplishments to burnish their reputations. Their deceit was in turn protected by the rigorous censorship of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, which maintained a vast conspiracy of misinformation.

As far as his Phoenician theory, Wilson was not really saying anything that dozens of amateur historians and archaeologists had not hazarded in the 1830s and ‘40s. His comparison of the Aztecs to the Iroquois, to the disadvantage of both, would be elaborated in the 1880s by the far more respectable ethnologist Lewis Henry Morgan.<sup>160</sup> But after Prescott, Wilson’s knee-jerk chauvinism in the absence of any actual scholarship was more difficult to take seriously. (Wilson also played into the hands of his critics by displaying a limited command of punctuation, grammar, and composition.<sup>161</sup>) “It is hardly necessary for us to characterize this whole theory of Mr. Wilson’s as one of the most fantastic and absurd that was ever devised,” scoffed *The New*

---

<sup>159</sup> Wilson, *Mexico: Its Peasants and Priests*, iii-iv.

<sup>160</sup> Bruce G. Trigger, “Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian,” *American Antiquity* 45, no. 4 (October 1980): 663.

<sup>161</sup> “The number, the novelty, and the variety of his blunders have given us a very favorable impression of his ingenuity, and have afforded us constant entertainment in what we feared to be a drudgery and a task. We had intended to cull some of these beauties for the amusement of our readers and the personal gratification of Mr. Wilson himself. But, as children, gathering shells on the sea-shore, resign, one after another, the treasures which they have collected, and grasp at newer, and, therefore, more pleasing specimens, which are abandoned in their turn, so we, finding our stores accumulate beyond our means of transportation, and tantalized by a richness that made the task of selection an impossible one, have been forced to relinquish the prize and come away with empty hands.” (“Reviews and Literary Notices: *A New History of the Conquest of Mexico* [Second Notice],” *The Atlantic* 3, no. 9 [May 1859]: 633.)

*Englander*.<sup>162</sup> His glaring errors and the disrespect he demonstrated toward Prescott pushed the *Atlantic* so far as to defend the Spanish and condemn Wilson's anti-Catholicism. Wilson might "[enlist] the sympathies of a class in whom hatred of Romanism preponderates over knowledge and judgment," but readers exposed to Prescott would demand evidence. George Ticknor presented "Papers Discussing the Comparative Merits of Prescott's and Wilson's Histories, Pro. and Con." before the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1861.<sup>163</sup> Not surprisingly, Ticknor sided with his late friend Prescott.

And increasingly in Prescott's wake, the onus of defending their own lack of tolerance would fall on authors who might formerly have escaped censure. John Lothrop Motley's *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1856) celebrated the triumph of Protestant William of Orange over the subjugation of the Spanish in the late sixteenth century. Motley work was an encomium to liberty of conscience over bigotry and repression. But the *U.S. Democratic Review* pointed out that "republicanism and religious liberty" so-called Anglo-Saxons claimed as their own were in fact the legacies of the Dutch; the English Puritans were no paragons of enlightened toleration.<sup>164</sup> More damning, the ascent of "Know-Nothingism" in the mid-nineteenth century bore a remarkable resemblance to the rigors of the Inquisition at the time of Philip II:

It is true that the sixteenth century saw it crowned with more terrors than it has ever since displayed; but the serpents which coil about it are merely torpid, not dead, and ask only the grateful warmth of such a religious fanaticism as our own political parsons seem bent on fomenting, to animate

---

<sup>162</sup> "Notices of Books: *Wilson's New History of the Conquest of Mexico*," *The New Englander* 42, no. 66 (May 1859): 546.

<sup>163</sup> George Ticknor, "Papers Discussing the Comparative Merits of Prescott's and Wilson's Histories, Pro. and Con.: As Laid Before the Massachusetts Historical Society," ([Boston?: s.n], 1861).

<sup>164</sup> "*The Rise of the Dutch Republic*" (review), *U.S. Democratic Review*, August 1856: 71; 78.

them with new life, to infuse a deadlier poison in their sting, and set an added horror on their crest.<sup>165</sup>

Modern critics charge that Prescott was inclined to see the hand of destiny in the triumph of the conquerors and to estimate the achievements of the Aztecs accordingly. For all his sifting of evidence, he did not read his sources as critically as twenty-first century scholars do, and he was unequipped with the tools of ethnohistory that might have supplied evidence where textual sources are lacking. Nonetheless, Prescott earned his place in the pantheon of American historiography. To no inconsiderable extent, his felicitous prose, his extraordinary organization, his ability to sustain suspense and to foreshadow doom and triumph compel attention. “[E]ven today’s readers, conditioned by fast-paced drama and powerful visual imagery, are still likely to be gripped by the excitement of the story,” notes J.H. Elliott.<sup>166</sup> Beyond considerations of style, however, Prescott managed to question prevailing assumptions without promoting controversy. His grace and tact expressed the thoughts of an open mind. His nuanced, sympathetic portrait of the people of the past challenged his readers to think more inclusively about the Others on their borders and in their midst.

It would seem sacrilegious, then, to mention *The History of the Conquest of Mexico* in the same breath with two pieces of pulp fiction of the same period, George Lippard’s novelette *Legends of Mexico* (1847) and Ned Buntline’s *The Volunteer, or, the Maid of Monterey* (1847). Primitive in composition, sensational and sometimes quasi-pornographic in appeal, these texts, intended for a mass audience, seem to belong not to another category of literature but another universe. Their authors could not have been

---

<sup>165</sup> “*The Rise of the Dutch Republic*,” 78. My thanks to Patricia Roylance for pointing out this passage in “Inquisition: Religious Tolerance and Motley’s *Rise of the Dutch Republic*,” presented at the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic Conference, Rochester, NY, 23 July 2010.

<sup>166</sup> J.H. Elliott, “An Epic in Prose,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 31 July 2009, 15.

more dissimilar. Prescott labored for years in obtaining and interpreting obscure sources; Lippard and Buntline worked quickly, their research a matter of scanning the latest war news. Both Lippard and Buntline were Democrats—in Lippard’s case a radical Democrat who looked for the righteous vindication of the workers—very much in contrast to Prescott’s Whiggish conservatism.<sup>167</sup> Prescott paid considerable attention to the physical appearance of his masterworks, fretting over broken type, leading, binding specifications, and paper weights in order to assure the most pleasing and harmonious effect.<sup>168</sup> Lippard and Buntline, on the other hand, published in a world of wood pulp and mass production. Taking advantage of innovations in printing and distributing technologies, their fictional works (along with pamphlets, song sheets, and story papers), using newspaper accounts for background and stock characters and situations for structure, were produced with a frantic immediacy and sold for pennies.<sup>169</sup>

Yet on second glance these works intersect in subtle ways. Prescott wrote history influenced by the conventions of romantic fiction; Lippard and Buntline wrote cheap fiction grounded in recent history. All three authors traded in national pride. All three may have appealed to the same taste for thrills and violence. Lippard’s and Buntline’s audience almost certainly overlapped with Prescott’s. All three authors benefited from—and took advantage of—a vast reading public thirsting for news from Mexico and eager for tales of heroism and adventure. However much he despised it, Prescott benefitted from the war with Mexico, both in terms of the new market it produced for his work and

---

<sup>167</sup> David Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 206.

<sup>168</sup> “Do you not think that dark green or maroon color, for the bindings, would make an agreeable variety with the everlasting black?” wrote Prescott to his publishers, the Harpers, in 1846 (Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 258).

<sup>169</sup> Shelly Streeby, “American Sensations: Empire, Amnesia, and the US-Mexican War,” *American Literary History* 2001: 2-3.

the access to formerly unobtainable sources it allowed him. Prescott, always a canny businessman, produced abridged versions of his own work when pirated abridgements threatened to eat into his market share. Despite his correspondence with a titled readership, ordinary middle class readers clearly made up many of his thousands of readers. Theodore Parker damned his perspective with these words:

. . . Mr. Prescott writes with the average Sense of mankind, with their average of Conscience—and his judgment, the average judgment of a trading town, is readily accepted by the average of men, and popular with them . . . <sup>170</sup>

George Lippard gained renown by pandering to just this “average” audience. In *Legends of Mexico*, he wrote a popular history of the Second Conquest, exactly the project Prescott refused to undertake. In July, 1848 General Winfield Scott, contemplating a run for the U.S. presidency on the Whig ticket, wrote Prescott to request that he consider writing a history of the war with Mexico and promising to make his papers available.<sup>171</sup> Meanwhile an ally of Zachary Taylor, who did win the Whig nomination, made sure that some of his war correspondence was put into Prescott’s hands.<sup>172</sup> Although tempted, Prescott declined, preferring not to record such recent events.<sup>173</sup>

George Lippard, writing at nobody’s invitation, imagined *Legends of Mexico*, which he subtitled *The Battles of Taylor*, as part of a series of historical works that would

---

<sup>170</sup> [Parker], “Character,” 248.

<sup>171</sup> Johannsen, 248.

<sup>172</sup> Taylor wrote to Abbott Lawrence on August 29, 1847 complaining of his treatment by the head of the War Department and seeking to justify his own behavior; Lawrence returned Taylor’s original letter on September 7, 1849, noting that he had made “two copies . . . one of which will be placed in the hands of Mr. William H. Prescott.” (Zachary Taylor, *Letters of Zachary Taylor from the Battle-Fields of the Mexican War* [Rochester, NY: The Genesee Press, for William E. Bixby, 1908], 173.)

<sup>173</sup> Johannsen, 248.

stretch back to the struggle for the Aztec empire.<sup>174</sup> Born in Pennsylvania in 1822, Lippard's lurid *Quaker City* (1845) sold nearly 200,000 copies by the end of 1850, and he was proclaimed "unquestionably the most popular writer of the day" by *Godey's Lady's Book*.<sup>175</sup> If it was Prescott that soldiers carried with them into Mexico as a Baedeker, it was Lippard they turned to for entertainment around the dull campfire of the army bivouac: one volunteer recalled listening as a fellow soldier, sitting on a cannon, read from one of Lippard's romances about Washington and the Revolution.<sup>176</sup>

Lippard had no very fine conception of the kind of historical research necessary for undertaking such a project, but he did have what Theodore Parker called a philosophy of history. What generally passes for history, Lippard writes, deals too much with "Kings and blood, Revolutions and Battles, Murderers by wholesale, but not a word . . . of that of Home-life of nations."

. . . History to speak to the heart, should not lie to us by wholesale, nor deal in vague generalities . . . It should, in narrating the records of an event or age, make us live with the people, fight by them in battle, sit with them at the table, make love, hate, fear, and triumph with them.<sup>177</sup>

To this end Lippard presents a pageant of the U.S. War with Mexico, or, perhaps more accurately, a panorama. Like the narrator of one of these nineteenth-century presentations, he commands his audience look at a half-clad young woman on her couch, a Mexican general next to his "voluptuous bed," noble Zachary Taylor on his rude cot.<sup>178</sup> In *Legends of Mexico* his narrative consists of a set of disconnected scenes, with no more connective tissue than that shared by a series of articles in a newspaper (suggesting that a

---

<sup>174</sup> Johannsen 199.

<sup>175</sup> Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance*, 207.

<sup>176</sup> Johannsen, 61.

<sup>177</sup> George Lippard, *Legends of Mexico* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1847), 27.

<sup>178</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 28, 22, 23.

short attention span is not the monopoly of the television generation). A volunteer listening to this material read aloud by a fellow soldier perched on a cannon could be called away to guard duty and return the next night without suffering any loss of comprehension. Except for Zachary Taylor, whose efforts to relieve the beleaguered Fort Brown take up much of the work, there is no continuity of situations or characters. There are a few dramatic scenes, but little dialogue, usually set off like titles in a silent movie: “A little more grape, Captain Bragg!”<sup>179</sup>

A cursory glance at Lippard’s style suggests that he had little more at stake than producing work quickly and selling it in prodigious quantities. A typical page from his oeuvre is a putrid mixture of awkward, pretentious writing, exaggerated patriotism, and queasy suggestions of incest, rape, and torture (Lippard typically promises to reveal more than he actually describes, which makes his literary striptease all the more meretricious). Yet recent scholarship has demonstrated that Lippard had more on his mind than simply selling novelettes at ten cents a copy.<sup>180</sup> In the late 1840s he formed an anticapitalist labor organization called the Brotherhood of the Union that within four years boasted 150 branches in twenty-four states.<sup>181</sup> Although he presented a United States entirely in the right (“We are the American People. Our lineage is from God”), he condemned “those gamblers in fraud, those grey-beards in falsehood, termed politicians, [who] have usurped control of the Nation . . .”<sup>182</sup> In his own day, Prescott’s scrupulous critic Theodore Parker was inclined to take Lippard seriously, noting that although he was

---

<sup>179</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 130.

<sup>180</sup> See particularly Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) and Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance*.

<sup>181</sup> David S. Reynolds, *The Quaker City* (Introduction), (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), xvii-xviii.

<sup>182</sup> George Lippard, *Legends*, 16; 103.

clearly writing from “an inferior motive,” he always demonstrated “the interest of mankind, showing a ready sympathy with justice, mercy, and unaffected trust in God” (recall that it was the absence of sympathy for the Indians for which Parker took Prescott to task).<sup>183</sup> Lippard was a hack, but he was a hack hard to dismiss, either in his time or our own.

By far the most conspicuous part of the text of *The Legends of Mexico* is the recounting of battle scenes. Here, perhaps surprisingly, Lippard betrays his debt to William Hickling Prescott. “Did you ever read of Montezua?” inquires Lippard. “. . . [Y]ou have read it all.”<sup>184</sup> Again and again Lippard reproduces the improbability of Cortes’s victory in the reality of his outnumbered forces. “Taylor, the Conqueror of the New Conquest of Mexico,”<sup>185</sup> constantly triumphs over impossible odds: two thousand to six thousand at Palo Alto;<sup>186</sup> sixteen hundred against nine thousand at Resaca de la Palma;<sup>187</sup> four thousand to twenty thousand at Buena Vista.<sup>188</sup>

In observance of his stated purpose of letting history speak to the heart, he leaves no battlefield without inspecting every body lacerated, mutilated, drenched in gore. A widow holds the severed head of her husband in her lap and fends off hovering vultures;<sup>189</sup> a bayonet pierces a soldier’s skull, entering his mouth and emerging behind his ear.<sup>190</sup> As Jesse Alemán points out, Prescott himself was not above retailing this kind of gruesome image as *The Conquest of Mexico* shifts from romanticism to the gothic. Up

---

<sup>183</sup> [Theodore Parker], “Washington and his Generals; or, Legends of the Revolution,” (Review), *Massachusetts Quarterly Review* 1, no. 1 (December 1847): 125.

<sup>184</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 33.

<sup>185</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 27.

<sup>186</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 60.

<sup>187</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 81.

<sup>188</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 136.

<sup>189</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 54-5.

<sup>190</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 91.

until the return of the *conquistadores* to Tenochtitlan after the *Noche Triste*, Prescott maintains a certain judicious circumspection about the mechanics of human sacrifice and cannibalism. But when the Spanish return to the city for its final conquest and destruction, heads literally roll, and in profusion. Alemán suggests that this shift has something to do with Prescott's own latent racial anxiety: "the romance of indigenous adversaries darkens as their terrifying resistance inspires the gothic in the romantic historian whose greatest fear in the 1840s may very well be collective racial rebellion to Anglo imperialism."<sup>191</sup>

More significantly, Lippard partakes of Prescott's toleration. He dismisses the idea that Americans are all of one origin.

We are no Anglo-Saxon People. No! All Europe sent its exiles to our shores. From all the nations of Northern Europe, we were formed. Germany and Sweden and Ireland and Scotland and Wales and England, aye and glorious France, all sent their oppressed to us, and we grew into a new race.<sup>192</sup>

Neither are they all of one state. He invokes soldiers hailing from the customary catalogue of farms and prairies, workshops and fields.<sup>193</sup> While it may be that they would ultimately find common cause in their identity as producers, in *Legends of Mexico* Lippard makes clear that in the crucible of war they are fused into one people. The United States bestrides slavish Canada and pusillanimous Mexico, but Lippard imagines a future in which these foreign sovereignties are absorbed rather than simply conquered. The "mongrel" race of the south, consisting of both Spanish and Indian blood, will

---

<sup>191</sup> Jesse Alemán, "The Other Country: Mexico, the United States, and the Gothic History of Conquest," *American Literary History* 2006: 418.

<sup>192</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 16.

<sup>193</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 109.

likewise “melt into, and be ruled by” the people of the U.S.<sup>194</sup> To demonstrate exactly how this will happen, Lippard both opens and closes the novel with scenes of American soldiers taking Mexican women as wives—in both cases after facing their brides’ fathers in battle.

Ned Buntline—the pseudonym of Edward Zane Carroll Judson (1813-1886)—emerged, like Lippard, from the journalistic tradition. In 1849 he would help instigate the Astor Place Riot in New York, in which devotees of the homegrown acting style of Edwin Forrest, who had made his reputation acting in the plays of Robert Montgomery Bird, would face off against the audience of English actor William Charles Macready (the latter actor feted by William Hickling Prescott<sup>195</sup>). Buntline’s *The Volunteer; or, The Maid of Monterey: A Story of the Mexican War* (1847) was, like *Legends of Mexico*, a hastily composed pulp novel, although composed along more conventional novelistic lines. The titular character is George Blakey, a vigorous young Kentuckian who raises a company of volunteers and goes to Mexico. Among Blakey’s other accomplishments, notes Buntline, he is well informed about current events and well read in current literature despite his lack of formal education—the result, Buntline writes, of regular reading or two or three newspapers in his rural isolation.<sup>196</sup>

Blakey is in effect a cut-rate, James Polk-era Francis Berrian. Yet his mission to Mexico is not to free a neighboring country from oppression but (ostensibly) to defend the honor of his own. When he arrives south of the border, nothing is as it seems. Early

---

<sup>194</sup> Lippard, *Legends*, 15.

<sup>195</sup> Prescott unsuccessfully attempted to arrange a dinner for Macready in the early 1840s; he was more successful in 1848, an occasion the actor recalled as “*very elegant*.” (Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott*, 164; 283. Italics original.)

<sup>196</sup> Ned Buntline [Edward Zane Carroll Judson.] *The Volunteer; or, the Maid of Monterey: A Story of the Mexican War* (Boston: Elliott, Thomes & Talbot: 1847), 5.

in his military career Blakey makes prisoner of a Mexican officer. “He” turns out to be a woman, Edwina Canales, sister of a notorious guerilla chief, who speaks surprisingly good English. She is as loyal to her country’s cause as Blakey is to his, but Blakey frees her since ““Americans never war upon women!””<sup>197</sup> One of Blakey’s fellow volunteers, the Texan Ranger Gorin, recognizes the trousered Edwina Canales: she is Helen Vicars, a half-American, half-Mexican woman who had been “born in the province of Texas, while the Mexican flag waved over its soil. Yet when the province revolted,” she adds, “we joined not with the Mexican arms. We became Texans in the true sense of the word.”<sup>198</sup> The brutish Gorin, having been discouraged in his improper advances, had assembled a party of “Regulators” who murdered Edwina/Helen’s parents; now he makes repeated attempts on her life.

Just as Prescott breathed life into his Indian characters, the tragic Montezuma and the hapless Atahualpa, Buntline peoples his narrative with individuated black and Mexican characters as well as white ones. Gorin has a slave described as so lazy as to appear narcoleptic.<sup>199</sup> On the other hand, Edwina’s brother the guerilla leader has a statuesque black body servant “with a step wondrously light and agile for one of his bulk and build” whose son, “having a face expressive of great intelligence,” acts as a spy on his own recognizance.<sup>200</sup> Blakey employs a Mexican guide “who, recreant to all feelings of honor or principles of patriotism, was serving his country’s foe for gold.”<sup>201</sup> Gorin

---

<sup>197</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 10.

<sup>198</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 57.

<sup>199</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 42.

<sup>200</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 28-9.

<sup>201</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 31.

hires a Mexican spy, too, although his is actually a double agent who serves Edwina/Helen and her brother.<sup>202</sup>

Nationality is similarly ambiguous. Edwina/Helen has a “brilliantly clear” complexion<sup>203</sup> and speaks in a “pure English,”<sup>204</sup> while Gorin’s “dark appearance and perfect command of the Spanish language enabled him to pass easily through the country.”<sup>205</sup> Gorin admits to having been brought up in a Spanish settlement in Texas, though he considers himself an American. His sense of patriotism is so lax that he offers himself to Santa Anna, who boasts he has “a full company of deserters, mostly Irish, German, and French Catholics.” This treason Buntline clearly considers morally unacceptable.<sup>206</sup> Yet it seems that Buntline values national loyalty above the particular nation to which one is loyal: the affection of Blakey and Edwina/Helen is sealed over the mutual understanding that duty to their respective countries must keep them apart.<sup>207</sup>

Having made patriotism the supreme good and betrayal of country an unpardonable offense, how can Buntline give his fictional lovers the requisite happy ending? His novel was published while the war still continued: as Edwina’s brother acknowledges, in words that recall the lengths to which Cortes was brought in his determination to subdue the country: “My countrymen are as stubborn as mules. They will struggle, even though defeated on every hand; you must crush, nay extirpate, before you can conquer them!”<sup>208</sup> Buntline’s plot calls for Blakey rescuing his lover on three

---

<sup>202</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 22.

<sup>203</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 16.

<sup>204</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 9.

<sup>205</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 67.

<sup>206</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 68.

<sup>207</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 60.

<sup>208</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 111.

separate occasions, with her returning the favor almost as often. The obligations that the lovers owe each other ultimately seem to trump those they owe their respective countries.

On each side family members doubt the appropriateness of the union: Blakey's mother complains that "blue eyes are prettier than black ones, any day!"<sup>209</sup> and Edwina/Helen's brother laments that she has taken up with someone of Saxon blood, but his fiancée insists that Blakey's deeds are more indicative of his character than his descent.<sup>210</sup> When Blakey's tour of duty is over, Edwina/Helen's brother gives his blessing: "We give you are deepest treasure, noble American; we know that you will guard and cherish her. You have won her by your own prowess. Take her, and God bless you!"<sup>211</sup>

Buntline follows the precedent of the writers discussed in Chapter 3 who use Latin American settings to present North American realities. But in *The Volunteer* the characters are themselves almost all American. The transplanted United States society of the U.S. War with Mexico allows for the kind of interactions among classes and races often apparent during times of armed conflict, when fraternization with sympathetic soldiers and brave people of color is possible. Love can blossom with a Mexican donna who turns out to be Helen Vicars—not so very foreign after all.

Lippard and Buntline are more unambiguous in their celebration of the war's aims and the ambitions of the United States than is Prescott. But like him they are willing to "make room upon the earth" for difference; to acknowledge people on the margins and in border areas; to admit that the boundaries that separate nations and races are sometimes transgressed and that these transgressions are not always apparent. Their compromises

---

<sup>209</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 105.

<sup>210</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 88.

<sup>211</sup> Buntline, *Volunteer*, 115.

were ones that proslavery advocates in the South, looking at slavery in Cuba and Brazil, steadfastly refused to make.



BRASILIAN SEDAN.

**Chapter 5:** Southerners were wary of drawing close connections between U.S. slavery and that of Brazil. As these illustrations from Thomas Ewbank's *Life in Brazil; or, a Journal of a Visit to the Land of the Cocoa and the Palm* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856) suggest, urban slaves took the place of modern infrastructure in Brazilian cities: yoked to massive trucks like oxen, they drew freight through the city streets; in the absence of omnibuses, slaves ferried passengers in sedan chairs.



ENTRANCE TO A COFFEE ESTATE.

This Cuban coffee estate from "Three Weeks in Cuba, by an Artist" (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine* VI: xxxii [January 1853], 172) is depicted in a manner that emphasizes its exoticism, and possibly its decadence. Some Southerners worried that Cuba was another Haiti in the making.

## Chapter 5

### An Even More Peculiar Institution

#### Expressions of Southern Exceptionalism in a Hemispheric Context, 1848-1861

In comparison with the decades that preceded them, the 1850s in the United States were marked by less national reticence on the subject of slavery. The problem posed by the disposition of the former Mexican territory—its division into states slave or free, and the authority entitled to determine that division—quickly entered the national discourse. The Compromise of 1850, the implications of the Fugitive Slave Act, the riots in Bleeding Kansas and the Pottawatomie Massacre, the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision and John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry all acted as catalysts that impelled people to speak up and choose sides. Politics provided sides to join: the Liberty Party, the Free Soil Party, and ultimately the Republican Party addressed the issue of slavery more directly, even as the Whig Party, which had muted discussion in order to gather both North and South under its big tent, collapsed. Citizens previously silent or uncommitted suddenly found their voices. The paranoia of hysterical Southerners suddenly appeared justified to some, while the erstwhile fanaticism of Northern abolitionists seemed less extreme to others. When William Hickling Prescott’s friend, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, suffered a caning by Preston Brooks of South Carolina on the very floor of the U.S. Senate in 1856, Prescott wrote to him, “There are few in old Massachusetts, I can assure you, who do not feel that every blow on your cranium was a blow on them.”<sup>1</sup> The middle ground of silence, where people quietly or

---

<sup>1</sup> William Hickling Prescott to Charles Sumner, quoted in Rollo Ogden, *William Hickling Prescott* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), 199.

cautiously spoke in whispers or in metaphor to avoid giving offense, did not disappear entirely, but it was shrinking.

And yet overt discussion of U.S. slavery was not the only context in which U.S. slavery was discussed. As David Potter wrote memorably of the period of the “impending crisis,” “Questions of tariff policy, of banking policy, of public land policy, of subsidy to railroads—all loomed large and engendered strong feelings. Such questions were not necessarily sectional, and on their face they seemed unrelated to slavery, but they tended to get translated into terms of sectional conflict, with slavery somehow involved.”<sup>2</sup> To Potter’s list might be added the way Latin America was talked about in the 1850s: it continued to serve as a context for what could not be said overtly. For Southerners, it even allowed the expression of a very particular manifestation of the proslavery argument.

Although they felt increasingly beleaguered by a world that was turning away from slavery, proslavery U.S. Southerners refrained from claiming common cause with Cuba and Brazil, the last remaining slave societies in the New World besides themselves, or holding these societies up as exemplars of how bondage could be adapted to a variety of circumstances or how it could thrive in foreign cultures. Indeed, in some of the Southern discourse about Cuba and Brazil, these foreign slave systems are almost incidental: what interested U.S. slaveholders was the land itself, rich with unexploited potential. Many Southern accounts of these regions read like real estate prospectuses, descriptions of places that might alternately be colonized by North American know-how or used to contain the unnecessary overflow of natural slave increase.

---

<sup>2</sup> David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (Edited & Completed by Don E. Fehrenbacher), (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 145.

When U.S. slaveholders did analyze the practical workings of slavery in Brazil and Cuba, when they compared themselves to their Latin American counterparts, they found more basis for contrast than for community. Cuba and Brazil were slave systems that the United States defined itself against rather than peers who might aid them in their defense of slavery. In their painstaking analyses of the way slavery worked in Cuba and Brazil, proslavery Southerners found negative examples rather than usable models for versatile deployment of slave labor or more effective management of plantations. They pounced on data about Cuba and Brazil not for offshore evidence of slavery's superiority to other systems, but proof that their own version of the peculiar institution was in fact unique. Rather than glorifying slavery in the abstract, U.S. Southerners carefully framed their observations of Cuban and Brazilian slavery to particularize their celebration of slavery in the United States.

By the 1850s the last slave societies remaining in the New World, where human bondage had until recently been widespread, were in Cuba, Brazil, and the Southern United States. In the wake of the English abolition of the international slave trade in 1807, the violent revolution that ended slavery in Haiti at the turn of the nineteenth century, and the emancipation of the slaves of the West Indies in the 1830s, the U.S. South found itself increasingly on the defensive, called upon to answer charges not only from Northern abolitionists but from the world community. During this period when their own slave system was under attack, the conspicuous refusal on the part of Southerners to claim fellowship with those who might seem natural allies reveals a great deal about how they were defining themselves. Despite the fact that they were increasingly outnumbered in a world that organized labor in new ways, U.S. Southerners

were particular about their associates. By estranging Cuba and Brazil, U.S. slaveholders hoped to credibly attribute to Latin Americans the very qualities that antislavery writers attributed to them—cruelty and inhumanity. In the process, they reassured themselves that they were not heirs to the errors that had doomed slavery in Haiti and the West Indies, whose echoes they identified in their Latin American neighbors.

Matthew Pratt Guterl seems to argue something quite different in his *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation*, namely that the master class of the U.S. South was linked to a hemispheric world of slavery with “institutions, cultures, and ‘structures of feeling’ that were not contained by the nation-state.”<sup>3</sup> Guterl’s focus is the private writings and recollections of a “core group”<sup>4</sup> of individual slaveholders who looked with horror and disgust at the effects of emancipation in Haiti and Jamaica (reactions shared in published texts) and with longing at the continuation of slavery in Brazil and Cuba after the U.S. Civil War. His study considers the way the career of slavery in Latin America affected the former masters after the war, when some fled to Brazil while others sought to establish systems of segregation in the wake of the abolition of slavery.

Guterl’s overall observation that U.S. slaveholders were more aware of slave systems outside the U.S. than is generally acknowledged is consistent with the evidence of Southern periodicals and speeches. In this sense Southerners were indeed cosmopolitan. But the public proslavery platform in the decade and a half before the Civil War was reluctant to claim kin between U.S. masters and their Latin American counterparts. Like people all over the U.S., their relationship with their neighbors further

---

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Pratt Guterl, *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Guterl, 9.

south were complex: they admired the real estate, and they recognized certain intersections in their shared history, but they defined themselves in opposition to what they considered dangerously flawed systems of bondage. Thus for all their cosmopolitanism they used comparisons with Latin America in a way specific to the U.S.—though with a specifically Southern inflection.

To search out Southern perspectives on Cuba and Brazil during the 1850s, this chapter draws primarily on political and intellectual discourse of the period 1848 to 1861. The published writings of proslavery apologists, the speeches of Southern legislators in Congress, and articles from the region's three major journals—*DeBow's Review*, *The Southern Literary Messenger*, and *The Southern Quarterly Review*—form the basis of this analysis. Newspaper accounts provide a sense of more localized perspectives. Many of these sources reflect the evolution of attitudes over the period, as new territory was added to the United States, as bitter conflict broke out in Kansas over the extension of slavery, as rumors of the emancipation of Cuban slaves and the scandal of the Ostend Manifesto played upon American hopes of acquiring Cuba. Not all of the material consulted refers to Cuba and Brazil specifically, but it discusses the issues that Southerners were evidently considering when they talked about these regions. Travel accounts and descriptive literature, much of it by Northern authors, that was read and cited by Southerners, helps set Southern comment on Latin America in its wider context.

While Southerners had defended their peculiar institution since the seventeenth century, historians have noted a decisive break when the proslavery defense took on the characteristics of a formalized and sometimes vituperative ideology. This disjuncture

occurred as early as the crisis over the Missouri Compromise and certainly by the 1830s.<sup>5</sup> Southern authors pointed out, with some justification, that defending slavery had never been necessary until the early nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> By the 1840s and '50s, Southerners shed the vestiges of apologetic hesitancy and no longer excused slavery as a flawed economic system that produced undoubted economic advantages; instead, they vigorously justified it as a positive good, superior to other, more exploitive labor systems in societies like England, France, and the industrial North.<sup>7</sup> The best of all social orders, slavery formed the cornerstone of republicanism.<sup>8</sup>

Within this literature of apparent consensus, however, there was considerable regional, political, economic, and cultural variation. Geography, class, and political affiliation strongly influenced Southern priorities. Many people in the older states of the Upper South could foresee a not-distant day when slavery in their region would be no more. In the Deep South, on the other hand, expansionists kept audible the drumbeat of further Latin American conquest up to the Civil War. Yeomen farmers were less committed to slavery than were plantation nabobs, and some of them actively opposed the slave power's claims to the most productive land. Coastal cities had a different take

---

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 80; Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981): 4-6; Eric L. McKittrick, *Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963): 2-5; 20. Henry Field James' proslavery novel *Abolitionism Unveiled; Or, Its Origin, Progress, and Pernicious Tendency Fully Developed* (Cincinnati: E. Morgan & Sons, 1856) associated the need to make the proslavery argument with the rise of abolitionism, which it dated with modest specificity: "About the year 1833 of the Christian era, Abolitionism made its appearance in these United States." (61).

<sup>6</sup> E.N. Elliott wrote in 1860, "When therefore they [the Southern states] were charged with upholding a moral, social, and political evil; and its immediate abolition was demanded, as a matter not only of policy, but also of justice and right, their reply was, we have never investigated the subject. Our fathers left it to us as a legacy, we have grown up with it; it has grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength, until it is now incorporated with every fibre of our social and political existence." (E.N. Elliott, editor, *Cotton is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments* [Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbot & Loomis, 1860], ix).

<sup>7</sup> Fox-Genovese and Genovese, 110.

<sup>8</sup> Fox-Genovese and Genovese, 77.

on the importance of slavery than did land-bound plantations, and residents of Charleston thought differently about slavery than did those of New Orleans. Southerners responded to abolitionists and antislavery writers as diverse as Frederick Douglass, Theodore Dwight Weld, William Lloyd Garrison, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. They argued as both Whigs and Democrats. They found scriptural justifications for bondage in the Bible, but they also utilized the new science of ethnography, at least as articulated by friendly witnesses like Josiah Nott. They alternately invoked slavery as a lovingly-preserved institution from the classical world and an up-to-date system necessary for economic progress.

Nonetheless, some proslavery advocates did presume to speak for the whole South, and articulated the shared concerns of the region long before Secession. Among the best examples of this deliberate show of consensus are the Southern journals that attempted to give a voice to an admittedly diverse set of communities, and promoted common interests like the preservation of slavery and the danger of federal regulation of it. Southern intellectuals, many of whom knew and corresponded with each other, made a conscious effort to supply answers to the difficult questions posed by abolitionists in the 1850s about the brutality and backwardness of an economic system that seemed increasingly antiquated.<sup>9</sup> They also showed a particular sensitivity to Northern attacks on slavery in particular and the Southern way of life in general, and supplied extensive, tightly structured replies. Spooked by what they saw as Northern aggression, Southerners

---

<sup>9</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust inserts a chart that maps the interpersonal connections among the most prominent politicians, novelists, scientists, and clergymen who defended slavery in "A Southern Stewardship: The Intellectual and the Proslavery Argument," *American Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 68.

were more successful in circling the wagons in defense of slavery than were Northerners unilateral in condemnation of it.<sup>10</sup>

The historian David Donald concluded that in an increasingly modern world the proslavery project was an exercise in nostalgia, “not so much defending slavery-as-it-was as . . . dreaming of the South-as-it-might-have-been.”<sup>11</sup> Yet Donald’s evocation of the Lost Cause *avant la lettre* does not quite explain the exertion that writers applied to their task. More convincing is James Oakes’ allusion to fear: “While the slave economy was being transformed from within, its importance outside the South was waning. Corresponding declines in the South’s demographic predominance and political authority were brought into sharp relief by the increasing volume of Northern antislavery rhetoric.”<sup>12</sup> Southerners were keenly conscious of abolitionist attacks against them, and able to perceive the statistics that backed up Northern arguments in a rapidly changing world. Proslavery discourse attempted to rebut abolitionist charges point for point. But it was also evidently intended to remind Southerners why they were right, to strengthen their resolve and dispel their doubts.

*DeBow’s Review* provides a good example of proslavery’s most myopic lens. Superficially a business journal that ran articles and statistical overviews that would not be entirely out of place in a modern commercial publication, the July 1857 issue included features on “The Wealth, Resources, and Hopes of Virginia,” “The Industrial Resources

---

<sup>10</sup> For one perspective on the origins of this unity, see Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and its Aftermath* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 106 ff. Similarly, as Leonard L. Richards points out, time after time doughface Democrats caved in to Southern demands and helped push many proslavery measures through Congress in the antebellum period. See Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 112-33.

<sup>11</sup> David Donald, “The Proslavery Argument Reconsidered,” *The Journal of Southern History* 37, no. 1 (February, 1971): 17.

<sup>12</sup> James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 228.

of Delaware,” shipping, patents, and the national budget.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, editor James Dunwoody Brownson DeBow’s eclectic tastes (or perhaps the limitations on available material for publication) permitted the inclusion of notices of new books, an article by George Fitzhugh about the modern relevance of Aristophanes’ “Ecclesiazusæ,” a piece on anthropology, and an exposé of exploited Chinese workers brought to the West Indies.

Yet the modern reader cannot proceed very far into any of these pieces—or, indeed, into thousands of others published in journals like *The Southern Literary Messenger* or the *Southern Quarterly Review* in the 1850s—without seeing them turned into a defense of white Southern superiority or a justification for slavery. To peruse this material with admitted hindsight is to recognize a people arming themselves for a coming struggle. Thus George Fitzhugh’s reading of Aristophanes noted that “the Athenian dames were but a little behind the modern free-love and infidel Amazonide who fight shoulder to shoulder with the free negroes and Black Republicans of the North.”<sup>14</sup> “The Industrial Resources of Delaware” noted that the state still held 3,000 slaves in bondage and was therefore a “sister State” to the South.<sup>15</sup> The hypocrisy of both England and the abolitionist North was manifest in the former case by the use of “coolies” to grow sugar in Mauritius<sup>16</sup> and in the latter by the provisioning of slave trading vessels making the voyage between Africa and Cuba in Long Island.<sup>17</sup> “The Earth and its Indigenous Races,” a capsule discussion of an 1857 book edited by Josiah Nott and published in Philadelphia, argued that the differences among the world’s languages and the varying

---

<sup>13</sup> *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 1 (July 1857).

<sup>14</sup> George Fitzhugh, “Black Republicanism in Ancient Athens,” *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 1 (July 1857): 24.

<sup>15</sup> “The Industrial Resources of Delaware,” *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 1 (July 1857): 27.

<sup>16</sup> “The Coolie Trade,” *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 1 (July 1857): 31.

<sup>17</sup> “The African Slave Trade,” *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 1 (July 1857): 51.

quality of the artistic productions of various peoples suggested that “there were many creations, in different zones of the habitable earth”;<sup>18</sup> thus the ancestors of the Europeans and of the Africans had no common origin. A short piece on agricultural patents poked fun at the idea that beet sugar would ever eclipse “slave-made sugar.”<sup>19</sup> A book review of *White Oak Farm* cast a skeptical glance at the novel’s moralizing on the subject of slavery. The work’s theme, that “the slave is our fellow-creature” might be just as easily thrown back in the faces of its Northern adherents: “it is a pity our yankee [sic] brothers will not admit as much practically for the free negroes, who are always at their doors.”<sup>20</sup>

It can legitimately be asked for how large a constituency these journals spoke. “Did the intellectuals discussed here have much influence? Did they, as it were, speak for their people, in particular the slaveholders?” asks Eugene Genovese at the beginning of *Slaveholders’ Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860*. “The answer to both questions is yes.”<sup>21</sup> Even when proslavery’s most hysterical voices did not speak for everyone, they often spoke the loudest, and their opponents kept quiet.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, it should be kept in mind that behind the public face of proslavery apologetics lurked private doubts and misgivings. In their diaries and in letters to friends, Southerners confided fears of slave insurrections and questions about the absolute rightness of slavery that they did not admit in public. In a personal letter to

---

<sup>18</sup> J.D.B. DeBow, “The Earth and its Indigenous Races,” *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 1 (July 1857): 71.

<sup>19</sup> M. Gross, “The Agricultural Bureau of the Patent Office—Its Operations and Reports,” *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 1 (July 1857): 84.

<sup>20</sup> “Editorial—Book Notices, Etc.,” *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 1 (July 1857): 108.

<sup>21</sup> Eugene Genovese, *Slaveholders’ Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 1.

<sup>22</sup> As William Freehling writes, “Embattled minorities’ power over sleepy majorities . . . repeatedly drove the drama.” (William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* [New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 532.)

his friend George Frederick Holmes in 1855, the strident proslavery advocate George Fitzhugh wrote, “I assure you, Sir, I see great evils in slavery, but in a controversial work I ought not to admit them.”<sup>23</sup> Published discourse kept a resolutely fearless face on the practicality of slave society: the booster personality defined the developing territories of the antebellum United States, and slave owners fit the booster stereotype.<sup>24</sup> Trumpeting the superiority of slavery in the U.S. involved proclaiming the inferiority of slavery in Cuba and Brazil.

In drawing up their examinations of Cuba and Brazil, Southerners drew upon the same sources to which latter-day historians have referred, namely export and census statistics and travel accounts, and they sometimes complained about the inherent biases of this material. “The progress and present condition of this empire [Brazil], so rich in nature’s choicest gifts, are then to us matters worthy of investigation. Unfortunately, at the outset, we encounter the difficulty of obtaining information, and it becomes necessary to draw one’s inference from works written either by Northerners or Europeans,” explained one article.<sup>25</sup> But the attitudes these writings reflected would not necessarily have offended proslavery sentiments. Typical accounts of travel in Cuba and Brazil, even when offering firsthand observations by Northerners, traded in a finite vocabulary of stereotypes that fit perfectly into Southern publications. Julia Ward Howe, who would

---

<sup>23</sup> Quoted by C. Vann Woodward in the introduction to George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! or Slaves without Masters*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 1960), xvii. William Freehling cites a blatant case of hypocrisy in the case of James Henry Hammond, whose 1845 *Letters to Clarkson* alternately minimized and denied charges of brutality and sexual domination by masters over their slaves. As Freehling points out, Hammond’s private life told rather a different story. (Freehling, *Road to Disunion II*, 27-34.)

<sup>24</sup> But boosters in the West did not engage in the same defensive stance that typifies Southern boosterism. For a discussion of boosters, see William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 31-41, and Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1973), 124-34.

<sup>25</sup> “Slavery in Brazil—The Past and Future,” *DeBow’s Review* 28, no. 4 (October, 1860): 479.

go on to produce the lyrics to “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” the Civil War Union anthem, had few kind words for the blacks of the Caribbean. She described her first glimpse of “the raw material out of which Northern Humanitarians have spun so fine a skein of compassion and sympathy” during a voyage recounted in *A Trip to Cuba*, published by Ticknor and Fields in 1860.

The negro of the North is an ideal negro; it is the negro refined by white culture, elevated by white blood, instructed even by white iniquity;—the negro among negroes is a coarse, grinning, flat-footed, thick-skulled creature, ugly as Caliban, lazy as the laziest of brutes, chiefly ambitious to be of no use to any in the world.<sup>26</sup>

In a review of the book, the *Southern Literary Messenger* commented approvingly on the “moderate” tone in which Howe described the “vexed question of slavery,” and surmised that abolitionist audiences would be less than pleased with Howe’s asides.<sup>27</sup>

In many of their analyses of Cuba and Brazil, proslavery writers focused on the land itself rather than the sometimes radically different deployment of slave labor. That slavery thrived in these regions was not insignificant: U.S. Southerners recognized that there were only certain geographic regions where a plantation-based, agriculturally intensive economy proved viable, and many doubted that slave labor could be effectively used in contexts other than physical work requiring little judgment or initiative.<sup>28</sup> But overt comparisons with alternate slave societies were not the point of these geographical assessments. Instead, these critiques offered extensive catalogues of agricultural and mineral resources, assembling figures on exports and human capital with almost proprietary interest. Although Southerners expressed doubts about the way the Spanish

---

<sup>26</sup> Julia Ward Howe, *A Trip to Cuba* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1860), 12. Here Howe is commenting on the population of emancipated slaves in Nassau.

<sup>27</sup> “Notices of New Works: *A Trip to Cuba*,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 30, no. 3 (March 1860): 236.

<sup>28</sup> Cobb, ccxvii.

and Portuguese developed these resources and deployed labor, they fairly salivated in describing the wealth of Cuba and Brazil, measuring harbors and calculating profits on potential harvests as if they expected to take immediate possession. This territory contained infinite possibilities for the expansion of U.S. influence and sometimes U.S. control.

Southerners expressed frustration about the difficulty of obtaining information about these tempting regions. Matthew Fontaine Maury of Virginia, one of the first Americans to survey Brazil, bristled with indignation about the “Japanese-like policy which has been observed with regard to scientific explorations of La Plata and its tributaries [and] has kept the world in the dark as to many parts of that valley.”<sup>29</sup> But descriptions of Cuba provide a clue about why the Brazilians had reason to be secretive. A report published in 1854, at the height of the filibuster period, listed, besides the usual statistics on population, climate, and natural resources, an extensive survey of the military force of the island along with the ships in the navy and the number of guns borne by each.<sup>30</sup> Clearly conquest was a constant subtext.

Proslavery thought betrayed perhaps its greatest regional variation over the issue of national expansion. Even when most Southerners supported further acquisition of Latin American territory, competing motivations lurked behind their impulses—to provide more proslavery legislators in Congress, to mark territory and check the spread of free labor, to have a place to banish unnecessary blacks.<sup>31</sup> New Orleans had economic reasons for supporting U.S. expansion into the Caribbean: city leaders could see that the railroads of the North were intercepting more and more of the freight that had formerly

---

<sup>29</sup> Matthew Fontaine Maury, “Valley of the Amazon,” *DeBow’s Review* 14, no. 5 (May, 1853): 453.

<sup>30</sup> “Cuba as it is in 1854,” *DeBow’s Review* 17, no. 3 (September, 1854): 223-4.

<sup>31</sup> See for example *The Ruling Race*, 148-9.

passed down the Mississippi to the port of the Crescent City, and they hoped to restore their market share of the nation's trade.<sup>32</sup> The Upper South, on the other hand, was more lukewarm about further conquest, except as a place of exile for its surplus slaves. This attitude concerned some in the Deep South. If the demand for laborers in the proposed tropical regions of the U.S. drained the old seacoast states of its bondmen so quickly that the political *bona fides* of even such proslavery stalwarts as Maryland and Virginia were in question, what would happen to the fragile sectional balance in Congress?<sup>33</sup> "It is not generally known, yet it is nevertheless true that two-thirds of the people of Virginia are open and undisguised advocates of ridding the State of Slavery," warned *The Augusta Chronicle*.<sup>34</sup>

Southern acquisitive impulses typically focused more on Cuba, a nearby colony of a worn-out European power, rather than on Brazil, a faraway, independent empire. Throughout the 1850s, Spain's grip on its ever-faithful isle seemed conspicuously tenuous. Two potential dangers argued strongly in favor of Cuban annexation by the U.S. First, an independent Cuba, without Spanish control, might prove easy prey for British or French colonization. Second, given the high black population, it might as easily proceed down the road already trodden by Haiti and become a black republic. In either case, slavery would end in Cuba. England or France would emancipate the slaves as much out of a desire to eliminate a source of cheap, slave-grown sugar as any misplaced humanitarian impulse.<sup>35</sup> Southerners feared that the well-publicized success

---

<sup>32</sup> Freehling, *Road to Disunion II*, 151.

<sup>33</sup> Freehling, *Disunion*, 155.

<sup>34</sup> "A Sectional War," *Augusta Chronicle* 23 June 1848, 4. Italics original.

<sup>35</sup> "We all remember that, within a few years, the authorities of Spain, and of the local Cuban government, united, found it extremely difficult to resist the intrigues and plottings of British agents, who attempted to effect the abolition of slavery, by exciting the slaves to insurrection, and to a repletion of the horrors and massacres of San Domingo. Were Cuba independent, these diabolical schemes would be immediately

of foreign slaves winning their freedom could inspire slaves in the U.S., and tendencies toward dissatisfaction and resistance might be imported with slaves brought from other societies.

The Gulf states in particular favored seizing Cuba out of fear of the effects of Cuban emancipation on their slaves at home: “[S]uch an event would entail upon us a struggle with the negro communities upon our Southern borders, resulting, perhaps, in a war of extermination against four millions of free blacks,” raved the *New Orleans Times Picayune* in 1854.<sup>36</sup> In the Senate, Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana, possibly remembering the goad to slave insurrection thought to have come from the Haitian revolt, deplored the “pernicious influence upon the social, commercial, and political interests and institutions of the United States” that would result from the abolition of Cuban slavery.<sup>37</sup> The *New Orleans Delta* urged private citizens to come forward “with the sinews of war” in the absence of officially sanctioned U.S. government action.<sup>38</sup>

But what effect would Cuba’s entry into the union have on the economy of the existing sugar-growing areas of the U.S.? The fertile lands of the Caribbean, once under the stewardship of more efficient North American planters, might produce such a surplus that they would drive planters in Louisiana to destitution. And the Cuban slaves, once reproducing at capacity because of the beneficent treatment of North American masters,

---

resumed, and with much prospect of success. Cuba could not enjoy its independence in tranquility, nor can we allow it to be transferred to any other European power; it must, therefore, continue to belong to Spain, or become ours.” (Ashbel Smith, “Our Relations with Cuba,” *DeBow’s Review* 7, no. 6 [December, 1849]: 538.)

<sup>36</sup> “Purchase of Cuba,” *New Orleans Times Picayune* 2 June 1854, 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, First Session, 24 May 1854, 1298. For a discussion of the effect of the Haitian Revolution that whites in the Southern U.S. feared among their slaves, see Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> *The New Orleans Delta*, quoted in “Cuba—A Perilous Inaction,” *The San Antonio Ledger* 8 June 1854, 1.

would render superfluous the slaves of the Upper South, whose value depended upon their being commodities that could be sold to the new cotton-growing regions.<sup>39</sup> DeBow himself tried to paper over this danger with reassuring promises. “It is not saying too much to say that if we hold Cuba, in the next fifty years we will hold the destiny of the richest and most increased commerce that ever dazzled the cupidity of man. And with that commerce we can control the power of the world.”<sup>40</sup> The U.S. possession of Cuba did not necessarily entail the ruin of Louisiana: Cuban sugar was kept cheap by the illegal importation of African slaves, which would cease under U.S. law.<sup>41</sup> Further, with the price of sugar equalized, the United States might use its influence to reduce the tariffs on imported sugar in foreign markets, producing a vastly increased demand for the product.<sup>42</sup>

Expansionist projects were time sensitive, waxing and waning as the probability of the U.S. possession of Cuba appeared proximate or remote and as the Civil War approached. As important were mutually beneficial opportunities for trade between regions that shared certain assumptions. Dreams of Manifest Destiny fired the imagination of Americans following the War with Mexico in 1848.

The North Americans *will* spread out far beyond their present bounds. They *will* encroach again and again on their neighbors. New territories *will* be planted, declare their independence, and be annexed! We have New Mexico and California! We *will* have Old Mexico and Cuba! The Isthmus cannot arrest—nor even the Saint Lawrence!! Time has all of this in her womb,

---

<sup>39</sup> “The Cuba Question,” 540.

<sup>40</sup> “Destiny of the Slave States,” *DeBow’s Review* 17, no. 3 (September, 1854): 281.

<sup>41</sup> J.S. Thrasher, “Cuba and the United States: How the Interests of Louisiana Would be Affected by Annexation,” *DeBow’s Review* 17 no. 2 (August, 1854): 46.

<sup>42</sup> Thrasher, 48.

crowded J.D.B. DeBow in 1848.<sup>43</sup> Cuba, temptingly close to Florida, was the focus of imperialist lust. But the acquisition of “the Gem of the Antilles” proved surprisingly elusive. Spain refused an offer by James Polk to purchase Cuba for \$100 million that year, and a bungled second attempt to buy the island led to the scandal of the Ostend Manifesto in 1854. Between these years, filibusters led by Narciso Lopez and backed by John Quitman, the governor of Mississippi, attempted to seize Cuba by force.<sup>44</sup> Spain hinted that it was contemplating the emancipation of Cuban slaves—a poison pill intended to deter the filibusters, but a threat that turned some Southerners wild with impatience, determined not to see the formation of a black republic ninety miles from American shores.<sup>45</sup>

Meanwhile, the failed entrance of Kansas into the Union as a slave state offered slavery expansionists another incentive for the acquisition of Cuba. Unlike the Western territories of the continental United States, where introducing slavery was at best a questionable proposition, Cuba was territory with an existing, and a flourishing, slave economy. The incorporation of Cuba into the Union would be a comparatively easy way to increase proslavery representation in the U.S. Senate.<sup>46</sup>

The exposure of the Ostend Manifesto and subsequent embarrassment to the administration of Franklin Pierce suppressed schemes to acquire Cuba until James Buchanan became president in 1857. His interest in the island reached a crescendo in 1859, when Congress considered a bill appropriating \$300 million for the president’s

---

<sup>43</sup> “The South American States,” *DeBow’s Review* 6, no. 1 (July, 1848): 9. Italics original.

<sup>44</sup> Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 23-30.

<sup>45</sup> May, 34; see also *Congressional Globe*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, First Session, 24 May 1854, 1299.

<sup>46</sup> May, 36-7.

purchase of Cuba.<sup>47</sup> Once again, however, Spain proved uncooperative, refusing to part with what the rhetoric of the time referred to as the last remaining jewel in its empire. The decade's last serious attempt to gain Cuba foundered.<sup>48</sup>

The lack of unanimity in the Southern effort to make Cuba part of the United States contributed to these missteps. As William Freehling argues, by the 1850s the porous borders of the Upper South, where abolitionists reached out to extend a helping hand to escaping fugitives, became a greater threat to slavery than the failure to acquire Cuba or more of Mexico. Southern politicians applied their energies to keeping Kansas open to slavery not because it offered ideal growing conditions for plantation agriculture but because it served as a buffer between Missouri and freedom.<sup>49</sup>

But the ultimate reason for the hesitation with which Southerners embraced the possibility of further conquest of contiguous Latin American territory may have been its population of slaves and Spaniards, which no amount of rhetorical bleaching would make entirely white. With the end of the U.S. War with Mexico, the Manifest Destiny impulse stumbled. The All-Mexico movement lacked popular support when Americans understood it would involve the prospect of amalgamating a large foreign population. The Rio Grande marked the boundary beyond which it was impossible to imagine the land as empty, where the U.S. urge for possession was forced to butt up against another group of free people who would have to be absorbed rather than dislodged. Proslavery advocates might not have disagreed with the analysis of abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet, although their reaction would have been exactly the opposite of his:

---

<sup>47</sup> May, 171-2.

<sup>48</sup> May, 184.

<sup>49</sup> William W. Freehling, "The Complex Career of Slaveholder Expansionism," *The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 169-73.

I would not despair of the triumph of freedom in the hemisphere, were Mexico to be annexed to this union. For one I would welcome my dark-browed and liberty-loving brethren to our embrace. Aye! let them come with the population of seven and a half millions. One fifth of that number are white, and they are ultra Abolitionists. Two fifths are Indians, and the other two fifths are of the black, and mixed races.<sup>50</sup>

Filibuster attempts to annex Mexico, Honduras, and Ecuador similarly collapsed under the challenge of making citizens of people who had been so effectively vilified.

Although Baltimore native Anna Ella Carroll commended William Walker for his takeover of Nicaragua in 1855 in *A Star of the West*, she expressed her conviction that Mexico's "population of ignorant paupers and criminals . . . could never appreciate our Anglo-American liberty, under the aegis of American laws."<sup>51</sup>

In regard to Cuba, General Felix Huston insisted in a letter to *The Mississippian*, "They are a full blooded white race, and not mongrels, like the Mexicans," but his was a minority view.<sup>52</sup> Even DeBow came to temper his expansionism by the early 1850s, publishing articles that admitted that grave hazards might attend its annexation. Cuba offered little open territory for footloose Southerners; it was already densely populated, and populated with people who were "different from us in nearly every respect, and would not easily coalesce with us. . . . Cuba is now, and will perhaps always be, in the hands of the Spanish race, which can never be assimilated to our own."<sup>53</sup> Legislators

---

<sup>50</sup> Henry Highland Garnet, *The Past and the Present Condition, and the Destiny, of the Colored Race: A Discourse Delivered at the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Female Benevolent Society of Troy, NY, February 14, 1848* (Troy, NY: Steam Press of J.C. Kneeland and Co., 1848), 21.

<sup>51</sup> Anna Ella Carroll, *The Star of the West; or, National Men and National Measures* (Boston: James French and Company, 1856), 172-193; 347. See also Robert E. May, "Reconsidering Antebellum U.S. Women's History: Gender, Filibustering, and America's Quest for Empire" *American Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (December 2005): 1170-1173.

<sup>52</sup> Felix Huston, "Cuba—Freesoilism at the North," from *The Mississippian*, reprinted in *Texas State Gazette* 21 October 1854, 68.

<sup>53</sup> "Cuba and the United States: The Policy of Annexation Discussed," *DeBow's Review* 14, no. 1 (January, 1853): 65.

drawn from such a population were sure to be corrupt.<sup>54</sup> Spanish Cubans would be more likely to migrate to the continental United States than would U.S. Southerners be drawn to Cuba.<sup>55</sup> Were Cuba added to the Union, the North would demand the annexation of Canada, a territory so vast that it would quickly undo any temporary representational advantage to be gained from Cuba.<sup>56</sup>

The territory of Brazil offered another attraction, one only increased by its distance from the United States and the unlikelihood of its incorporation into the Union. By the 1840s whites in the Upper South beheld areas where the soil was exhausted and slaves were superfluous. They foresaw a time when slaves would become a positive burden.<sup>57</sup> In such an instance the South would follow the example of the North, which had banished its freemen after abolition—or sold them beforehand—rather than incorporating them into civil society.<sup>58</sup> At such time, declared *DeBow's* with apparently no conscious irony, the valley of the Amazon offered blacks a “last resting-place upon this continent.”<sup>59</sup> Brazil thus would provide what Cuba, because of its overpopulation, could not supply, in a term used with increasing frequency during the 1850s, “the safety-valve of the Union.”<sup>60</sup> Exiling the unwanted slaves to Brazil, where the indiscriminating Portuguese had not the finer feeling necessary to exhibit prejudice against these black immigrants, would be a blessing to all concerned. “Let the young, the vigorous and healthy of both sexes, the source of future increase, be the sole adventurers selected for

---

<sup>54</sup> “The Cuba Question,” *DeBow's Review* 7, no. 6 (December, 1849): 540.

<sup>55</sup> “Independence of Cuba,” *DeBow's Review* 14, no. 5 (May, 1853): 421.

<sup>56</sup> “Cuba and the United States,” 65.

<sup>57</sup> “Southern Slavery and Its Assailants,” *DeBow's Review* 16, no. 1 (January 1854): 58.

<sup>58</sup> “Direct Foreign Trade of the South,” *DeBow's Review* 12, no. 2 (February, 1852): 145.

<sup>59</sup> “Direct Foreign Trade,” 144.

<sup>60</sup> “Cuba and the United States.” *DeBow's Review* 14, no. 1 (January, 1853): 64; “Direct Foreign Trade,” 147.

this expedition,” proposed the *Southern Literary Messenger*, “and the others left to finish their days in the land of their birth and sojourn.”<sup>61</sup>

The idea that spreading the area of slavery would “dilute the evil” dates at least to Thomas Jefferson, who in an 1820 letter to Lafayette included the amelioration of slave misery in the process of human bondage.<sup>62</sup> During the Missouri Compromise debates, other Southerners added a sinister component to this argument by suggesting that the evil to be avoided by reducing the concentration of slaves was the possibility of insurrection.<sup>63</sup> But when thirty years later in the wake of Texas annexation some Southerners proposed reopening the African slave trade because of the insufficiency of domestic bondmen, they exposed the fallacy of the “Texas-outlet logic.”<sup>64</sup>

Alternately, as was also suggested, an independent Brazil uninfluenced by North American abolitionism would provide a viable getaway for frustrated slaveholders in the event of a U.S. regime unfriendly to slavery.<sup>65</sup> In comparison with Cuba, with its hobbling restrictions imposed by its despotic European colonizer, Brazil was autonomous and relatively tolerant. According to C.S. Stewart, the author of *Brazil and La Plata: The Personal Record of a Cruise*, Brazil’s progress resulted from the flight of the Portuguese court and twenty thousand followers from Napoleon’s advancing army into Rio de Janeiro in 1808. In an instant, according to Stewart, the transplanted Europeans

---

<sup>61</sup> “The Black Race in North America: Why was their Introduction Permitted?” *Southern Literary Messenger* 21, no. 11 (November, 1855): 682.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Volume VII, ed. H.A. Washington (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859), 194.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and its Aftermath* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 48.

<sup>64</sup> William W. Freehling, “The Complex Career of Slaveholder Expansionism,” *The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 167.

<sup>65</sup> Gerald Horne, *The Deepest South: The United States, Brazil, and the African Slave Trade* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007).

introduced active commerce, vibrant arts and culture, and a modern press.<sup>66</sup> Though Brazil was governed with a modern parliamentary system, the presence of a royal sovereign in the person of the emperor, Dom Pedro, assured stability and succession.<sup>67</sup> A monarchy might respect the rights of slaveholders that were imperiled in a democracy so easily swayed by abolitionist sentiment. If abolition passed from threat to reality in the U.S., the region of the Amazon basin would provide a fertile home for the perpetuation of slavery, predicted *DeBow's Review* in 1854.<sup>68</sup> After the Civil War, defeated Confederates—known as *Confederados*—did indeed follow this prescription and decamp for Brazil.<sup>69</sup>

The benefits provided by Cuba and Brazil as territories did not have to involve their susceptibility to U.S. domination. The United States already enjoyed a profitable trade with Cuba, which would be increased if the island won its independence and Spain forfeited the duties it imposed on imports.<sup>70</sup> Even more might be gained by increased trade with the fabulous and unexploited wealth of Brazil, a country that was not held up as the object of imperial takeover. “The ‘policy of commerce,’ and not the ‘policy of conquest,’ is the policy of the United States,” insisted Matthew Fontaine Maury. But Brazil refused to yield its riches. “Has diplomacy no arts, commerce no charms, by

---

<sup>66</sup> C.S. Stewart, *Brazil and La Plata: The Personal Record of a Cruise* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Company, 1856).

<sup>67</sup> Stewart, 110-1.

<sup>68</sup> “Southern Slavery and its Assailants,” 58.

<sup>69</sup> See Cyrus B. Dawsey and James M. Dawsey, editors, *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995). See also Gerald Horne, *The Deepest South: The United States, Brazil, and the African Slave Trade* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007).

<sup>70</sup> “The Independence of Cuba,” *DeBow's Review* 14, no. 5 (May, 1853): 420.

which this policy may be broken up: by which its rivers may be opened to navigation, its forests to settlement, its pampas to cultivation?”<sup>71</sup>

But, however attractive the real estate, U.S. Southerners drew few positive lessons from the slave systems that thrived on the enviable territory of Cuba and Brazil. They preferred to hold up their own version of human bondage as a paragon than to admit they might be schooled by their Latin American counterparts. In spite of the fact slavery advocates in the U.S. used Southern journals to discuss more progressive ways of extracting labor from their bondsmen and –women; more cost-effective ways of feeding, clothing, and housing them; more scientific ways of caring for them in sickness; and more efficacious means of punishing them;<sup>72</sup> they avoided drawing productive lessons from the markedly different deployment of slaves in Cuba and especially in Brazil.

What might they have learned? To take one example, the versatile deployment of slaves in the cities of Latin America might have offered a model for a more urbanized and commercial South: the traveler was sure to notice the variety of employments of slaves in Rio, noted one account.<sup>73</sup> In Cuba second-generation slaves were generally selected “for city labor, becoming postilions, house-servants, draymen, laborers on the wharves, and the like.”<sup>74</sup> Slaves might thus have had a role in the modernizing South championed by *DeBow’s Review*, which employed the occasional tagline “Commerce is

---

<sup>71</sup> Maury, “Valley of the Amazon,” 449; 450.

<sup>72</sup> See for example “The Management of Negroes upon Southern Estates,” *DeBow’s Review* 10, no. 6 (June 1851): 621-7; “The Management of Negroes,” *DeBow’s Review* 11, no. 4 (October-November, 1851): 369-372; “Management of Slaves,” *DeBow’s Review* 17, no. 4 (October, 1854): 421-6; “Management of a Southern Plantation—Rules Enforced on the Rice Estate of P. C. Weston, Esq., of South Carolina,” *DeBow’s Review* 22, no. 1 (January, 1857): 38-44; “Domestic Treatment of Slaves,” *DeBow’s Review* 24, no. 1 (January, 1858): 63-4.

<sup>73</sup> Stewart, 72.

<sup>74</sup> Maturin M. Ballou, *History of Cuba; or, Notes of a Traveller in the Tropics* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1854), 181.

King.”<sup>75</sup> In accounting for the decision not to cite Cuba and Brazil as exemplars, Michael O’Brien declares flatly that “the Old South shared this sense of relevance very little. It was its misfortune mostly to look towards Europe for its comparative cultural understandings, not Brazil or Cuba, with which it shared many experiences.”<sup>76</sup>

But to learn from these societies would be to acknowledge weaknesses in the inviolability of the proslavery defense, and Southerners showed no hesitation in asserting U.S. slavery superior to every other system, ancient and modern. “Domestic slavery in the Southern States has produced the same results in elevating the character of the master that it did in Greece and Rome. He is lofty and independent in his sentiments, generous, affectionate, brave and eloquent; he is superior to the Northerner in every thing but the arts of thrift,” declared George Fitzhugh. And for the slave, bondage secured the benefits falsely promised by the up-to-date “beau ideal of Communism; it [the Southern farm] is a joint concern, in which the slave consumes more than the master, of the coarse products, and is far happier, because although the concern may fail, he is always sure of a support; he is only transferred to another master to participate in the profits of another concern . . . .”<sup>77</sup> If the ideology of U.S. slavery had a ready response to every objection, a retort to every attack, it could only undermine its own superiority by borrowing from and thus putting itself in the ideological debt of its poorer relations.

In two areas only were North American proslavery advocates willing to make even half-hearted associations with Cuba and Brazil. They insisted that it was owing to slavery that Cuba and Brazil were, after them, the most prosperous economies in the New

---

<sup>75</sup> For example, see *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 1 (July, 1857): 1.

<sup>76</sup> Michael O’Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 192.

<sup>77</sup> [George Fitzhugh], *Slavery Justified; by a Southerner* (Fredericksburg, Virginia: Recorder Printing Office, 1850), 9.

World. They pointed out that, like them, Cuba and Brazil had fewer incidents of crime and social unrest. But beyond this, they did not use these societies to buttress their defense of slavery.

According to *DeBow's Review*, the leading journals in Europe acknowledged the contrast between the prosperity and contentment of Cuba, Brazil and the U.S. South and the degradation, poverty, and barbarism of Central and South America and the English and French colonies in the West Indies where slavery had ended.<sup>78</sup> Slavery brought civilization: lacking the peculiar institution, New World societies easily slipped into savagery. But slavery put the U.S. in a rather oddly assorted company. "The civilized world does not condemn [slavery]," insisted Henry Bedinger, U.S. Minister Plenipotentiary to Denmark, in a conversation with British Admiral Sir Charles Napier, "for the United States, Spain, Brazil, Russia, and Turkey (as civilized as some Christian countries I could name) form a considerable part of the civilized world."<sup>79</sup> How were Southern readers expected to understand "civilization" in this context? Specific attributes of Southern progress were more often assumed than enumerated. The South lagged in railroads and manufactures; its citizens had to go North or abroad for education. But defining civilization too loosely drew the United States into an undesired identification with Brazil and Cuba, which were noted for many qualities from which Southerners wished to distance themselves.

Both *DeBow's Review* and the *Southern Quarterly Review* found a happy characteristic of civilization in economic prosperity, which could be quantified. According to David Christy (of Cincinnati, but cited approvingly in proslavery literature),

---

<sup>78</sup> "Cuba: The March of Empire and the Course of Trade" *DeBow's Review* 30, no. 1 (January, 1861): 33.

<sup>79</sup> "Interview between a British Admiral and an American Diplomat," *The Daily Picayune* [New Orleans] 26 May 1854, 1.

civilization was advanced through the cultivation of cotton, which “may be seen freighting every vessel, from Christian nations, that traverses the seas of the globe; and filling the warehouses and shelves of the merchants of two-thirds of the world,” and promoting industry and clothing mankind.<sup>80</sup> Likewise, frequent tables of exports showed the soaring production of sugar in Cuba, coffee in Brazil.<sup>81</sup> Clearly it was slave labor that made possible this output; free labor would not cultivate these resources on the scale possible under slavery, and, without compulsion, black laborers would be content to tend modest garden patches, sustaining no one but themselves.<sup>82</sup> “Without the institution of slavery the great staple products of the South would cease to be grown, and the immense annual results which are distributed among every class of the community, and which give life to every branch of industry, would cease. . . . Brazil, whose slave population nearly equals our own, is the only South American state which has prospered. Cuba, by her slave labor, showers wealth upon old Spain . . .”<sup>83</sup>

The corollary to this equation of civilization with productivity was the charge that, after emancipation, the West Indies slipped back into barbarism. The rate of exports plummeted after the abolition of slavery, with shipment of “less than half the sugar, rum or ginger; less than one-third the coffee; less than one-tenth the molasses; and nearly two

---

<sup>80</sup> David Christy, “Cotton is King; or, Slavery in the Sight of Political Economy” in *Cotton is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments*, 55.

<sup>81</sup> Christy continues, “The principal articles demanded by this increasing commerce have been coffee, sugar, and cotton, in the production of which slave labor has greatly predominated. Since the enlargement of manufactures, cotton has entered more extensively into commerce than coffee and sugar, though the demand for all three has advanced with the greatest rapidity.” (Christy, 57.) For Cuban production, see, among many others, “Cuba and Our Relations with Her” *DeBow’s Review* 26, no. 5 (May, 1859): 589-90. For Brazil, see, among others, “The South American States,” 16.

<sup>82</sup> “The coercion of slavery alone is adequate to form man to habits of labor. Without it, there can be no accumulation of property, no providence for the future, no tastes for comfort or elegancies, which are the characteristics and essentials of civilization. He who has obtained the command of another’s labor, first begins to accumulate and provide for the future, and the foundations of civilization are laid.” (Chancellor Harper, “Slavery in the Light of Social Ethics,” in *Cotton is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments*, 552.)

<sup>83</sup> “The Non-Slaveholders of the South” *DeBow’s Review* 30, no. 1 (January, 1861): 75.

millions of pounds less of pimento, than during the three years which preceded the Emancipation Act.”<sup>84</sup> Vast, once-productive estates were overgrown with weeds, their fine houses in disrepair, their labor force, now freed of discipline, “sunk to the ears in pumpkin, imbibing saccharine juices” while an unharvested crop rotted in the fields.<sup>85</sup> The ease with which the veneer of civilization could be stripped away was evidently a potent threat for Southerners, one that could only be contained by the application of force.

The lack of crime and the presence of social stability were other measures of societal health that flattered the South. Like “civilization,” “crime” and “stability” had to be defined in specific ways. Crimes perpetrated by masters against slaves—cruel and unusual punishments, sexual exploitation—fell outside of the definition. Acts of slave resistance did not count. What Southerners apparently meant by crime was burglary, assault, pickpocketing, prostitution, and riot, vices associated with the dense and diverse population of urban areas, of which the South had few. “While the South has been so much more secure than the North, in life and property, from individual crime, it has been at least equally exempt from social disturbance. The apprehensions of danger from the dissimilarity of its white and black population, have not been realized,” wrote Elwood Fisher in 1849. “Even in Brazil, where this proportion is reversed, where there are two blacks to one white, tranquility has reigned for a quarter of a century.”<sup>86</sup> What should slaves gain by crime? Their wants were provided for, their security assured. They had

---

<sup>84</sup> “Emancipation in the British West Indies,” *Southern Quarterly Review* (April 1853): 426.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Carlyle, “Carlyle on West India Emancipation,” *DeBow’s Review* 8, no. 6 (June, 1850): 530.

<sup>86</sup> Elwood Fisher, “The North and the South, Part III” *DeBow’s Review* 7, no. 4 (October 1849): 310.

no fear of poverty and no opportunity for drunkenness.<sup>87</sup> Since slaves were the property of the master, and therefore an extension of him, it was in his interest to treat them generously; for the slaveholder, labor was capital, and thus there could be no conflict between the two.<sup>88</sup>

Again, the example of emancipated societies provided evidence of how near at hand was chaos, exposing the propensity for disorder as pronounced in “free” Latin America as it was in the North of the United States: out of attempts to establish political equality among the races in Spanish America grew instability, anarchy, and want.<sup>89</sup> But the prime counterpoint to Southern rural stability was the urban, industrial North, where an unpredictable immigrant population imported dangerous “isms” that threatened civil society. In the South, where the African slave trade had been discontinued in 1808, no dangerous foreign ideas were imported.

But too close an identification with the purported civilization and order of Cuba and Brazil posed problems for U.S. Southerners. By many measures, these Latin American societies hardly constituted models of stability and advance. In many accounts, conditions in Brazil and Cuba, however “civilized,” appeared shockingly primitive. In 1856 Thomas Ewbank described the city of Rio substituting human labor for municipal infrastructure: lacking water and sewer pipes, slaves hauled water from common wells and made nightly forays to dump wastes into the bay; in the absence of omnibuses, slaves ferried passengers through the streets in sedan chairs. Slaves waded some fifty feet from the docks to where ships were anchored and returned with one-

---

<sup>87</sup> Thomas R.R. Cobb, *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: T & J.W. Johnson & Company, 1858): ccxiv; Fisher, 310.

<sup>88</sup> Cobb, ccxiv.

<sup>89</sup> Fisher, 310.

hundred-and-sixty-pound sacks of lime or coal or coffee on their heads. Yoked to massive trucks like oxen, they drew freight through the cities: why could there not be at least rails laid along the streets, even wooden ones, to make their progress more efficient, Ewbank mused.<sup>90</sup> It was little wonder, he reflected, that so many crippled slaves filled the streets. The cities of Brazil were bad enough, but the navigator Matthew Fontaine Maury, frequently cited in *DeBow's*, noted, "At present the country is for the most part a wilderness of howling monkeys and noisy parrots . . . only here and there, when you leave the outskirts of the valley and begin to penetrate into the interior, are the traces of civilized man to be found."<sup>91</sup>

Cuba was similarly in a rudimentary state of civilization by most indices. A colony unable to escape the "febrile grasp" of its corrupt and worn-out European oppressor,<sup>92</sup> Cuba was bled dry by restrictive policies proscribing the local production of both flour and wine,<sup>93</sup> stifling industry,<sup>94</sup> and strictly regulating foreign trade. Richard Henry Dana reported that the general education of most of the population was limited, its prospects for self-government dim.<sup>95</sup> For entertainment there was no art or music save the gaudy excesses of Roman Catholicism; for sport there were cockfights and bullfights.<sup>96</sup> Street crime there may not have been, but the Presidio and Grand Carcel of Havana was a prison of shocking brutality, with political offenders in solitary

---

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Ewbank, *Life in Brazil; or, a Journal of a Visit to the Land of the Cocoa and the Palm* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856): 93; 91; 112; 85.

<sup>91</sup> M. F. Maury, Lt. U.S. Navy, "On Extending the Commerce of the South and West by Sea," *DeBow's Review* 12, no. 4 (April 1852): 397.

<sup>92</sup> Ballou, 14.

<sup>93</sup> Howe, 225-6.

<sup>94</sup> Ballou, 216.

<sup>95</sup> Richard Henry Dana, *To Cuba and Back*, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966): 130; 132.

<sup>96</sup> Dana, 109; 96-101.

confinement.<sup>97</sup> Money poured in from the sugar industry, but there was little diversification of agriculture and less development of the island's mineral resources.<sup>98</sup>

Though Southerners believed that slavery assisted in the civilizing process, in itself it was not proof that a given society was in an absolute state of civilization. Southerners were civilized because of their ethnic stock and their gentle breeding; they were well read in the classics and conversant with modern science and politics. When Southerners discussed Latin American nations, civilization was relative: "With equal advantages of soil and climate, the inferiority of the Spanish and Creole character tend to place the countries inhabited and administered by them, even under the best systems, very far behind those in which the Anglo-Saxon element is allowed to operate."<sup>99</sup> Cuba and Brazil remained ignorant, indolent, and benighted by superstition; only in comparison with their neighbors were they far advanced.

An article in the *Southern Literary Messenger* made a similar argument about Indian tribes: those like the Choctaws, Cherokees, Creeks and Chickasaws that adopted slavery demonstrated tremendous progress—roads and houses, books and newspapers, and proper Sabbath observances.<sup>100</sup> Once possessed of slaves, the article argued, Indians had to resign their migratory ways and settle down (another measure of progress that was not applied to antebellum Southerners, who restlessly pressed further West in search of fresh land). A fixed abode necessitated laws of property and courts to administer them; it rewarded education and encouraged diplomacy over warfare. Though the Indians failed in their own devotion to the work ethic, they had learned to make others work for them, a

---

<sup>97</sup> Dana, 93.

<sup>98</sup> Dana, 128-9.

<sup>99</sup> "South American States," 8.

<sup>100</sup> "Slavery among the Indians," *The Southern Literary Messenger* 28, no. 5 (May, 1859), 334.

significant gain in the opinion of the anonymous author. “No people has ever become civilized *except upon the basis of domestic slavery*,” the article affirmed. “It is the foundation upon which all improvement has rested; without it, all mankind would yet be savages.”<sup>101</sup> Yet if the slaveholding Indians of what was referred to as the “South-western border” had escaped savagery, they clearly were not yet the equals of white Southerners. Similarly, proslavery polemicists in the U.S. were willing to concede only relative progress to Cubans and Brazilians, a concession that cost nothing in reckoning their own still more advanced status.

As the sectionalism of the 1850s intensified, proslavery writings supplied Southerners with ready-made arguments with which to resist Northern attacks. Beyond specific criticisms of slavery, Northerners stereotyped Southerners with all the expected slurs: Southerners were indolent and improvident, barbaric in their cruelty and lascivious in their sexuality. As Frederick Pike notes in his analysis of U.S. perceptions of Latin America, there is a consistent vocabulary of pejorative images of the Other that appears across cultures.<sup>102</sup> Consequently, it is not surprising that Southerners turned around and applied to Latin Americans many of the same stereotypes that Northerners applied to them. In particular, they focused on three factors that prevented them from expressing anything but the most cursory and expedient identification with Cuba and Brazil: religion, race, and slave management practice. Each of these factors reveals something essential about Southern understandings of self identity. In comparison with their Latin American counterparts, Southern slaveholders were decorous and God-fearing but also

---

<sup>101</sup> “Slavery among the Indians,” 335. Italics original.

<sup>102</sup> Frederick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 44ff.

independent and up-to-date; they were racially pure—scrupulously so; and as masters they were benign and considerate, but always firmly in control.

The first major obstacle to identification was the fact that both the Spanish in Cuba and the Portuguese in Brazil were Roman Catholics. Significantly, for Southerners the influences of Catholicism had little or nothing to do with the workings of slavery *per se*. Historians Frank Tannenbaum and Stanley Elkins found that the Roman Catholic faith of the Spanish and Portuguese slaveholders acted as a check on their cruelty: it subjected them to oversight from the clergy and forced them to regularize marriages and proscribe labor on Sundays and holydays.<sup>103</sup> Elkins also located in the Church the power to interpose itself between master and slave: a slave could apply to a clergyman for redress of wrongs perpetrated by the master.<sup>104</sup>

But if Southern commentators ever noted such phenomena, they did not remark on them. Rather, their enmity to Catholicism seems reflexive and unselfconscious. In this prejudice, the attitudes of Southerners resembled their Northern neighbors more than might have been expected: in the North of the 1850s, after all, Know Nothings linked “Slavery and Priestcraft:” “one denies the right of a man to his body, and the other the right of a man to his soul.”<sup>105</sup> But as James Oakes writes, “Slaveholders, like other white Americans, indulged in most of the popular prejudices of their day. It did not matter in

---

<sup>103</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1946); Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>104</sup> Elkins, 67-80.

<sup>105</sup> Anson Burlingame, Massachusetts Congressman, in 1854, quoted in Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992): 45.

the least that most of the groups the slaveholders disdained were represented in their own class. They did not like Catholics.”<sup>106</sup>

Typical travel accounts did not associate Catholicism with slaveholding, but they were nonetheless scathing in their attacks of Roman Catholicism as the established religion of Cuba and Brazil. These attacks took amazingly varied, detailed, and sometimes contradictory forms. Observance of the Sabbath was disgraceful, with Sunday ceremonials displaying the splendid costumes and “intoxicating perfumes” of a pageant<sup>107</sup> and the “*Evangel, Kyrie, and Credo . . .* recited to the music of Trovatore and Traviata.”<sup>108</sup> Exiting these stimulating exercises, worshipers thronged the streets and the open stores, attended cockfights, and purchased lottery tickets.<sup>109</sup>

Julia Ward Howe described a visit to the Jesuit College in Havana, where she met two priests, one elderly and devious, the other attractive and ingenuous. Evidently somewhat charmed, in spite of herself, by the younger of the two, Howe finally dismissed him from her thoughts with the realization that he had willed himself into a state of perpetual childishness, never able to question the absurd doctrines of the Church nor, evidently, to assume the offices of a husband and father.<sup>110</sup> But rather than disparaging the stunted and fugitive character of the celibates, travel literature more often titillated its readers with hints of depravity and decadence among the clergy (“[Their] lives were of such a grossly-immoral character that I dare not insult my readers by the particulars . . .” wrote Kidder about candidates for a plantation chaplaincy.<sup>111</sup>) Even the ordinarily

---

<sup>106</sup> Oakes, 130.

<sup>107</sup> Ballou, 80-81.

<sup>108</sup> Howe, 143. Italics original.

<sup>109</sup> Ballou, 83.

<sup>110</sup> Howe, 61.

<sup>111</sup> Kidder, Rev. D.P. and Rev. J.C. Fletcher, *Brazil and the Brazilians* (Philadelphia: Childs & Peterson, 1857): 142.

cautious Richard Henry Dana admitted that “Cuba became a kind of Botany Bay for the Romish clergy.”<sup>112</sup> Kidder saw an unintentional benefit for Brazil in the excesses of the priests: unable to miss the disjuncture between the commandments of the clergy and their own notorious behavior, Brazilians became skeptical of the inflexible rules of the Church and adopted a more tolerant and open-minded attitude than Catholics elsewhere.<sup>113</sup>

From the Southern perspective, Roman Catholicism bred flaws particularly dangerous to slaveholders: credulity, deference, venality. Unlike Southerners, who professed a sober devotion to the tenets of American Protestantism, independent Cubans and Brazilians winked at religious authority because its agents fell so obviously short of its professed ideal.<sup>114</sup> The clergy’s dereliction was a serious matter because the church hierarchy provided no check to the baser impulses of their flocks. Moreover, Roman Catholicism emphasized tradition over the literal reading of scripture. U.S. Southerners found some of their favorite defenses of slavery in the Bible; the history of slave codes in Catholic countries that stretched back to St. Paul and Justinian complicated Southerners’ elaborately worked out scriptural arguments.<sup>115</sup>

But the effect of Catholicism scarred slaves more than masters. Southerners most deplored the syncretic character of Roman Catholicism. The absorption and channeling of paganism into acceptable practice has historically been both a key to Catholic

---

<sup>112</sup> Dana, 118.

<sup>113</sup> Kidder, 143-4.

<sup>114</sup> “Gentlemen rarely attend the services of the church, except as spectators, and I was told that more than two thirds of the young men of the island were open and avowed infidels. They hate both church and priests most cordially, for as one remarked to me ‘they keep us ground down to the earth.’” (Tenella [Mary Bayard Devereux Clarke], “Some Farther Reminiscences of Cuba” *Southern Literary Messenger* 21, no. 12 (December, 1855): 745.

<sup>115</sup> See Mark Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 367-421.

missionary success and a stumbling block to more rigid, and less effective, Protestants.<sup>116</sup> In Cuba and Brazil, pagan rites from Africa were sometimes cloaked in Catholic symbolism, from which they were nearly indistinguishable.<sup>117</sup> “I could have imagined myself in a heathen temple sooner than in a Christian Church,” remarked one Southern visitor to the cathedral in Havana.<sup>118</sup> Because the conversion of Africans from paganism to Christianity was an important element in the justification of U.S. slavery—it was argued that the lot of a Christianized African in America was vastly superior to a heathen African<sup>119</sup>—Christianity of the Catholic variety, which could be enthusiastic in its liturgy and superstitious in its popular practice, was not far enough removed from paganism to give evidence of “civilization.” While Protestant Christianity could be a powerful tool in the management of slaves, especially when under the direction of a wise master, the hybrid devotions of Roman Catholicism allowed slaves to retain too much autonomy.

Secondly, North American travelers observed relations between the races in Cuba and Brazil that differed markedly from their own. In the United States, elaborate disquisitions sought to establish the permanent inferiority of the African and the error of elevating him to anything like equal status. “[T]he negro was created essentially to be a slave, and finds his highest development in that condition,” declared *DeBow’s*.<sup>120</sup> Samuel Cartwright went so far as to insist that “the species of the genus homo are not a unity, but a plurality, each essentially different from the others . . . [the negro is] more

---

<sup>116</sup> For example, in *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), James Axtell compares the conversion rate of the French Jesuits in Canada with that of the English Protestants in New England and finds the latter wanting in sympathy for their “heathen” subjects.

<sup>117</sup> Stewart, 293-4.

<sup>118</sup> Clarke, 745.

<sup>119</sup> See for example Elliott, xiii.

<sup>120</sup> “The West India Islands,” *DeBow’s Review* 5, no. 6 (June, 1848): 487.

like the monkey tribes and the lower order of animals than any other species of the genus man.”<sup>121</sup> In the United States, “the distinction of races has been invariably preserved; or viciously violated by concubinage; and in vice, the loftiest prince and the meanest savage occupy one level.”<sup>122</sup> Persons of mixed race were firmly classified as black.

The racial order of Latin America differed sharply from the U.S. taxonomy. Not only was the proportion of blacks to whites noticeably greater; mixed race people passed easily into the white society of Cuba and Brazil.

The number of negroes and persons of mixed blood within the territory [of Brazil] is estimated as bearing the proportion of five to one of the white population. All of these are not slaves; the bond being estimated as only two-fifths of the whole. The number of free negroes, mulattoes, &c., is hence very considerable. There is probably no state in the world where there is less “prejudice of color” than in Brazil, though a slaveholding state. At court, in the army, in the haunts of business, everywhere may be found freely mingling together persons of every hue.<sup>123</sup>

Cuba was still more willing to incorporate mixed-race people. As Thomas C. Reynolds wrote in 1850,

Free persons of mixed blood in Cuba are ambitious of classing themselves with the whites; the policy of the government, its laws, the customs of the white creoles themselves, and the almost entire absence, among the Spanish officials, of prejudices on the subject of color, afford facilities for their quiet admission into the class of whites. These circumstances, and, in some cases, the real difficulty in deciding claims based on shades of color and questions of genealogy, as well as the leaning of the ecclesiastical authorities toward the assumption, that every child brought to the baptismal font is white, unless the contrary be notorious, have doubtless operated so as to throw into the class of whites, in the census, many who would, in most of the southern States of our Union, be considered “free people of color.”<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>121</sup> Samuel Cartwright, “The Prognathous Species of Mankind,” *Slavery Defended*, 139.

<sup>122</sup> “Amalgamation,” *DeBow’s Review* 29, no. 1 (July, 1860): 2.

<sup>123</sup> Cobb, ccvi. A similar observation is made by Charles Wilkes in *Voyage Round the World: Embracing the Principal Events of the Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* (Philadelphia: Geo.W. Gorton, 1849), 17.

<sup>124</sup> Thomas C. Reynolds, “Cuba—Its Position, Dimensions and Population” *DeBow’s Review* 8, no. 4 (April 1850): 315.

Significantly, this tacit acknowledgment of the higher rate of manumission in Latin America was not understood by U.S. Southerners as indicative of a milder form of slavery; the large number of free people, and their easy transition into white society, signified a kind of blindness, the inability to distinguish very dissimilar racial groups.

Thomas Dew, a professor at the College of William and Mary, insisted that the skewing of population ratios in favor of the Africans presented no threat to well-ordered slave societies: more slaves meant more wealth, and more wealth meant more public services including, if necessary, a police force to control restive slaves.<sup>125</sup> But more often Southerners expressed the sentiment that the proportion of blacks to whites was a delicate matter indeed. In 1854 Stephen Mallory, Senator from Florida, introduced a resolution in Congress condemning Spain for the “Africanization” of Cuba, importing so many illegal blacks onto the island as to produce a volatile tipping point. The importation of African slaves was a conscious provocation of the U.S. government, Mallory argued, a known formula for producing instability on an island only a few hours away from American soil.<sup>126</sup>

Mallory’s horror of Africanization referred to a conspiracy attributed to Spain as a way to keep its colony in check. Maturin M. Ballou, the author of *History of Cuba* published in Boston at the height of the filibuster period, posited an infernal alliance between Spain and England to allow the importation of Africans into the island in an attempt to maintain a high ratio of blacks to Europeans and a cynical policy of enrolling blacks as regular troops in the army. “[T]he Spanish authorities have . . . constantly endeavored to weaken the bonds of attachment between master and slave, and to ferment

---

<sup>125</sup> Thomas R. Dew, “Professor Dew on Slavery,” *The Pro-Slavery Argument; As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States* (Walker, Richards & Company, 1852), 470.

<sup>126</sup> *The Congressional Globe*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, First Session, 16 May 1854, 1194.

the unnatural hatred of races with fearful design of preparing another St. Domingo for the Cubans, should they dare to strike a strenuous blow for freedom.”<sup>127</sup> The white creoles, outnumbered by the armed blacks, would not dare to rebel against Spanish tyranny, knowing that the ultimate result would be another black republic after the pattern of Haiti. Five years after Mallory’s resolution, when the acquisition of Cuba was again being debated in the Senate, Judah P. Benjamin warned that because of the Spanish policy of arming former slaves, “the bayonets of the black race threaten . . . an exterminating war of races.”<sup>128</sup>

Once a slave won his freedom in Latin America, observers noted few barriers to hold back his advance. John Esaias Warren’s 1851 *Para; or, Scenes and Adventures on the Banks of the Amazon*, described how Brazilian slaves, after completing the comparatively little labor required of them each day, were allowed to work gainfully and save money against their own emancipation. One enterprising black whom Warren met had been loaned money to purchase his freedom, which he repaid by starting his own business hiring out laborers in the loading and unloading of freight.<sup>129</sup> Blacks formed a significant presence in the armies of both Cuba and Brazil. Ballou anticipated that in Cuba free blacks would soon be admitted to holy orders and Stewart reported that freedmen were already members of the clergy.<sup>130</sup> The same civil rights and rights of property applied to free members of both races in Cuba.<sup>131</sup> Kidder pointed out that there

---

<sup>127</sup> Ballou, 189-90.

<sup>128</sup> *The Congressional Globe*, 35th Congress, Second Session, 12 February 1859, 962.

<sup>129</sup> John Esaias Warren, *Para; or, Scenes and Adventures on the Banks of the Amazon* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1851): 65-6.

<sup>130</sup> Ballou, 60; Stewart, 72.

<sup>131</sup> Dana, 121-2.

were few checks to the social advance of a freed slave and concluded that the consequent collapse of slavery in Brazil was imminent.<sup>132</sup>

Yet this toleration and colorblindness had the immediate result that the races were clearly mixed. George M. Colvocoresses, who wrote an account called *Four Years in the Government Exploring Expedition*, claimed that the population of Rio was “perhaps more mixed than that of any other city in the world” and Julia Ward Howe made a similar claim for Cuba, adding that mixed blood ran in the veins of even the wealthiest and most important families there.<sup>133</sup>

What is critical to recognize, of course, is that for Southerners this absence of racial prejudice indicated not tolerance but moral carelessness. “Amalgamation, to any great extent, is a moral impossibility,” stated Thomas R.R. Cobb.<sup>134</sup> The sloppy decision to let standards slip could have dangerous consequences. Slavery seemed secure in Brazil; it was inextricably bound up with the commercial success of the nation. But the racial composition of the population was anything but auspicious: “A race which has so large an admixture of caste has not the essential qualities of progressive development; hence ignorance, superstition, and social and political inharmoniousness; and with all these, worst of all, licensed amalgamation, the raising up a hybrid race with titles to rule and govern—a nation who, as a people, never had, or never can have either a history or a literature.”<sup>135</sup>

The promiscuous mingling of the races that Southern observers noted in Latin America set Cuba and Brazil apart from the U.S. South, where such congress was not

---

<sup>132</sup> Kidder, 138.

<sup>133</sup> George M. Colvocoresses, *Four Years in the Government Exploring Expedition* (New York: J.M. Fairchild & Company, 1855), 216.

<sup>134</sup> Cobb, ccxxi.

<sup>135</sup> “Slavery in Brazil—The Past and Future,” 480.

acknowledged. But more threatening was the Latin American practice of allowing mixed-race people to pass as white. Southerners scarcely acknowledged that the supposed absence of the problem in the United States was the result of a contrary legal fiction—classing mixed-race people as black. U.S. Southerners were capable of splitting hairs much finer than that, even among white people of English extraction: New Englanders, explained more than one article, were descended from the intolerant Saxons who had come to America to practice their inflexible Puritanism; Southerners claimed kin with the gentle and cultivated Normans.<sup>136</sup> In comparison with such razor-thin distinctions, the Latin American practice of allowing an inclusive definition of “white” stood out in sharp contrast.

Finally, North American slaveholders drew a firm line between their own compassionate and solicitous treatment of their slaves and that of masters in Latin America. Here again some distinction should be noted between Cuba and Brazil, with Spanish Cuba—the extant example of the Black Legend of Spanish cruelty—coming in for more frequent criticism. *The Southern Literary Messenger* declared that imputations of Spanish inhumanity were well known throughout the world.<sup>137</sup> A poem published in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1860 began,

Isle of the ocean! jeweled on the breast  
Of waters fragrant with thy tropic breath,  
Thou seem'st alike some happy dream at rest  
In the calm sea of mind! But underneath  
Those clear, blue skies there lurks despair and death.<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> For a further explication of this remarkable idea, see “The Difference of Race between the Northern and Southern People” *Southern Literary Messenger* 30, no. 6 (June 1860): 401-409; “The True Question: A Contest for the Supremacy of Race, as between the Saxon Puritans of the North, and the Normans of the South” *Southern Literary Messenger* 33, no. 1 (July 1861): 19-27; William Gilmore Simms, “The Morals of Slavery” *The Pro-Slavery Argument*, 282; [George Fitzhugh], “Superiority of Southern Races—Review of Count de Gobineau’s Work, *DeBow’s Review* 31, no. 4-5 (October-November, 1861): 369-81.

<sup>137</sup> “Twenty Months in the Andes,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 24, no. 5 (May 1857): 373.

<sup>138</sup> “Cuba,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 31, no. 4 (October, 1860): 256.

The apparent expendability of slave lives in areas where the slave trade was still countenanced—as it was in both Cuba and Brazil—explained a valid demographic observation: while the black population of the North American South was growing in the antebellum period, an illegal transatlantic trade was necessary to replenish the slave supply in the sugar-growing regions of Cuba and Brazil. Thomas Reynolds—quoted above—reasoned that in Cuba the proclivity for freeing mixed race offspring of Africans and Europeans and classifying them as white must be the part of the key to the declining number of slaves. But he, as well as many other authors, declared that that the infinite need for new immigrants was owing to the mistreatment and cruelty of Latin American slaveholders. “[S]o long as the slave was made cheap by the trade, the master’s pecuniary interest was more operative than his sympathies. In Brazil now, (as in Louisiana before her annexation,) it costs less to buy an adult negro from Africa than to rear an infant,” noted the *Southern Quarterly Review*.<sup>139</sup>

It is possible to detect in this discourse a hint of envy for the ability of the Spanish and the Brazilians to routinely flout international regulations against the slave trade. But as the suppression of trade with Africa affected different parts of the South in different ways—a boon for the Upper South, from whence excess labor could be sold, but a handicap for the Lower South, which might have benefited from prices lowered through imports—publications aiming for a wide audience tended to make a virtue of the necessity of the ban. Calling the Portuguese and Spanish traders pirates allowed U.S. Southerners to claim the moral high ground.

---

<sup>139</sup> “Christian Missions and African Colonization,” *Southern Quarterly Review* 2, no. 2 (February, 1857): 294.

Southern slaveholders did not consider that the comparatively large birthrate among their bondsmen might be due to anything (the rigors of sugar cultivation as opposed to cotton growing; the ratio of women to men) besides superior care;<sup>140</sup> indeed, pointed out one article, the population growth of North American slaves neatly exploded the myth that slaves were overworked, while calling into question the conditions of free workers in Europe, whose increase was less.<sup>141</sup> In comparison to the Southern U.S., which prided itself on the care it took of its elderly and infirm slaves, Brazilian masters of urban slaves sent their elderly bondsmen into the streets to work, and expected them to beg if they failed.<sup>142</sup>

Kindly treatment maintained the security of the Southern United States. “Having been generally well-treated, the slaves have never exhibited that disposition to revolt so frequently seen in the West Indies. No Maroons have infested our mountains; no wars of the Maroons stain our annals,” wrote Thomas Cobb.<sup>143</sup> What fear should the Southern slaveholder have of his contented bondsmen, indignantly demanded the *Southern Quarterly Review*. “How ignorant, people at a distance are, of the little antagonism that really exists between master and slave.” The English abolitionists who dwelt among a starving and desperate laboring class had comparatively more to fear. “Their ‘fearful firesides and nightly alarm of massacre.’ This is uttered of us by one, who lives in

---

<sup>140</sup> “That their bondage has been mild is evidenced by their great and rapid increase. For about 333,000 slaves imported, there are now more than 4,000,000.” (Cobb, ccxii.) On the other hand, “Negroes from Africa were first introduced into Cuba in 1524; but, from causes other than climatic, the multiplication of the race has never corresponded with what might have been reasonably expected. The race has, according to most accounts—though this is steadily denied by the Spaniards—been greatly diminished by the masters. Be this as it may, it is certain that millions of negroes have been introduced into the island as slaves from Africa since 1524, and that now its slave population is only little more than half a million.” (“Cuba as it is in 1854,” 220.)

<sup>141</sup> “British and American Slavery,” *Southern Quarterly Review* 8, no. 16 (October 1853): 386.

<sup>142</sup> Kidder, 128.

<sup>143</sup> Cobb, ccxi.

constant insecurity, in the metropolis of the British Empire, amidst elements as combustible and dangerous as the powder magazine at Woolwich.”<sup>144</sup>

Accusing Latin American slavery of greater cruelty served to deflect abolitionist interference while implicating Northerners in the very enterprise they condemned: “[T]he illegal African slave-trade, of the most cruel and murderous character, (and with many of the slave vessels fitted out in Northern cities and by Northern capital,) continued to add to the number of slaves, and by such additions to increase the sufferings of all. . . . Yet scarcely have the Northern abolitionists noticed the horrors of Cuban and Brazilian slavery, while all their denunciations and hostility have been reserved for the milder slavery in the Southern States,” declared Edmund Ruffin in 1857.<sup>145</sup>

The South’s felt need to defend itself against charges of brutality increased after the 1852 publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, an event that all three Southern journals and not a few pamphlets and tracts noted with anger only intensified by its fantastic popularity.<sup>146</sup> Dozens of reviews, rebuttals, and parodies followed the bestseller’s appearance; one Mary Eastman (whose husband illustrated many of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s Indian studies) even produced *Aunt Phillis’ Cabin, or Southern Life As it Is*, whose literary appeal, the *Southern Quarterly Review* acknowledged sadly, could not compete with *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.<sup>147</sup> The depictions of sadism in Stowe’s novel hit a particular nerve with Southern audiences. “Her argument is a description of scenes such as we have never seen or heard of, but which, of course,

---

<sup>144</sup> “British and American Slavery,” 397-9.

<sup>145</sup> Edmund Ruffin, “Consequences of Abolition Agitation (Concluded),” *DeBow’s Review* 23, no. 6 (December 1857): 602.

<sup>146</sup> See for example “Notices of New Works,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 18, no. 10 (October, 1852): 630-38; “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 18, no. 12 (December, 1852): 721-31; “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” *Southern Quarterly Review* 7, no. 13 (January, 1853): 81-120; “The Queen’s Dream—A Sequel to ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’” *DeBow’s Review* 15, no. 1 (July, 1853): 95-105.

<sup>147</sup> “Critical Notices,” *The Southern Quarterly Review* 7: 14 (April, 1853): 523.

we cannot undertake to deny,” wrote Edward Pringle. “It is always easy to attack an institution by dwelling with emphasis upon its abuses.”<sup>148</sup> According to Southern critics, Stowe erred by confusing extreme and isolated incidents for the general rule. In consequence, particularly after 1852, U.S. slaveholders took care to distance themselves from the legendary barbarism of Latin American slavery.

Comparing North American to Spanish systems of slave governance spoke not only to the beneficence of masters in the United States, but to their superior understanding of the relations between the races, with one intended by God to rule and the other to serve. Latin American ambivalence made masters by turns weak administrators and vicious tyrants. Brazilian mistresses wore out their health scolding their female slaves, both unable to think of sufficient work to assign them and lacking more effective means of managing them.<sup>149</sup>

The consequences of Cuban incompetence in slave management were more serious. “When in Cuba, I was surprised to see overseers carrying a broad-sword into the field instead of a whip, and relying upon blood-hounds to catch and hold resisting negroes, instead of negroes themselves,” wrote Samuel Cartwright in 1861. “. . . The Spaniards have never made anything profitable out of negroes, because they govern them on the same principles that white slaves are governed, instead of governing them by moral powers, applicable to them, but not to the white man.”<sup>150</sup> U.S. Southerners were better masters because they felt so deeply their own superiority. As Thomas Cobb wrote, “Born to command, and habituated to rule, they frequently commend themselves to the

---

<sup>148</sup> [Edward J. Pringle,] *Slavery in the Southern States by a Carolinian* (Cambridge: John Bartlett, 1852): 8.

<sup>149</sup> “The Empire of Brazil,” 11.

<sup>150</sup> “Editorial Miscellany,” *DeBow’s Review* 30, no. 4 (April 1861): 504-5.

nation by their firmness, their independence, and their fearlessness.”<sup>151</sup> Conversely, the lack of distance between the Spanish and Portuguese slaveholders and their bondsmen allowed room for doubt about their aptitude for leadership.

For the Latin American, the possession of slaves was a license to loaf rather than an opportunity to engage in more productive work. The Spanish plantation owner exhibited no inclination to “improvement of his mind or preparation of philanthropic plans for the amelioration of his servant’s lot.” Without colleges and learned societies, uninterested in the news of the world, Spanish slaveholders were sunk in indulgence and avarice.<sup>152</sup> ““The Brazilian, feeling himself above all the drudgery of life, is a man of leisure, and looks down in perfect contempt upon the foreigner, who is always grumbling, fretting, and busy.””<sup>153</sup> Once free, a Brazilian slave, who in theory had the prerogative to become a Prime Minister, followed the example of the whites he observed and became, “instead of a producer, an idle and perhaps dangerous consumer.”<sup>154</sup>

It is possible to see in all three points of difference maintained by U.S. Southerners regarding Cuba and Brazil—religion, racial composition, and slave management—an attempt to distance the United States from the threatening Caribbean precedent of Haiti, which represented the result of relaxed discipline, casual racial distinctions, and misplaced philanthropy. Congressional testimony preceding the termination of the international slave trade in 1808 reveals how thoroughly Southerners considered the effects of the Haitian revolution. Slaves themselves were aware of the Haitian template. Among the African and West Indian slaves in Louisiana in 1811, one

---

<sup>151</sup> Cobb, ccciv.

<sup>152</sup> Brantz Mayer, *Mexico: Aztec, Spanish and Republican* (Hartford: S. Drake & Company, 1853), 35.

<sup>153</sup> Kidder, quoted in “The Empire of Brazil,” 12.

<sup>154</sup> “Slavery in Brazil—The Past and Future,” 480.

Charles Deslondes organized a short-lived reign of terror.<sup>155</sup> Haiti actively inspired Denmark Vesey in 1822, and quite possibly Gabriel in 1800. Although Nat Turner was not directly motivated by Haiti, the Turner Rebellion was quickly linked with Haiti in the popular white imagination.<sup>156</sup> The Haitian revolt had also helped associate Romanism with slavery among U.S. Protestants;<sup>157</sup> the Southern condemnation of Catholicism made clear that U.S. slaveholders fit a different profile. Free *gens de couleur*—not slaves—had first taken up arms against the whites in Haiti, a good reason, if Southerners needed another, for limiting manumissions and maintaining a firm color line, with people of mixed race on the other side of it. And the public insistence that U.S. slavery was not cruel, that “*mutual affection between the owners and the owned*”<sup>158</sup> prevailed in the South, offered a whistling-past-the-graveyard reassurance that the specter of Haiti did not haunt the United States.

Yet Haiti did not provide the only cautionary tale. Because U.S. slavery advocates were aware that even the most irreproachable slave systems could succumb to decay, they defended the particularity of U.S. slavery. Ancient Israel had practiced slavery—in fact provided scriptural justification for the peculiar institution—but had not prospered. David and Solomon brutalized the state slaves who built the temple.<sup>159</sup> Disconcertingly, even the unassailable slaveholding paragons of Greece and Rome collapsed: Rome, Southerners argued, weakened its once glorious race through

---

<sup>155</sup> Daniel Rasmussen, *American Uprising: The Untold Story of America's Largest Slave Revolt* (New York: Harper/HarperCollins Publishers, 2011).

<sup>156</sup> Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), Chapter 4.

<sup>157</sup> Hunt, 7.

<sup>158</sup> “En Route: or, Notes of the Overland Journey to the East,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 20, no. 2 (February 1854): 106. Italics original.

<sup>159</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, “King Solomon’s Dilemma—and the Confederacy’s,” *Southern Cultures* (Winter 2004): 61.

amalgamation.<sup>160</sup> Some slavery advocates went so far as to acknowledge that, among societies of lesser men, slavery could indeed be a curse. *The Southern Literary Messenger* recoiled at “the manifest injustice in which a similitude is asserted between the American and Egyptian systems of slavery. . . . *there is no resemblance . . .* in the land we are describing, slavery is marked by everything loathsome and revolting, where obscurity of mind and filthiness of body distinguish the slave; and indifference or cruelty, the master.”<sup>161</sup>

But Haiti, the West Indies, and the remaining states of Central and South America did offer nearby examples of what happened to slave societies that were irresolute. The fact that Cuba and Brazil stopped short of total commitment to the absolute rightness of slavery made them suspect: as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese write, unlike U.S. Southerners, “[t]he Brazilian and Cuban slaveholders who defended slavery as a positive institution for blacks and whites did not celebrate slavery as the best foundation for all social order and as the wave of the future.”<sup>162</sup> What would be their fate if their resolution wavered? Cuba and Brazil edged alarmingly close to their unfortunate neighbors: “Plunge Brazil into a political revolution, and destroy the present Imperial government, and her army, composed for the best part of free negroes, will soon dictate its terms of emancipation to the nation, and the empire be converted into another Venezuela,” warned one article.<sup>163</sup> A close reading of the history of failed slave societies both maintained the uniqueness of U.S. slavery and enabled its defenders to avoid repeating the mistakes of lesser societies.

---

<sup>160</sup> [Fitzhugh], “Superiority of Southern Races,” 380.

<sup>161</sup> “En Route,” 106. Italics original.

<sup>162</sup> Fox-Genovese and Genovese, 77.

<sup>163</sup> “Slavery in Brazil—The Past and Future,” 480.

The coming of the Civil War effected a sharp break with the nascent Confederacy's previous policy of keeping political distance from the inferior slave systems farther south. By 1861, the year of secession, the value of Cuba and Brazil as allies—or buffer zones—and the benefits of their possession by sympathetic foreign powers, was belatedly acknowledged.<sup>164</sup> *DeBow's* pointed out, "Spain, Brazil, and the South, are the only slaveholding countries. If Cuba were detached from Spain, the cause of slavery would be weakened, not only by the loss of one of the great powers of Europe as its friend, but still more, by converting that rising nation into its irreconcilable enemy."<sup>165</sup> George Fitzhugh went so far as to suggest that the Monroe Doctrine be disregarded by the Confederacy and France invited to repossess its former colony, strengthening the balance of power among the areas surrounding the South and supplying a viable rival to the United States.<sup>166</sup> By the beginning of the Civil War, maintaining Cuba and Brazil as slave societies—and reestablishing slavery where it had been eradicated—became more critical than ever.

Even without the elaborate defenses and justifications fabricated by U.S. slavery advocates, slavery ended up continuing longer in both Cuba and Brazil than it did in the United States. Abolition came to Cuba only in 1886 and to Brazil two years later. Yet despite the earlier ending of slavery in the United States South, it is possible to see some truth in Frank Tannenbaum's formulation that emancipation freed the slaves from their bondage but could not free whites of their racism.<sup>167</sup> Examining Southern attitudes to

---

<sup>164</sup> Robert F. Durden, "J.D.B. DeBow: Convolutions of a Slavery Expansionist" *The Journal of Southern History* 17, no. 4 (November, 1951): 460.

<sup>165</sup> "Cuba: The March of Empire and the Course of Trade," 33.

<sup>166</sup> George Fitzhugh, "Hayti and the Monroe Doctrine" *DeBow's Review* 31, no. 2 (August, 1861): 131.

<sup>167</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1946), 42. In an early attempt to compare slavery in Brazil and the U.S., Tannenbaum suggested that Europeans

Cuba and Brazil reveals how consciously Southerners constructed that racism, how painstakingly they fitted it together, and how carefully they polished it.

Some U.S. Southerners understood that, in the abstract, slavery linked their interests with those of Cuba and Brazil. “To succeed with cotton, and every other southern product in British Asia and New Holland [cultivated by free labor], it is foreseen that nothing stands in the way but the associated or slave-labor of the United States, Brazil, and Cuba,” declared *DeBow’s Review* in 1851.<sup>168</sup> But the 1850s saw the definition of U.S. slavery as an exclusive institution, distinguished by its coherence. Not even by reaching far back in history—to the inviolate precedent of Hebrew slavery, to the glory of imperial Rome—could one find its equal. Nowhere else in the modern world was slavery an institution of such integrity, spreading the benefits of Christianity and civilization to a benighted race, preserving labor from dissatisfaction and hunger and crime. Southern society shunned the amalgamation that weakened other races; it was impervious to corruption as a diamond. The rate of manumission in Cuba and Brazil, and the comparative lack of racial prejudice, revealed the wavering and uncertain commitment these regions demonstrated to a system the U.S. South found perfect.

“[T]he condition of the negro slave in the United States is preeminently superior to that of the free negro in any part of the earth, and . . . the negro’s greatest happiness and greatest usefulness are best secured under our system of domestic servitude,” asserted Stephen Mallory in the Senate in 1859.<sup>169</sup> Comparisons with the slave systems of other nations only served to provide Southerners with evidence of their own

---

in Cuba and Brazil never equated people of African descent with permanent servitude as they did in North America.

<sup>168</sup> “How to Save the Republic, and the Position of the South in the Union,” *DeBow’s Review* 11, no. 2 (August 1851): 190.

<sup>169</sup> *The Congressional Globe*, 35<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session, 25 February 1859, 1828.

industrious efficiency, gentle firmness, and racial purity. Acknowledging the shared interests of slaveholders in a world that organized labor in new ways involved compromises Southerners were unwilling to make. Defending their own superiority over Latin American slaveholders weighed more heavily than finding mutual agendas.

But the implications of such imperious exclusivity were not reassuring. “The Southern people, now, are fused into a common mass,” asserted *DeBow’s Review* on the very eve of the Civil War. Arguing against the acquisition of Cuba by the United States, it continued, “[In the U.S.,] all speak the same language, have the same manners and customs, the same moral notions, the same political opinions; emphatically, they are one people. Disturb not this harmony by introducing a foreign element. Harmony constitutes national strength: discord begets dissension, civil broils, and national weakness. Peoples of different national descent cannot live peaceably under one government, unless the one people be slaves to the other. We do not propose to make the Cubans slaves, and yet know not how they might get along as our co-equals.”<sup>170</sup> This quotation cuts to the heart of the inconsistency with which Southern expansionists regarded the acquisition of Cuba during the 1850s: the nearer they approached, the more clearly they divined the impossibility of absorbing such a foreign culture into American society. Assuredly, this article affirmed the conservative extreme of the proslavery position, but it was part of an ideology that had no means of incorporating outsiders and no intention of tolerating difference. If the successful slave society depended upon such an inflexible set of assumptions, its survival must be precarious. If it required exactly the correct ethnic composition of masters, precisely the right proportion of blacks to whites, exactly the right roles assigned to slaves, it rested on a delicate balance indeed: its foundations were

---

<sup>170</sup> “Cuba: The March of Empire and the Course of Trade,” 34.

insecure. The irony of the preoccupation with the security of the Southern system was that it depended upon stasis and must necessarily resist change. Such a perfect system could easily breed conservatism, suspicion, and hostility to outsiders at a time when the North was finding ways to accommodate and even welcome new ideas, new technologies, and new politics.

An unabashedly proslavery and pro-filibustering novel of 1854 exposes the way the South was held back by its inflexibility and blind to the kind of change that might be growing within the system itself. Under the pseudonym M.H. Hardimann, Southerner Lucy Holcombe (1832-1899) published a short novel called *The Free Flag of Cuba; or, The Martyrdom of Lopez*. Within a typical novelistic plot that introduces, separates, and finally unites two sets of lovers, *The Free Flag of Cuba* unabashedly raises the banner of its particular politics: Holcombe's heroes are American filibusters in the legacy of Timothy Flint's Francis Berrian, hero of the first filibustering novel of 1826.<sup>171</sup> Written when its author was only nineteen, the short fiction was inspired by Holcombe's 1851 meeting with the revolutionary Narciso Lopez at the home of John Quitman (who served as Governor of Mississippi, his term interrupted by his need to respond to charges relating to his own freebooting activities).<sup>172</sup> Holcombe locates the failure of Cuba's independence movement in the official policy of the U.S. toward its unfortunate neighbor. She directs her icy condemnation toward President Millard Fillmore's refusal to protect U.S. citizens who left the country as soldiers of fortune.

---

<sup>171</sup> That the first filibustering novel is Timothy Flint's 1826 *Francis Berrian* is pointed out in Orville Vernon Burton and Georganne B. Burton, Introduction, *The Free Flag of Cuba: The Lost Novel of Lucy Holcombe Pickens*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>172</sup> Elizabeth Wittenmyer Lewis, *Queen of the Confederacy: The Innocent Deceits of Lucy Holcombe Pickens* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2002), 39-40.

Holcombe's narrative embrace of the filibusters did not speak for all Southerners, who, as the citations from the Southern journals above demonstrate, were of two minds about the incorporation of Cuba into the American republic. But her outspoken views did not make her a pariah. To the contrary, in 1858 she married the eligible, much older Francis W. Pickens, whom she met at Sweet Springs, Virginia. ("The lady may feel proud of her conquest," remarked a gossipy correspondent of the *Charleston Courier*.<sup>173</sup>) Two years after that, Pickens was the governor of South Carolina when the state seceded from the Union. Charming and clever, Lucy Holcombe Pickens was the only woman whose likeness appeared on Confederate currency and was known as the "uncrowned Queen" of the Confederacy.<sup>174</sup>

In *The Free Flag of Cuba*, Holcombe leaves open-ended the goal of the proposed Cuban revolution, whether for outright independence or annexation by the U.S. (In fact, the historical Lopez was equally unclear about his intentions for "free" Cuba.<sup>175</sup>) But as Orville Vernon Burton and Georganne B. Burton point out in their introduction to a 2002 reissue of the novel, Holcombe had spent part of her youth in Texas and would have been familiar with the precedent of an independent republic choosing to be annexed to the United States. Holcombe decidedly has no doubts about the goal of the filibuster cause. The U.S. revolutionaries come "not for conquest," Holcombe repeats more than once;<sup>176</sup> rather, they are assisting Narciso Lopez in his attempt liberate his people from their tyrannous mistress, the Queen of Spain. The author situates their struggle as the last in a

---

<sup>173</sup> "Life at the White Sulfur," *The Charleston Courier*, 15 August 1857, reprinted, with commentary, in "Fashionable Gossip at the Southern Springs," *New York Herald*, 6 September 1857, 2.

<sup>174</sup> Lewis, vii; John Lowe, "'Calypso Magnolia': The Caribbean Side of the South," *South Central Review* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 58.

<sup>175</sup> Orville Vernon Burton and Georganne B. Burton, Introduction, *The Free Flag of Cuba: The Lost Novel of Lucy Holcombe Pickens*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 10.

<sup>176</sup> Holcombe Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*, 118; see also 59, 124.

line of noble battles that begins with Washington, Lafayette, and the American Revolution. And in the tradition of eighteenth-century revolution, the Cubans are “slaves” to Spanish tyranny. At his last desperate stand, with the Spanish army in sight of their depleted forces, Lopez attempts to rouse his men:

“Soldiers! you have fought to free slaves; you will not bear yourselves less bravely now that the slave of slaves gloats on the butchered forms of freemen. Stand firmly to your arms, and trust the God of truth for victory . . .”<sup>177</sup>

In a manner that curiously anticipates the post-Civil War Lost Cause tradition,<sup>178</sup> Pickens paints the struggle as all the holier for its ultimate failure. The blood of martyrs and the tears of suffering women cleanse every human error and frailty from the doomed enterprise. Yet with her constant identification of the white Cubans as slaves, Holcombe has unconsciously done something extraordinary. What she has depicted is nothing more or less than a slave rebellion.

Perhaps it goes without saying that Holcombe assumes her readers will understand that this slave rebellion is open to whites only. The “slaves” in question cannot and can never be African; without irony or even apparent consciousness she considers the possibility of emancipation a perversion. Freeing Cuba’s African slaves is a filthy trick of the Spanish, who might resort to anything to keep their colony from falling into U.S. hands. Lopez explains:

“[R]ather than this silver-set gem which nature so much loves, should shine amid the stars of the Columbian flag, rather than she should stand in the self-sustaining life of her own republicanism, the Spaniard would cast upon her the undying stain of African equality. He would bid the Cuban clasp his slave as a brother, and together kneel before a crown whose pollution, fiends might blush to wear.”<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>177</sup> Holcombe Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*, 157.

<sup>178</sup> Orville Vernon Burton and Georganne B. Burton, Introduction, *The Free Flag of Cuba*, 4.

<sup>179</sup> Holcombe Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*, 173.

Within the setting of Cuba and the U.S. South, however, Holcombe cannot entirely avoid acknowledging the presence of blacks, both slave and free. Ostensibly, the black slaves in Holcombe's story prefer bondage to freedom. When Ralph Dudley, one of Lopez's American allies, proposes granting freedom to his faithful slave, the slave retorts angrily that the master has insulted him and the memory of Dudley's father.<sup>180</sup>

Yet these are slaves who, in the disruption of war, manage to tailor their enslavement to their own specifications. Their direct or vicarious encounters with life in both Mexico (where one of the white characters also served as a soldier) and in Cuba allow them a wider perspective and a less deferential manner. The reader senses that beyond a certain point, Holcombe's black characters are out of her control, and her narrative cannot quite suppress their resilience, resourcefulness, and independence. The novel's hero, the headstrong, improvident Ralph Dudley, invests his fortune in the attempt to free Cuba and loses everything. He returns home, determined to sell his estate and all its slaves, when he is intercepted by Marmion, his oldest retainer.<sup>181</sup> Rather than being bereft by the prospect of the coming sale, Marmion quickly schools his master in some home truths: "Marse Ralf, ef you does scatter dese people when you ken keep um, ef you does sell dis old place when you ken help it, ef you wants to, my blessed master'll rise wid his grave close on, to curse you."<sup>182</sup> Patiently Marmion explains how mortgages work, how creditors can be put off, how a few years' relocation to "Callyforny" will enable the neighbors to forget the shame of the family's indebtedness.

---

<sup>180</sup> Holcombe Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*, 100.

<sup>181</sup> Marmion's name recalls the hero of an 1808 epic poem by Sir Walter Scott.

<sup>182</sup> Holcombe Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*, 201.

Dudley takes Marmion's advice. "You must control me," Dudley tells his slave, though it is evident that Marmion hardly needs Dudley's permission to do so.<sup>183</sup>

Scipio, Dudley's body servant, takes an even more active role in Dudley's welfare, and is even more determined to keep from escaping the grasp of a master he can easily manipulate. Having already accompanied Dudley to Mexico in the war of the previous decade, he knows what to expect from combat in a Latin American country. When a Spaniard is about to kill the sleeping Dudley, Scipio pops out of the shadows and dispatches the assassin.<sup>184</sup> Although Dudley attempts to leave Scipio behind when he sets out to restore his fortunes in California, the slave stows away onboard the vessel. Confronted by the flummoxed Dudley, Scipio fires back, "'You can't *never* lef me, Marse Ralph; you need n't try to more, tain no use. Scip ain save yo' life five, six times, fur be 'ceived an' 'posed on, dis way.'"

"Well, sir, we will see which will be master," Dudley retorts, but it is already clear to both Holcombe and the reader that the master is Scipio. He points out that once in California he could pass himself off for free, but he has no intention of doing so. "'I gwine foller arter you to de 'other side of Jurden,'" he tells Dudley, in words which, if they were not clearly intended to be delivered as sassy backtalk, could easily sound like a threat.<sup>185</sup> Both Marmion and Scipio are loyal and devoted, but were their powers of calculation and perseverance applied to escape—or revolt—they would be formidable antagonists indeed.<sup>186</sup>

---

<sup>183</sup> Holcombe Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*, 202.

<sup>184</sup> Holcombe Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*, 186.

<sup>185</sup> Holcombe Pickens, *The Free Flag of Cuba*, 205.

<sup>186</sup> Pushed just a little further, Marmion and Scipio would resemble Babo in Melville's *Benito Cereno*, published in *Putnam's Monthly* in 1855. Apparently the slave of a sea captain encountered by the American Amasa Delano, Babo has in fact led a successful slave revolt and uses the captain as a puppet to conceal his own autonomy. Babo's performance of solicitude and devotion—he never leaves his master

One publisher to whom Holcombe submitted the manuscript rejected it as too provocative, faulting its incendiary overtones in words usually applied to the instigation of slave rebellion: “He said its principles were dangerous—its fillibustering [sic] tendency rendered it inflammable, and he had conscientious scruples which prevented him from giving to the American public a work which contained such elements of agitation,” Holcombe reported in a letter to John Quitman.<sup>187</sup> The black characters in *The Free Flag of Cuba* do not appear poised on the edge of revolt. Rather, seemingly beyond the power of their own author’s governance, they seem to have found a less dangerous way of seizing control. Like the slaves in W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction* who eschew active deeds of violence in favor of passive strategies of resistance as a safer, smarter method of achieving their goals, Holcombe’s Marmion and Scipio do not always show the upper hand they clearly possess.<sup>188</sup>

No less than Holcombe’s white characters who foresee the possibility of freedom transcending national boundaries, both fictional and actual African Americans were capable of seeing both slavery and freedom in hemispheric terms. Like Henry Blake, the hero of Martin Delany’s abolitionist novel *Blake, or, The Huts of America* of just a few years later,<sup>189</sup> Marmion and Scipio live in a world where they can cross lines with relative ease. Where proslavery Southerners insisted that borders and boundaries, properly guarded, would protect their institution, these characters understand how porous and

---

unattended—masks the reality that he never permits his supposed master the freedom of revealing the true state of affairs.

<sup>187</sup> Georganne B. Burton and Orville Vernon Burton, “Lucy Holcombe Pickens, Southern Writer,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 103, no. 4 (October 2002): 306.

<sup>188</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 53.

<sup>189</sup> Martin R. Delany, *Blake; or, the Huts of America*, with an introduction by Floyd Miller (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970) Delany published the first twenty-six chapters in *The Anglo-African Magazine* in 1859; then the entire novel was published in *The Weekly Anglo-African* in 1861 and 1862.

easily breached those borders are. This vision of the hemispheric—indeed, the global—implications of slavery contrast markedly with the borders outlined by proslavery Southerners, who insisted on their own exceptionalism and maintained—publicly, at least—that what happened outside of the South affected them in minimal ways. Against the white Southern insistence on the superiority of the peculiar institution in the United States, these black characters see U.S. slavery as mutable, capable of being undermined, and not so peculiar after all.

## Epilogue: 1861 and After

The Civil War did not go well for the Union in the beginning, and Abraham Lincoln called a national day of fasting on September 26, 1861. The *New York Evening Post* reported that the city's banks and businesses were closed and churches were full.<sup>1</sup> At Trinity Church, the Reverend Francis Vinton—who thirteen years earlier had delivered a funeral oration in honor of a soldier killed in the U.S. War with Mexico in which he called all foreign wars indefensible—now preached a sermon citing a text from the first letter of John in which John compared renegade Christians to the anti-Christ:

They went out from us because they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that it might be more manifest that they were not all of us.<sup>2</sup>

What Vinton was doing—as the entire United States found it necessary to do—was to characterize Southerners, formerly U.S. citizens, as aliens and strangers.<sup>3</sup>

Southern nationalists undertook a similar process of defining the U.S. as a foreign country. The *Richmond Whig*, for its part, explained what made the Confederate fighting forces prevail over the Union Army: Southern troops belonged to the “master race” which, according to the *Whig*, exhibited “superior manhood to the mongrel and many-

---

<sup>1</sup> “National Fast-Day,” *The New York Evening Post*, 27 September 1861: 1.

<sup>2</sup> John I, 2:19. The sermon was reported in “National Fast-Day,” *The New York Evening Post*, 27 September 1861: 1.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Vinton played a third act on the historical stage when in 1862 he supposedly won the unchurched Abraham Lincoln to Christianity. The episode of Lincoln's purported conversion is told, among other places, in William Jackson Johnstone, *Abraham Lincoln: The Christian* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1913), 82-4 with all the requisite sentimental stops pulled out: “Mr. Lincoln threw his arm around Dr. Vinton's neck, laid his head upon his breast, and sobbed aloud . . .”

tongued enemy.”<sup>4</sup> The amalgamation of foreigners into the North had adulterated its racial purity.

Civil wars, as William Hickling Prescott noted, are second only to wars of religion in savagery and horror. Combatants must learn to cast friends as sworn enemies, to make foes out of people among whom they traveled and lived and studied, with whom they entered business and invested money, with whom they shared a past. History must be rewritten to foreshadow the ultimate divide. How can one abruptly understand as antagonists a people with a common origin, language, form of government?

Yet in this project of defamiliarizing the familiar, people in the Union and the Confederacy had considerable practice in their understanding of Latin America. At the time of the Spanish-American wars of independence, people in the U.S. needed little encouragement to see these Hispanic republicans as their counterparts. Differences of religion and language did not guarantee their being regarded as inferiors. However much the U.S. and its Southern neighbors emerged from different backgrounds, their shared characteristics could not easily be overlooked: their colonial past, their conflation of European, African, and indigenous racial stock, their constitutions. The Latin American aspiration to the type of government pioneered by the U.S. might have been the prelude to a close association of nations. Instead, in 1826 the door closed on this type of community, and race and slavery became the point at which the United States and Latin America were seen to diverge.

The need to make Latin Americans into strangers arose out of both cupidity and fear. However much citizens of the U.S. affected to disparage the people south of the

---

<sup>4</sup> *The Richmond Whig*, 25 June 1862, quoted in “‘The Master Race,’” *The New York Evening Post*, 8 July 1862, 2.

border, with their superstition and inefficiency, the U.S. admired, desired, and acquired the territory those people occupied. They had to be identified as unworthy possessors of land that the people of the U.S. could turn to better account. Interest in Latin America in the post-Panama Congress period emphasized the region's ancient history and its valuable territory and resources. Its contemporary situation, on the other hand, was held up for contempt. Expressions of U.S. superiority focused on racial difference.

In Latin America the people of the U.S. were also forced to see a reflection of themselves with troubling weaknesses. Here the republican form of government appeared a sickly, fragile thing, easily bruised, ailing under cures prescribed by quack doctors. Here people pushed ideals of racial equality further than they went in the U.S. Here the tenuous compromise the U.S. had drawn between slavery and freedom appeared not simply precarious but potentially explosive. Belittling their Latin American counterparts made U.S. nationalists feel more confident about their own union even as it was falling apart.

All these expressions of difference made possible the use of Latin America as a context in which to talk about slavery, the most intractable and provocative problem of the day. Northerners could speak without offending their neighbors in the slave states—or their neighbors down the street who profited from human bondage. Southerners discovered an opportunity to criticize, to brood, and to doubt about an institution whose weaknesses they could not otherwise admit. Latin America proved more valuable as a foil than as an ally.

Just as 1826 marked the waning of dreams of pan-American community, the events of 1861, in turn, ended much of the national interest in Latin America. So

distracted was the United States with its Civil War that it could do nothing when European powers installed an emperor in Mexico in 1864. The Confederacy fought to protect its own territory, not to make further conquests.

Most importantly, the Civil War marked the termination of the problem that had caused Americans so much difficulty in treating openly. With the abolition of slavery in the United States, the usefulness of Latin America as a context for displacing a painful and divisive subject abruptly ended. The silence and evasion that had for thirty-five years characterized U.S. discourse about slavery disappeared in the roar of battle. The Civil War provided a much more direct context in which this issue would be dealt with and resolved.

## A Selected Bibliography

### Archival and Manuscript Collections

American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA

Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT

Hispanic Society of America, New York, NY

Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA

New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ

New York Public Library, New York, NY

Newark Public Library, Newark, NJ

New-York Historical Society, New York, NY

Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, NY

Rare Book Room, Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Cincinnati, OH

University of Pennsylvania Rare Book Library, Philadelphia, PA

### Primary Sources

#### Government Documents

*Register of Debates in Congress*

*Congressional Globe*

#### Books

Abbott, John S.C. *South and North; or, Impressions Received during a Trip to Cuba*. New York: Abbey & Abbot, 1860.

Atwater, Caleb. *Writings of Caleb Atwater*. Columbus, OH: Published by Caleb Atwater; Printed by Scott and Wright, 1833.

Ballou, Maturin M. *History of Cuba; or, Notes of a Traveller in the Tropics*. Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1854.

- Bartlett, John Russell. *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua*. New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1854.
- Benton, Thomas Hart. *Thirty Years' View; or, A History of the Working of the American Government for Thirty Years, From 1820 to 1850*. Boston: Frederick Parker, 1854.
- Bickley, George W.L. *Address to the People of the Southern States*. Richmond, s.n., 1860.
- Bird, Robert Montgomery. *Calavar; or, The Knight of the Conquest, A Romance of Mexico*. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1834.
- . *The Infidel; Or, The Fall of Mexico: A Romance*. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1835.
- . *The Life and Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird*. Edited, with an introduction by Clement Edgar Foust. New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1919.
- Bradford, Alexander W. *American Antiquities and Researches into the Origin and History of the Red Race*. New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1843.
- Buffon, Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de. *Natural History, General and Particular*. Translated into English by William Smellie. London: Printed for A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1791.
- Buntline, Ned. [Edward Zane Carroll Judson.] *The Volunteer; or, the Maid of Monterey: A Story of the Mexican War*. Boston: Elliott, Thomes & Talbot: 1847.
- Calhoun, John C. *The Essential Calhoun: Selections from Writings, Speeches, and Letters*. Edited by Clyde N. Wilson. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000.
- Carroll, Anna Ella. *The Star of the West; or, National Men and National Measures*. Boston: James French and Company, 1856.
- Cazneau, Jane ["Cora Montgomery"]. *The Eagle Pass; or, Life on the Border*. New York: G.P. Putnam & Company, 1852.
- Chesnut, Mary. *The Private Mary Chesnut: The Unpublished Civil War Diaries*. Edited by C. Vann Woodward and Elisabeth Muhlenfeld. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- Choate, Rufus. *Addresses and Orations of Rufus Choate*. Cambridge, MA: Press of John Wilson and Son, 1878.
- Clay, Henry. *The Papers of Henry Clay*. Edited by James F. Hopkins and Mary W.M. Hargreaves. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1973.
- . *The Speeches of Henry Clay: Delivered in the Congress of the United States*. Philadelphia: H.C. Carey & I. Lea, 1827.

- Civis [pseud.] *Romanism Incompatible with Republican Institutions*. New York: The American Protestant Society, 1845.
- Cobb, Thomas R.R. *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America*. Philadelphia: T. & J.W. Wilson & Company, 1858.
- Colvocoresses, George M. *Four Years in the Government Exploring Expedition*. New York: J.M. Fairchild & Company, 1855.
- The Conquest of Mexico! An Appeal to the Citizens of the United States, on the Expediency of the Conquest of Mexico*. Boston: Jordan & Wiley; Hill & Brodhead; Redding & Co.; Waite, Pierce & Co., 1846.
- The Correspondence of William Hickling Prescott*. Transcribed and edited by Roger Wolcott. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925.
- Cotton is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments*. Edited by E.N. Elliott. Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbot & Loomis, 1860.
- Culbertson, Rosamond. *Rosamond; or, A Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of an American Female under the Popish Priests, with a Full Disclosure of their Manners and Customs, in the Island of Cuba*. New York: Leavitt, Lord & Company, 1836.
- Cutler, Manasseh. *A Sermon Preached August the 15th, 1798, at Hamilton, at the Ordination of the Rev. Daniel Story*. Salem: Thomas C. Cushing, 1798.
- Dana, Richard Henry. *To Cuba and Back*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966.
- . *Two Years Before the Mast*. New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1912.
- Delafield, John. *An Inquiry into the Origin of the Antiquities of America*. New York: J.C. Colt, 1839.
- . *Mysticism and Its Results: Being an Inquiry into the Uses and Abuses of Secrecy*. St. Louis: Edwards & Bushnell, 1857.
- Delany, Martin R. *Blake; or, The Huts of America*. With an introduction by Floyd Miller. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.
- . *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*. Philadelphia, 1852.
- Dickens, Charles. *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1844.
- Donnavan, C. *Adventures in Mexico; Experienced During a Captivity of Seven Months*. Boston: George R. Holbrook & Co., 1848.

- Drake, Samuel G. *Biography and History of the Indians of North America from its First Discovery*. Boston: Sanborn, Carter & Bazin, 1857.
- [Dwight, Theodore.] *Sketches of Scenery and Manners in the United States*. New York: A.T. Goodrich, 1829.
- Elliott, Richard Smith. *The Mexican War Correspondence of Richard Smith Elliott*. Edited and annotated by Mark L. Gardner. Norman & London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, with Annotations*. Edited by Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1912.
- Emory, Lieut. Col. W.H. *Notes of a Military Reconnaissance from Fort Leavenworth, in Missouri, to San Diego, in California*. Washington: Wendell and Van Benthuysen, 1848.
- Ewbank, Thomas. *Life in Brazil; or, A Journal of a Visit to the Land of the Cocoa and the Palm*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856.
- Fitzhugh, George. *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves without Masters*. Edited by C. Vann Woodward. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960.
- [Fitzhugh, George.] *Slavery Justified; by a Southerner*. Fredericksburg, VA: Recorder Printing Office, 1850.
- Flint, Timothy. *Francis Berrian; or, the Mexican Patriot*. Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, and Company, 1826.
- Frost, John. *The American Speaker: Containing Numerous Rules, Observations, and Exercises, on Pronunciation, Pauses, Inflections, Accent and Emphasis; Also, Copious Extracts in Prose and Poetry, Calculated to Assist the Teacher, and to Improve the Pupil in Reading and Recitation*. Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowpertwait, & Co., 1845.
- Gallatin, Albert. *Peace with Mexico*. New York: Bartlett & Welford, [1847].
- Garnet, Henry Highland. *The Past and the Present Condition, and Destiny, of the Colored Race: A Discourse Delivered at the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Female Benevolent Society of Troy, NY, February 14, 1848*.
- Gibbes, R.W. *Cuba for Invalids*. New York: W.A. Townsend & Company, 1860.
- Gray, Thomas. *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Richmond, VA: Thomas Gray, 1832.
- Hale, Salma ["Algernon Sidney"]. *The Administration and the Opposition*. Concord: Jacob B. Moore, 1826.
- Hale, Salma. *History of the United States from the First Settlement as Colonies to the Close of the Campaign of 1814*. Aberdeen: George Clark and Son, 1848.

- Harrison, William Henry. *A Discourse on the Aborigines of the Valley of the Ohio: To Which are Prefixed Some Remarks on the Study of History*. Cincinnati (Printed at the Cincinnati Express), 1836.
- Haven, Samuel F. *Archaeology of the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1856.
- Herndon, William Lewis. *Exploration of the Valley of the Amazon, 1851-52*. New York: Grove Press, 2000.
- Howe, Eber D. *Mormonism Unveiled*. Painesville, Ohio: Telegraph Press, 1834.
- Howe, Julia Ward. *A Trip to Cuba*. Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1860.
- Hulbert, Simon Bolivar. *One Battle too Many*. Gaithersburg, MD: Olde Soldier's Book, 1987.
- Hulings, Robert. Note to Antonio de Leon y Gama, *An Historical and Chronological Description of Two Stones Found Under Ground, in the Great Square of the City of Mexico, in the Year 1790*, 1818.
- [Ingraham, Joseph Holt.] *Montezuma, the Serf; or, The Revolt of the Mexitili: A Tale of the Last Days of the Aztec Dynasty*. Boston: H.L. Williams, 1845.
- . *The Quadroone; or, St. Michael's Day*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841.
- Irving, Washington. *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981.
- . *Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986.
- James, Henry Field. *Abolitionism Unveiled; or, Its Origin, Progress, and Pernicious Tendency Fully Developed*. Cincinnati: E. Morgan & Sons, 1856.
- Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Richmond: J.W. Randolph, 1853 (1787).
- . *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Edited by H.A. Washington. New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859.
- Johnson, Samuel. *The Works of Samuel Johnson*. London: Printed by Thomas Davison, Whitefriars, 1824.
- Kemble, Frances Anne. *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*. Edited, with an introduction by John A. Scott. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970.
- Kennedy, John Pendleton. *Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion*. New York, Hafner Publishing Company, 1962.

- Kidder, Rev. D.P. and Rev. J.C. Fletcher. *Brazil and the Brazilians*. Philadelphia: Childs & Peterson, 1857.
- Lippard, George. *Legends of Mexico*. Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1847.
- . *The Quaker City*. With an introduction by David S. Reynolds. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
- Lipscomb, Andrew A. *Our Country: Its Danger and Duty*. New York: The American Protestant Society, 1844.
- Mathews, Cornelius. *The Various Writings of Cornelius Mathews*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863.
- Maturin, Edward. *Montezuma: The Last of the Aztecs: A Romance*. New York: Paine & Burgess, 1845.
- Mayer, Brantz. *Mexico: Aztec, Spanish and Republican*. Hartford: S. Drake & Company, 1853.
- McGee, W.J. and Cyrus Thomas. *The History of North America: Volume Nineteen, Prehistoric North America*. Philadelphia: George Barrie & Sons, 1905.
- McKenney, Thomas L. *Memoirs Official and Personal, with Sketches of Travels among the Northern and Southern Indians*. New York: Paine and Burgess, 1846.
- Meigs, Charles D., M.D. *A Memoir of Samuel George Morton, M.D.* Philadelphia: T.K. & P.G. Collins, 1851.
- [Melish, John.] *The Traveller's Manual; and Description of the United States*. New-York: A.T. Goodrich, 1831.
- Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1988 (1851).
- . *The Writings of Herman Melville: Correspondence*. Edited by Lynn Horth. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993.
- Moody, Loring. *Facts for the People: Showing the Relations of the United States Government to Slavery*. Boston, 1847.
- Morton, Samuel George. *Crania Americana; or, A Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations*. Philadelphia: J. Dolson, 1839.
- Murray, Honorable Amelia M. *Letters from the United States, Cuba and Canada*. New York: G.P. Putnam & Company, 1856.
- Norman, Benjamin Moore. *Rambles in Yucatan; Including a Visit to the Remarkable Ruins of Chi-Chen, Kabah, Zayi, and Uxmal*. New York: J. and H.G. Langley, 1842.

- O'Neill, J.W. *The Aboriginal Races of North America*. Philadelphia: Charles Desilver, 1860.
- The Papers of Andrew Jackson, Volume V, 1821-24*. Edited by Harold D. Moser, David R. Hoth, and George H. Hoemann. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996.
- The Papers of Andrew Jackson, Volume VII, 1829*. Edited by Harold D. Moser, Laura-Eve Moss, and Thomas Coens. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2007.
- Peskin, Allan. *Volunteers: The Mexican War Journals of Private Richard Coulter and Sergeant Thomas Barclay, Company E, Second Pennsylvania Infantry*. Kent, OH and London: The Kent State University Press, 1991.
- Philanthropos [William Ladd], *Essays on Peace & War, Which First Appeared in the Christian Mirror, Printed at Portland, ME*. (Portland: A. Shirley, 1827).
- Pickens, Lucy Holcombe. *The Free Flag of Cuba: The Lost Novel of Lucy Holcombe Pickens*. With an introduction by Orville Vernon Burton and Georganne B. Burton. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002 (1854).
- Prescott, William Hickling. *Biographical and Critical Miscellanies*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1845.
- . *The Conquest of Mexico*. Abridged, with an introduction by Carl Van Doren. New York: The Book League of America, 1934.
- . *The History of the Conquest of Mexico and The History of the Conquest of Peru*. New York: The Modern Library, 1936 (1843 and 1847).
- . *The History of the Conquest of Peru*. With an introduction by Samuel Eliot Morison. New York: The Heritage Press, 1957.
- . *The History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, The Catholic, of Spain*. London: Richard Bentley, 1842.
- . *The Papers of William Hickling Prescott*. Selected and edited by C. Harvey Gardiner. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1964.
- Priest, Josiah. *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West*. Albany: Hoffman and White, 1837.
- . *Bible Defence of Slavery; or, The Origins, History, and Fortunes of the Negro Race*. Glasgow, KY: Rev. W.S. Brown, 1853.
- [Pringle, Edward J.] *Slavery in the Southern States by a Carolinian*. Cambridge: John Bartlett, 1852.
- The Pro-Slavery Argument; As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States*. Walker, Richards & Company, 1852.

- Quackenbos, G.P. *Illustrated School History of the United States and the Adjacent Parts of America*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857.
- Robertson, William. *The History of America*. Paris: Baudry at the Foreign Library, 1828.
- Sampson, Marmaduke B. *Central America and the Transit Between the Oceans*. New York: S.W. Benedict, 1850.
- Sands, Robert C. *The Writings of Robert C. Sands in Prose and Verse, with a Memoir of the Author*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835.
- Savage, Timothy. *The Amazonian Republic*. With an introduction by Joel Nydahl. Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1976 (1842).
- Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe. *History of the Indian Tribes of the United States: Their Present Condition and Prospects, and a Sketch of their Ancient Status*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1857.
- . *Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*. Philadelphia, 1857.
- . *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontiers*, Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Company, 1851.
- . *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society, Volume I*. New York: Bartlett & Welford; London: Wiley & Putnam, 1845.
- Sealsfield, Charles. *Tokeah; or, The White Rose*. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Carey, 1829.
- Semmes, Lieutenant Raphael. *Service Afloat and Ashore during the Mexican War*. Cincinnati: William H. Moore & Company Publishers, 1851.
- Sheridan, Richard Brinsely. *Pizarro; A Tragedy in Five Acts*. London: James Ridgway, 1799.
- Simms, William Gilmore. *An Early and Strong Sympathy: The Indian Writings of William Gilmore Simms*. Edited by John Caldwell Guilds and Charles Hudson. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003.
- . *The Damsel of Darien*. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1839.
- . *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*. Edited by Mary C. Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T.C. Duncan Eaves. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952.
- . *The Simms Reader*. Edited by John Caldwell Guilds. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001.

- . *The Social Principle: The True Source of National Permanence, an Oration Delivered before the Erosophic Society of the University of Alabama, at its Twelfth Anniversary, December 13, 1842*. Tuscaloosa: Published by the Society, 1843.
- . *The Wigwam and the Cabin*. New York: Redfield, 1859.
- . *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction*. New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845.
- Smith, E. Kirby. *To Mexico with Scott: The Letters of Captain E. Kirby Smith to His Wife*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917.
- Smith, Ethan. *View of the Hebrews*. Poultney, Vermont: Smith & Shute, 1823.
- Smith, Joseph, Jr. translator. *The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon, Upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi*. Palmyra, NY: E.B. Grandin, 1830.
- Spalding, M.J., D.D. *Miscellanea: Comprising Reviews, Lectures, and Essays, on Historical, Theological, and Miscellaneous Subjects, Volume I - Historical*. Baltimore: John Murphy & Company, 1875 (1855).
- Squier, E.G. *Observations on the Aboriginal Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*. New York: Bartlett & Welford, 1847.
- Squier, E.G. and E.H. Davis. *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley: Comprising the Results of Extensive Original Surveys and Explorations*. Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 1847.
- Stephens, John Lloyd. *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841.
- . *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1843.
- . *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*. Abridged by Karl Ackerman. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996.
- Stewart, C.S. *Brazil and La Plata: The Personal Record of a Cruise*. New York: G.P. Putnam & Company, 1856.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*. Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852.
- Stuart Wortley, Lady Emmeline. *Travels in the United States, Etc. During 1849 and 1850*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1851.
- Taylor, Zachary. *Letters of Zachary Taylor from the Battle-Fields of the Mexican War*. Rochester, NY: The Genesee Press, for William E. Bixby, 1908.
- Testimonial of Respect of the Bar of New York to the Memory of Alexander W. Bradford, Esq.* New York: Baker & Godwin, Printers, 1868.

- Thompson, Charles Blancher. *Evidence in Proof of the Book of Mormon*. Batavia, NY: C.B. Thompson, 1841.
- Thompson, Waddy. *Recollections of Mexico*. New York, London: Wiley and Putnam, 1847.
- Ticknor, George. *Papers Discussing the Comparative Merits of Prescott's and Wilson's Theories Pro. And Con.* 1861.
- Torres, Manuel. *An Exposition of the Commerce of Spanish America*. Philadelphia: G. Palmer, 1816.
- Trollope, Frances. *Domestic Manners of the Americans*. Edited by Donald Smalley. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949.
- Twain, Mark (Samuel Clemens). *Life on the Mississippi*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1917.
- Walker, David. *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles: Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America*. Boston: Revised and Published by David Walker, 1830.
- Walker, Robert. *Letter of Mr. Walker, of Mississippi, Relative to the Reannexation of Texas*. Philadelphia: Mifflin and Parry, 1844.
- Warren, Edward, M.D. *The Life of John Collins Warren, M.D.* Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860.
- Warren, John Esaias. *Para; or, Scenes and Adventures on the Banks of the Amazon*. New York: G.P. Putnam, 1851.
- Washington, George and Daniel Webster. *Washington's Farewell Address and Webster's Bunker Hill Orations*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915.
- Wilkes, Charles. *Voyage Round the World: Embracing the Principal Events of the Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*. Philadelphia: Geo. W. Gorton, 1849.
- Wilson, Robert A. *A New History of the Conquest of Mexico*. Philadelphia: James Challen and Son, 1859.
- . *Mexico: Its Peasants and Priests*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856.

## **Magazines and Journals**

*Albion*

*American Biblical Repository*

*American Monthly Magazine*  
*American Monthly Review*  
*American Quarterly Review*  
*American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Science*  
*Arcturus, A Journal of Books and Opinions*  
*Ariel*  
*Atkinson's Casket*  
*Atlantic*  
*Christian Review*  
*The Critic*  
*DeBow's Review*  
*Edinburgh Review*  
*Graham's Magazine*  
*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*  
*Hesperian*  
*Knickerbocker*  
*Literary World*  
*The Living Age*  
*Massachusetts Quarterly Review*  
*The New World*  
*New York Review*  
*Niles' Weekly Register*  
*North American Review*  
*The Novel Newspaper*  
*Putnam's Monthly Magazine*  
*Southern Literary Messenger*  
*Southern Quarterly Review*

*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*  
*United States Catholic Magazine and Monthly Review*  
*United States Magazine and Democratic Review*  
*United States Review and Quarterly Gazette*  
*Western Monthly Review*

**Newspapers**

*Albany Argus*  
*Augusta Chronicle*  
*Berkshire County Whig*  
*Boston Daily Advertiser*  
*Brooklyn Eagle*  
*Charleston Courier*  
*The Christian Examiner*  
*Cincinnati Advertiser*  
*Cincinnati Daily Gazette*  
*Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.)  
*The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans)  
*Hartford Times*  
*Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette*  
*The Liberator*  
*Louisiana State Gazette*  
*Nantucket Inquirer*  
*National Era*  
*National Intelligencer*  
*New Orleans Times Picayune*  
*New York Evangelist*

*New York Herald*  
*New-York Evening Post*  
*New-York Mirror*  
*Pittsfield Sun*  
*Richmond Enquirer*  
*Richmond Whig*  
*San Antonio Ledger*  
*Texas State Gazette*  
*U.S. Gazette*  
*Utica Whig*

## **Secondary Sources**

### **Books and Dissertations**

- Adams, Alice Dana. *The Neglected Period of Anti-Slavery in America*. Boston and London: Ginn and Company, 1908.
- Adeeko, Adeleke. *The Slave's Rebellion: Literature, History, Orature*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Aguirre, Robert D. *Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Allibone, S. Austin. *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors Living and Deceased from the Earliest Accounts to the Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1891.
- American Magazine Journalists, 1741-1850*. Edited by Sam G. Riley. Detroit, MI: Gale, 1988.
- Anbinder, Tyler. *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition. London and New York: Verso, 2006.
- Arrington, Leonard J. *Brigham Young: American Moses*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

- Axtell, James. *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Blight, David. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001.
- Boorstin, Daniel. *The Americans: The National Experience*. New York: Random House, 1973.
- Brading, D.A. *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492-1867*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Brodie, Fawn. *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957.
- Brooke, John L. *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Brown, Joshua. *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded Age America*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2006.
- Burstein, Andrew. *America's Jubilee*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001.
- Bushman, Claudia. *America Discovers Columbus: How an Italian Explorer Became an American Hero*. Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1992.
- Bushman, Richard Lyman, with the Assistance of Jed Woodworth. *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.
- Camp, Stephanie M.H. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Campbell, James. *Middle Passages: African-American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006.
- Ceram, C.W. *Gods, Graves, and Scholars: The Story of Archaeology*. Translated by E.B. Garside and Sophie Wilkins. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967 (1951).
- Clary, David A. *Eagles and Empire: The United States, Mexico, and the Struggle for a Continent*. New York: Bantam Books, 2009.
- Cline, Howard. *William Hickling Prescott: An Annotated Bibliography of Published Works*. Washington, D.C.: The Hispanic Foundation, Library of Congress, 1958.
- Coad, Oral Summer. *William Dunlap, A Study of His Life and Works and of His Place in Contemporary Culture*. New York: The Dunlap Society, 1917.
- The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil*. Edited by Cyrus B. Dawsey and James M. Dawsey. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995.

- Conn, Steven. *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Cooper, William J., Jr. *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856*. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978.
- Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991.
- Dahl, Curtis. *Robert Montgomery Bird*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1963.
- Dangerfield, George. *The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815-1828*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
- Degler, Carl N. *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.
- Dekker, George. *The American Historical Romance*. Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Dippie, Brian W. *Caitlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.
- Drinnon, Richard. *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Duyckinck, Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck. *Cyclopedia of American Literature*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1856.
- Elkins, Stanley and Eric McKittrick. *The Age of Federalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Elkins, Stanley. *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- The Encyclopedia of New York City*. Edited by Kenneth T. Jackson. New Haven and London: Yale University Press; New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1995.
- Evans, Eli N. *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate*. New York: The Free Press, 1988.
- Evans, R. Tripp. *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination, 1820-1915*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004.
- Fagan, Brian. *Elusive Treasure: The Story of Early Archaeologists in the Americas*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977.

- Farrow, Anne, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank. *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2005.
- Faust, Albert B. *Charles Sealsfield: Materials for a Biography*. Baltimore: Press of Friedenwald Company, 1892.
- Faust, Drew Gilpin. *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.
- Fitzpatrick, T.J. *Rafinesque: A Sketch of His Life with Bibliography*. Des Moines: The Historical Department of Iowa, 1911.
- Foner, Eric. *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Forbes, Robert Pierce. *The Missouri Compromise and its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Ford, Lacy K. *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth and Eugene D. Genovese. *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Franchot, Jenny. *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994.
- Freehling, William W. *The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- . *The Road to Disunion, Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Gardiner, C. Harvey. *Prescott and His Publishers*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959.
- . *William Hickling Prescott: A Biography*. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1969.
- Genovese, Eugene D. *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy & Society of the Slave South*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1961.
- . *Slaveholders' Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992.
- . *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1969.

- Gordon, Mary. *Reading Jesus: A Writer's Encounter with the Gospels*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2009.
- Greenberg, Amy S. *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paulo: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Greerson, Jennifer Rae. *Our South: Geographic Fantasy and the Rise of National Literature*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Grimsted, David. *Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968.
- Guterl, Matthew Pratt. *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*. Edited by Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan Van D'Elden Donaldson. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997.
- Henderson, Timothy J. *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and Its War with the United States*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007.
- Hietala, Thomas. *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Hochschild, Adam. *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005.
- Hofstadter, Richard. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965.
- Horne, Gerald. *The Deepest South: The United States, Brazil, and the African Slave Trade*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2007.
- Horsman, Reginald. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Howe, Daniel Walker. *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1814-1848*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Hudson, Linda S. *Mistress of Manifest Destiny: A Biography of Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, 1807-1878*. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2001.
- Hunt, Alfred N. *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988.
- The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. Edited by David P. Geggus. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001.
- The Invention of Tradition*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

- Jaede, Mark G. "Brothers at a Distance: Race, Religion, Culture and U.S. Views of Spanish America, 1800-1830." Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2001.
- Jaher, Frederic Cople. *The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago, and Los Angeles*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982.
- Johannsen, Robert. *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Johnson, John J. *A Hemisphere Apart: The Foundations of United States Policy toward Latin America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Johnstone, William Jackson. *Abraham Lincoln: The Christian*. New York: Eaton and Mains, 1913.
- Jordan-Lake, Joy. *Whitewashing Uncle Tom's Cabin: Nineteenth-Century Women Novelists Respond to Stowe*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005.
- Kastor, Peter. *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Kehoe, Alice Beck. *The Land of Prehistory: A Critical History of American Anthropology*. New York and London: Routledge, 1998.
- Kennedy, Roger G. *Hidden Cities: The Discovery and Loss of Ancient North American Civilizations*. New York: The Free Press, 1994.
- Kukla, John. *A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.
- Langley, Lester D. *The Americas in the Age of Revolution, 1750-1850*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Lepore, Jill. *In the Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.
- Levin, David. *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959.
- Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988).
- Lewis, Elizabeth Wittenmyer. *Queen of the Confederacy: The Innocent Deceits of Lucy Holcombe Pickens*. Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2002.
- Lewis, James E., Jr. *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

- Lives of Mississippi Authors, 1817-1967*. Edited by James B. Lloyd. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1981.
- Lockey, Joseph. *Pan-Americanism: Its Beginnings*. New York: Macmillan, 1920.
- Loveman, Brian. *The Constitution of Tyranny: Regimes of Exception in Spanish America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993.
- Mann, Barbara Alice. *Native Americans, Archaeologists, and the Mounds*. New York: Peter Lang, 2003.
- Manthorne, Katherine Emma. *Tropical Renaissance: North American Artists Exploring Latin America, 1839-1879*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989.
- Marshall, Herbert and Mildred Stock. *Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958.
- Mason, Matthew. *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.
- Matthiessen, F.O. *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1941.
- May, Robert E. *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973.
- McConachie, Bruce A. *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre & Society, 1820-1870*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992.
- McKittrick, Eric L. *Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963.
- McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Meigs, William Montgomery. *The Life of Thomas Hart Benton*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Company, 1904.
- Miller, Perry. *The Raven and the Whale: The War of Words and Wits in the Era of Poe and Melville*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956.
- Moody, Richard. *Edwin Forrest: First Star of the American Stage*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960.
- Mott, Frank Luther. *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930.
- Nairn, Thomas. *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited*. London and New York: Verso, 1997.

- Nathans, Heather. *Slavery and Sentiment on the Nation's Stage, 1787-1861: Lifting the Veil of Black*. Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Nevins, Allan. *The Evening Post: A Century of Journalism*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922.
- Newman, Richard S. *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Nineteenth-Century American Western Writers*. Edited by Robert L. Gale. Detroit, MI: Gale, 1997.
- Noll, Mark. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Oakes, James. *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982.
- . *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.
- O'Brien, Michael. *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Ogden, Rollo. *William Hickling Prescott*. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904.
- Osagie, Iyunolu Folayan. *The Amistad Revolt: Memory, Slavery, and the Politics of Identity in the United States and Sierra Leone*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2000.
- Owens, Robert M. *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007.
- Parrington, Vernon Louis. *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920, Volume II: 1800-1860, The Romantic Revolution in America*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927.
- Passing Performances: Queer Readings of Leading Performers in American Theater History*. Edited by Robert A. Schanke and Kim Marra. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.
- Pattee, Fred Lewis. *The Development of the American Short Story: An Historical Survey*. New York, London: Harper & Brothers, 1923.
- Peck, Harry Thurston. *William Hickling Prescott*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926.
- Pelletreau, William S. *Historic Homes and Institutions and Genealogical and Family History of New York*. New York and Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1907.

- Perkins, Dexter. *The Monroe Doctrine, 1823-1826*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1927.
- Peskin, Allan. *Winfield Scott and the Profession of Arms*. Kent, OH and London: Kent State University Press, 2003.
- Pike, Frederick B. *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.
- Pinheiro, John C. *Manifest Ambition: James K. Polk and Civil-Military Relations during the Mexican War*. Westport, CT and London: Praeger Security International, 2007.
- Potter, David. *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*. New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1976.
- Powell, Philip Wayne. *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudice Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World*. New York and London: Basic Books, 1971.
- Rasmussen, Daniel. *American Uprising: The Untold Story of America's Largest Slave Revolt*. New York: Harper/HarperCollins Publishers, 2011.
- Remini, Robert V. *Andrew Jackson and his Indian Wars*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2002.
- . *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union*. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991.
- . *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1951.
- . *The Legacy of Andrew Jackson: Essays on Democracy, Indian Removal, and Slavery*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988.
- Reynolds, David S. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988.
- . *Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- . *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson*. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.
- Richards, Leonard L. *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*. Edited by Don Ihde. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974.
- Rippy, J. Fred. *Joel R. Poinsett, Versatile American*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1935.

- . *The Rivalry of the United States and Great Britain over Latin America (1808-1830)*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929.
- Rourke, Constance Mayfield. *Trumpets of Jubilee*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927.
- Rugemer, Edward Bartlett. *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008.
- Sanchez-Eppler, Karen. *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body from the Sentimental to the Lyric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993.
- Sargent, Epes. *The Life and Public Services of Henry Clay*. New York: Greeley & McEldreth, 1848.
- Sassi, Jonathan D. *A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Schechel, Susan. *The Insistence of the Indian: Nationalism in Nineteenth Century American Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Sellers, Charles. *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1848*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- . *James K. Polk: Continentalist, 1843-1846*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.
- Shaw, Brent D. *Spartacus and the Slave Wars: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2001.
- Silverberg, Robert. *Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth*. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1973.
- Sollors, Werner. *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Spanagel, David Ian. "Chronicles of a Land Etched by God, Water, Fire, Time, and Ice." Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1996.
- St. Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Stamp, Kenneth M. *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Stanton, William. *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-1859*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

- Stauffer, John. *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Stepan, Nancy. *Picturing Tropical Nature*. London: Reaktion, 2001.
- Stephanson, Anders. *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.
- Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Schwartz, Stuart. *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Tannenbaum, Frank. *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1946.
- Tawil, Ezra. *The Making of Racial Sentiment: Slavery and the Birth of the Frontier Romance*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Taylor, George Rogers. *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860*. New York: Rinehart, 1951.
- Taylor, William R. *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and the American National Character*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963 (1957).
- Ticknor, George. *Life of William Hickling Prescott*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans 1880-1930*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2004.
- Trigger, Bruce. *A History of Archaeological Thought*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Uhlendorf, Bernhard Alexander. "Charles Sealsfield: Ethnic Elements and National Problems in his Works." Ph.D. thesis, University of Illinois, 1920.
- Waldstreicher, David. *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Wallace, Anthony F.C. *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.
- The War with Mexico: Why Did it Happen?* Edited by Armin Rappaport. New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1964.
- Watkins, Daniel P. *Keats's Poetry and the Politics of the Imagination*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989.
- Watson, Charles S. *From Nationalism to Secessionism: The Changing Fiction of William Gilmore Simms*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993.

- Watson, Richie Devon. *Normans and Saxons: A Southern Race Mythology and Intellectual History of the American Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008.
- Wertheimer, Eric. *Imagined Empires: Incas, Aztecs, and the New World of American Literature, 1771-1861*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Widmer, Edward L. *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Wiebe, Robert. *Who We Are: A History of Popular Nationalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Williams, Stanley. *The Spanish Background of American Literature*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1968.
- Witt, John Fabian. *Patriots and Cosmopolitans: Hidden Histories of American Law*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Yellin, Jean Fagan. *The Intricate Knot: Black Figures in American Literature, 1776-1863*. New York: New York University Press, 1972.

### **Journal Articles and Conference Papers**

- Abzug, Robert H. "The Influence of Garrisonian Abolitionists' Fears of Slave Violence on the Antislavery Argument, 1829-40." *The Journal of Negro History* 55, no. 1 (January 1970): 15-26.
- Aleman, Jesse. "The Other Country: Mexico, the United States, and the Gothic History of Conquest." *The Author* 2006: 406-26.
- Atwater, Edward C., M.D. "William Hickling Prescott, 1796-1859--An Early Report of Iritis Arthritis." *New England Journal of Medicine* 275 (1966): 1228-1232.
- Bauer, Ralph. "Laying Claim to the Literary Borderlands: The Contested Grounds of Hispanism in the U.S." *American Literary History* 16, no. 3 (2004): 487-495.
- Belasco, Susan. "Harriet Martineau's Black Hero and the American Antislavery Movement." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 55, no. 2 (September 2000): 157-94.
- Bell, Jr., Whitfield J. "The Relation of Herndon and Gibbon's Exploration of the Amazon to North American Slavery, 1850-55." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 19, no. 4 (November 1939): 494-503.
- Blassingame, John W. "Bibliographical Essay: Foreign Writers View Cuban Slavery." *The Journal of Negro History* 57, no. 4 (October, 1972): 415-24.

- Blaufarb, Rafe. "The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence." *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007): 742-63.
- Bonquois, Dora J. "The Career of Henry Adams Bullard, Louisiana Jurist Legislator, and Educator," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (October 1940): 999-1106.
- Brandstadter, Evan. "Uncle Tom and Archy Moore: The Antislavery Novel as Ideological Symbol." *American Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (May 1974): 160-75.
- Brooks, Joanna. "Who Reads an Early American Book?" [www.common-place.org](http://www.common-place.org) 9:3 (April 2009).
- Buffington, Nancy. "Conquering Histories: The Historical Romances of Robert M. Bird." *Modern Language Studies* 30, no. 2 (Autumn 2000): 87-117.
- Caine, Michael. "Sheridan's 'Pizarro.'" *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 July 2006.
- Campbell, Randolph B. "The Spanish American Aspect of Henry Clay's American System." *The Americas* 24, no. 1 (July 1967): 3-17.
- Cardozo, Manoel. "Slavery in Brazil as Described by Americans, 1822-1888." *The Americas* 17, no. 3 (January, 1961): 241-60.
- Carlson, Julie A. "Trying Sheridan's 'Pizarro.'" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38, no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 1996): 359-78.
- Casanova, Jose. "Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration." *Transit* 27 (2004). <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2004-07-29-casanova-en.html>
- Cayton, Andrew R.L. "The Debate over the Panama Congress and the Origins of the Second American Party System." *The Historian* 47, no. 2 (February 1985): 219-38.
- Charvat, William. "Prescott's Political and Social Attitudes." *American Literature* 13, no. 4 (January 1942): 320-30.
- Cleven, N. Andrew N. "The First Panama Mission and the Congress of the United States." *The Journal of Negro History* 13, no. 3 (July 1928): 225-54.
- Crenshaw, Ollinger. "The Knights of the Golden Circle: The Career of George Bickley." *American Historical Review* 47, no. 1 (October, 1941): 23-50.
- Cummins, Light T. "John Quincy Adams and Latin American Nationalism." *Revista de Historia America* 86 (July-December 1978): 221-31.
- Dahl, Curtis. "Mound-Builders, Mormon, and William Cullen Bryant." *The New England Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (June 1961): 178-90.
- Dewberry, Jonathan. "The African Grove Theatre and Company." *Black American Literature Forum* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 128-31.

- Donald, David. "The Proslavery Argument Reconsidered." *The Journal of Southern History* 37, no. 1 (February 1971): 3-18.
- Draper, Mark. "The 1857-58 Businessmen's Revival and Slavery, the Elephant in the Room." American Historical Association Conference, Boston, 7 January 2011.
- Durden, Robert F. "J.D.B. DeBow: Convolutions of a Slavery Expansionist." *The Journal of Southern History* 17, no. 4 (November 1951): 441-61.
- Eipper, John E. "The Canonizer De-Canonized: The Case of William H. Prescott." *Hispania* 83, no. 3 (September 2000): 416-427.
- Elliott, J.H. "An Epic in Prose: William Prescott and the 'Resistless March of Destiny' in Cortés's Conquest of Mexico." *Times Literary Supplement* 31 July 2009: 13-15.
- Ernest, John. "Reading the Romantic Past: William H. Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico*." *American Literary History* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 231-49.
- Faust, Drew Gilpin. "A Southern Stewardship: The Intellectual and the Proslavery Argument." *American Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 63-80.
- Fitz, Caitlin A. "The Problem of Slavery in a Hemisphere of Republics: The United States and Spanish American Emancipation." McNeil Center for Early American Studies Seminar Series, The Library Company of Philadelphia, 12 November 2010.
- Flanagan, John T. and Raymond L. Grismer. "Mexico in American Fiction Prior to 1850." *Hispania* 23, no. 4 (December 1940): 307-18.
- Fowler, Don D. "Uses of the Past: Archaeology in the Service of the State." *American Antiquity* 52, no. 2 (April 1987): 229-48.
- Genovese, Eugene D. "King Solomon's Dilemma—and the Confederacy's." *Southern Cultures* (Winter 2004): 55-75.
- Gleijeses, Piero. "The Limits of Sympathy: The United States and the Independence of Spanish America." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, no. 3 (October 1992): 481-505.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. "Fall in the House of Ussher." *Natural History* 100 (November 1991): 12-21.
- Green, Vivien M. "Hiram Powers's 'Greek Slave': Emblem of Freedom." *The American Art Journal* 14, no. 4 (Autumn 1982): 31-9.
- Gribbin, William. "A Matter of Faith: North America's Religion and South America's Independence." *The Americas* 31, no. 4 (April 1975): 470-87.
- Griffin, Susan. "Awful Disclosures: Women's Evidence in the Escaped Nun's Tale." *PMLA* 111, no. 1 (January 1996): 93-107.

- Gutierrez, David G. "Significant to Whom? Mexican Americans and the History of the American West." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (November 1993): 519-39.
- Haefeli, Evan and Kevin Sweeney. "'The Redeemed Captive' as Recurrent Bestseller: Politics and Publication, 1707-1853." *New England Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (September 2004): 341-67.
- Hamilton, Charles Granville. "English-Speaking Travelers in Brazil, 1851-1887." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 40, no. 4 (November, 1960): 533-547.
- Hanke, Lewis. "Baptis Irvine's Reports on Simon Bolivar." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 16, no. 3 (August 1936): 360-73.
- Harnett, Stephen. "Senator Robert Walker's 1844 Letter on Texas Annexation: The Rhetorical 'Logic' of Imperialism." *American Studies* 38, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 27-54.
- Harris, Richard. "A Young Dramatist's Diary: The Secret Records of R.M. Bird." *Library Chronicle: University of Pennsylvania* 25 (Winter 1959): 8-24.
- Kagan, Richard. "Prescott's Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain." *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 2 (April 1996): 423-446.
- Koepke, Wulf. "Charles Sealsfield's Place in Literary History." *South Central Review* 1, no. 1/2 (Spring-Summer 1984): 52-66.
- Kollen, Richard P. "The House Gag Rule Debate: The Wedge Dividing North and South." *OAH Magazine of History* 12, no. 4, Congressional History (Summer 1998): 55-63.
- Krumpelmann, John T. "*Tokeah*, the First English-Language Novel in Our Southwest." *South Central Bulletin* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1968): 142-3.
- Langley, Harold D. "Bolivar as Seen by an American Sailor." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (August 1956): 329-332.
- Lich, Glen E. "Postl, Carl Anton." *The Handbook of Texas Online* ([http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/PP/fpods\\_print.html](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/PP/fpods_print.html)) accessed 18 April 2009.
- Long, Kathryn. "The Power of Interpretation: The Revival of 1857-58 and the Historiography of Revivalism in America." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 77-105.
- Lowe, John. "'Calypso Magnolia': The Caribbean Side of the South." *South Central Review* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 54-80.
- Ludlum, Robert. "The Antislavery 'Gag-Rule': History and Argument." *The Journal of Negro History* 26, no. 2 (April 1941): 203-43.

- Luis-Brown, David. "An 1848 for the Americas: The Black Atlantic, 'El negro martir,' and Cuban Exile Anticolonialism in New York City." *American Literary History* 431-63.
- Malanson, Jeffrey J. "The Congressional Debate over U.S. Participation in the Congress of Panama, 1825-1826: Washington's Farewell Address, Monroe's Doctrine, and the Fundamentals of U.S. Foreign Policy." *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 5 (November 2006): 813-38.
- Matlaw, Myron. "'This is Tragedy!!!': The History of Pizarro." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 43, no. 3 (October 1957): 288-94.
- May, Robert E. "Reconsidering Antebellum U.S. Women's History: Gender, Filibustering, and America's Quest for Empire." *American Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (December 2005): 1155-1188.
- McGuire, Randall H. "Archaeology and the First Americans." *American Anthropologist* 94, no. 4 (December 1992): 816-36.
- McKee, Mabel F. "Three Examples of Motivation." *The English Journal* 9, no. 8 (October 1920): 457-62.
- Meltzer, David J. "North American Archaeology and Archaeologists, 1879-1934." *American Antiquity* 50, no. 2 (1985): 249-60.
- Merk, Frederick. "A Safety Valve Thesis and Texas Annexation." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49, no. 3 (December 1962): 413-36.
- Miller, Angela. "'The Soil of an Unknown America': New World Lost Empires and Debate over Cultural Origin." *American Art* 8, no. 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1994): 9-27.
- Miller, Ralph M. "Nationalism in Bryant's 'The Prairies.'" *American Literature* 21, no. 2 (May 1949): 227-32.
- Mumford, Jeremy Ravi. "The Inca Priest on the Mormon Stage." [www.common-place.org](http://www.common-place.org) 5, no. 4 (July 2005).
- Orians, G. Harrison. "The Romance Ferment after Waverly." *American Literature* 3, no. 4 (January 1932): 408-31.
- Pagliarini, Marie Anne. "The Pure American Woman and the Wicked Catholic Priest: An Analysis of Anti-Catholic Literature in Antebellum America." *Religion and American Culture* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 97-128.
- Podgorny, Irina. "Portable Antiquities: Transportation, Ruins, and Communications in Nineteenth-Century Archaeology." *Histor, Ciencias, Saude-Manguinhos* 15, no. 3 (July/September 2008): 577-95.

- Resendez, Andres. "National Identity on a Shifting Border: Texas and New Mexico in the Age of Transition, 1821-1848." *Journal of American History* 86, no. 2 (September 1999): 668-688.
- Reynolds, Amy. "The Impact of Walker's Appeal on Northern and Southern Conception of Free Speech in the Nineteenth Century." *Communication Law and Policy* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 73-100.
- Roberts, Jennifer L. "Landscapes of Indifference: Robert Smithson and John Lloyd Stephens in Yucatan." *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 3 (September 2000): 544-65.
- Robertson, Andrew W. "'Look on this Picture . . . And on This!': Nationalism, Localism, and Partisan Images of Otherness in the United States, 1787-1820." *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (October 2001): 1263-80.
- Rose, Alan Henry. "The Image of the Negro in the Pre-Civil War Novels of John Pendleton Kennedy and William Gilmore Simms." *Journal of American Studies* 4, no. 2 (February 1971): 217-26.
- Roylance, Patricia. "Inquisition: Religious Tolerance and Motley's Rise of the Dutch Republic." Paper presented at the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic Conference, Rochester, NY, 23 July 2010.
- Rugemer, Edward B. "Robert Monroe Harrison, British Abolition, Southern Anglophobia and Texas Annexation." *Slavery and Abolition* 28, no. 2 (August 2007): 169-91.
- Sayre, Gordon M. "The Mound Builders and the Imagination of American Antiquity in Jefferson, Bartram, and Chateaubriand." *Early American Literature* 33, no. 3 (1998): 225-248.
- Simmons, Charles Willis. "Racist Americans in a Multi-Racial Society: Confederate Exiles in Brazil." *The Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 34-39.
- Sio, Arnold A. "Interpretations of Slavery: The Slave Status in the Americas." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 7, no. 3 (April 1965): 289-308.
- Stimson, Frederick S. "'Francis Berrian': Hispanic Influence on American Romanticism." *Hispania* 42, no. 4 (December 1959): 511-16.
- Streeby, Shelly. "American Sensations: Empire, Amnesia, and the U.S.-Mexican War." *American Literary History* 2001: 1-40.
- Sullivan, Sherry. "A Redder Shade of Pale: The Indianization of Heroes and Heroines in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 57-75.
- Teed, Paul E. "The Politics of Sectional Memory: Theodore Parker and The Massachusetts Quarterly Review, 1847-1850." *Journal of the Early Republic* 21, no. 2 (September 2001): 301-29.

- Tinnemeyer, Andrea. "Enlightenment Ideology and the Crisis of Whiteness in 'Francis Berrian' and 'Caballero.'" *Western American Literature* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 21-32.
- Trigger, Bruce G. "Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian." *American Antiquity* 45, no. 4 (November 1980): 662-676.
- "The University of Alabama: History of UA." <http://www.ua.edu/history.html> accessed 5 December 2009.
- Vollaro, Daniel R. "Lincoln, Stowe, and the 'Little Woman/Great War' Story: The Making, and Breaking, of a Great American Anecdote," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2009), 18-34.
- Vorpahl, Ben M. "The Eden Theme and Three Novels by Timothy Flint." *Studies in Romanticism* 10 (1971): 105-29.
- Watson, Richie. "'The Difference of Race': Antebellum Race Mythology and the Development of Southern Nationalism." *Southern Literary Journal*: 1-13.
- Williams, Stanley T. "Spanish Influences on the Fiction of William Gilmore Simms." *Hispanic Review* 21, no. 3 (July 1953): 221-8.
- Wirks, Daniel. "'The Only Mode of Avoiding Everlasting Debate': The Overlooked Senate Gag Rule for Antislavery Petitions." *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 115-38.