

CHAPTER ONE

Figuring America

The Albert Memorial, completed in 1872 and recently restored to its glistening, gaudy Victorian splendor, stands on the southern edge of London's Hyde Park. It commemorates not only Queen Victoria's late husband, but also national pride in commerce, arts, and science—all of them causes in which Prince Albert had taken an energetic interest. The monument ostentatiously places Britain at the center of the world, at the apex of a ground plan that installs Europe, Asia, Africa, and America at the round Earth's imagined corners. John Bell's sculpture follows European classical tradition by representing the entire American continent as an Indian.¹ Wearing resplendent feathered headwear, she rides on the back of a curly maned bison. Her component lands accompany her. The United States is in the forefront, tickling the bison between the horns with her scepter; a classically draped female figure, she wears a single feather in her hair. On the other side of the bison stands Canada, clasping the Rose of England to her breast, the national maple leaf and Nova Scotia's mayflower woven into her headdress. Slightly behind the United States is a Mexican Indian with an Aztec crest, with the fruit of the cochineal cactus at his feet; apparently on the point of rising, he may very well symbolize the Mexican revolutionary wars of the 1860s and that country's desire for national independence. A fit young man, he certainly has a more lively air than the mestizo who represents South America. Partly clothed with sombrero and poncho and holding a carbine and lasso, he is clearly employed in the ranching industry, with which Britain had strong economic ties.² Although the dynamics of the group as a whole are unquestionably forward looking, alert observers were not oblivious to the potential ironies inherent in the iconic figures. At the moment of the monument's erection, the American plains were heaped with the carcasses of dead bison, killed not just by sportsmen but by American troops, who, in their turn, were instruments of a government eager to subdue Indian autonomy, if not to eliminate the race altogether.³

This book is, in part, about the place of the Native American in the British cultural imagination from the time of American independence up to the early decades of the twentieth century. As the resonances of Bell's sculptural cluster suggest, the topic stretches beyond the borders of the United States. The iconic image of the Indian is not only inseparable from



Figure 2. *America*, Albert Memorial, London. Sculpted by John Bell, 1872. Photo by Kate Flint.

the expansion and the internal policies of the new nation during the nineteenth century, and from the country's reflections concerning its history and its national identity, but is also central to Britain's conceptualization of the whole American continent. Additionally, the Indian is a figure charged with significance when it comes to Britain's interpretation of her whole imperial role and her responsibility toward indigenous peoples. In other words, the Indian is a touchstone for a whole range of British perceptions concerning America during the long nineteenth century and plays a pivotal role in the understanding and imagining of cultural difference. But transatlantic crossings were not limited to visual and textual representations. A significant number of Native Americans visited Britain in the long nineteenth century, and this book explores their engagement with that country, its people and institutions, and these visitors' perceptions of the development of modern, urban, industrialized life. Their reactions—whether curiosity, shock, resistance, or enthusiasm—show them to have been far from the declining and often degenerate race that popular culture frequently made them out to be. This book examines the centrality of the Indian—both imaged and actual—to our own understanding of that changing transatlantic world.

How did the British come to learn about Native Americans? First, through numerous kinds of publications. These included informed and informative periodical and newspaper articles, news reports of battles between Indians and American troops, accounts of and interviews with Indian visitors to Britain, and sensationalist narratives of captivities and sudden attacks, anthropological studies, works of racial science, and missionary narratives and evangelical tales, quite apart from the many imaginative works of fiction and poetry that foregrounded both idealized and demonized Indian figures, whether contemporary or historical. Some of these materials were produced in, and also circulated widely within, North America, and many common attitudes toward Indians were, as we shall see, readily replicated on each side of the Atlantic. All the same, British travelers, in a large number of accounts, in both book and magazine form, grappled with issues raised by the culture and policies of the United States in order to see what might be learned from that country by way of example or warning. Their authors' attitudes ranged from profound relief at the familiarity created through a shared language and shared assumptions about domestic life—coupled with the disorientation that followed from recognizing that this apparent similarity could be highly delusory—to apprehension generated by the raw primitiveness of conditions the farther one moved away from the eastern seaboard, to expressions of anxiety and alarm at those signs of difference or change that might be equated with the menace of modernity, commercialism, and vulgarity. Native peoples were very frequently mentioned in passing, even if firsthand contact (with the notable exception of those who went on hunting expeditions or who served as missionaries) tended to dwindle as the century wore on. Nonetheless, British administrators in Upper Canada, as well as missionaries there, were also keen to distinguish their activities from those of their counterparts in the United States.

In many of the publications that originated within the United States, which turned curiosity about the country and its original peoples into a commodity and which ensured the rapid transatlantic circulation of stereotypes, we find that tracing British forms of knowledge of the Indian means witnessing the speed with which American popular culture was disseminated within the British Isles. The most obvious case in point here is the fiction of James Fenimore Cooper and its legacy both in the form of imported dime novels and in the British-authored Western, as produced by Charles Murray, Mayne Reid, Arthur Paterson, and others.

Print culture, however, took second place to the real thing, even as it helped to form many of the expectations that greeted actual native peoples. Small groups of Indians, as well as tribal representatives, visited Britain throughout the nineteenth century. On occasion they put on

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entertainments; more frequently they were political visitors concerned with land rights issues, or they were missionaries or occasionally lecturers. Whatever their role, the press inevitably treated them as objects of public curiosity. Two entrepreneurs were notable for displays that, in their different ways, set out both to inform and to entertain. In the 1840s the American traveler and cultural memorialist George Catlin mounted an exhibition composed of Indian artifacts and his own paintings of Western scenes. Shown first in London and then the provinces, the static objects on show were enlivened, after three years, by actual Indians. Then, at intervals from 1888 onward, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, sustained by a highly professionalized publicity machine, vaunted its triumphalist version of the conquest of the West, taking its spectacular performances to London's Earl's Court and on tour around the country.

As a supplemental context to these live Indians, something of the scale of America, at once exhilarating and daunting, was conveyed through panoramas, their painted cloths offering vicarious tourism and surrounding spectators with the force of Niagara or the vastness of the plains. The plains formed the dwelling place of indigenous peoples whose presence guaranteed America's difference from Britain, and they were also the site of their displacement in the name of "civilization." Charles Dickens, writing in late 1848 about "Banvard's Geographical Panorama of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers," a supposedly three-mile canvas that took two hours to pass before its audience at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, drew a moral from the variety of materials and peoples, representative "of the different states of society, yet in transition," to be found on the banks of these rivers:

Slaves and free republicans, French and Southerners; immigrants from abroad, and restless Yankees and Down-Easters ever steaming somewhere; alligators, store-boats, show-boats, theatre-boats, Indians, buffaloes, deserted tents of extinct tribes and bodies of dead Braves, with their pale faces turned up to the night sky, lying still and solitary in the wilderness, nearer and nearer to which the outposts of civilisation are approaching with gigantic strides to tread their people down, and erase their very track from the earth's face. . . . We are not disposed to think less kindly of a country when we see so much of it, although our sense of its immense responsibility may be increased.

It would be well to have a panorama, three miles long, of England. There might be places in it worth looking at, a little closer than we see them now; and worth the thinking of, a little more profoundly. It would be hopeful, too, to see some things in England, part and parcel of a *moving* panorama: and not of one that stood still, or had a disposition to go backward.⁴

Dickens moves from a ritualistic melancholia, evoked by the representations of dead and potentially dying Indians, to the broader issue of national responsibility. His themes here—the rhetorical juxtapositioning of America with Britain, while refusing to allow any clear privileging of one country over another, and the use of the past to raise questions about present and future—set the ground for what follows in this book.

The idea that Indians belonged to the past—either to a mythical past or to an anachronistic, atavistic world that needed to be rapidly abolished—was a dominant nineteenth-century trope, on both sides of the Atlantic. At the opening of *Gone Primitive*, Marianna Torgovnick writes of the way that white Western culture perpetuates an “immensely powerful and seductive” set of images of primitive peoples: “They exist for us in a cherished series of dichotomies: by turns gentle, in tune with nature, paradisaical, ideal—or violent, in need of control; what we should emulate or, alternately, what we should fear; noble savages or cannibals.”⁵ These stereotypes began circulating from the time that Columbus, having crossed the Atlantic, had reached the islands of the Indian Ocean and first praised the indigenous people that he met for their liberality, honesty, and generosity, while subsequent Europeans condemned their strange appearance, customs, and hostility. The dichotomies were firmly established by the period that I am writing about, which stretches from the aftermath of the War of Independence, when Indians could be seen alternately as bloodthirsty enemies or noble, if ultimately doomed, allies, through the nineteenth century, when Indians were almost invariably thought of as being in a terminal decline, which stood for the condition of all “primitive” peoples.⁶ Contemporary comments on the Albert Memorial’s American figures both draw on and recirculate the stereotypes. James Dafforne, in his 1878 book on the memorial complex, describes the presiding figure of America as “mounted on a noble bison, which is bearing her onwards through the long prairie-grass; signifying thereby the rapid progress of the country in the march of civilization,” proceeding to remind, or inform, his readers that “the ‘red man’ has almost vanished from view: he disappeared as the white man advanced, and never became incorporated with him, or grew up into a civilised likeness of him, as have some of the native tribes of other continents.” In this context, he directs our attention to the foot of the United States herself, where “lies the Indian’s quiver, with but one or two arrows only left in it; showing that the period for using such weapons has almost passed away.”⁷

As we shall see, the possibilities for using Indians not as historical beings in their own right but as symbols for a more diffuse sense of loss and melancholy inform numerous literary works. Yet by the early

decades of the twentieth century, which conclude the main part of my book, a number of writers, both American and British, came to look at the Indian in a new spirit of idealization, setting up the figure in opposition to a modernity they characterized as artificial, mechanical, and drained of natural, instinctual emotions. As this trajectory suggests, cultural responses to Native Americans can never be divorced from a wider set of concerns relating to national identity and the development, both political and social, of those lands which native peoples originally occupied.

The history of native-white relations in the Americas is a long one, and it has generated a very considerable scholarly literature.⁸ The nineteenth century witnessed more systematic disruption and denigration of native peoples than ever before. Live Indians were commonly thought of as better dead (whether through the decay and degeneration of a “primitive” race that many presumed was inevitable or through more violent means), or a more humane alternative of “civilization”—that is, assimilation to the manners and values of Anglo-Christian lifestyles—was projected for them. This is very familiar territory. What distinguishes the period covered by *The Transatlantic Indian* is the fact that within the United States, the interactions that count are no longer between the British and Indians, as was the case before 1776, but between Britain’s literal and figurative heirs and the land’s original inhabitants.⁹

Throughout the nineteenth century, British commentators were fascinated by the paths the former colony had taken. It was, as it were, a renegade family member. They recurrently invoked the metaphor of the rebellious daughter, setting off powerful resonances of ingratitude and impropriety toward the mother country, resonances that could very handily be played upon with a queen on the throne and the development of a cult of maternity as a keystone value underpinning a successful empire. They also frequently expressed the commonly held view that Canadian First Nations people enjoyed a vastly superior relationship with their white rulers to that experienced by American Indians under the government of the United States. We may gauge the fact that administrators in Canada built upon the familial trope when impressing Victoria’s role upon First Nations people by the public expressions of filial loyalty some of the Indians expressed while on Buffalo Bill’s tours. For example, in 1887 it was reported that the Lakota Red Shirt, speaking through an interpreter, “said that he and his young men had sat up all night talking about the ‘Great White Mother’ . . . It pleased all their hearts that she came to them as a mother, and not with all her warriors around her. Her face was kind and pleased them, and every one of his young men resolved that she should be their great white mother.”¹⁰ The fact that the

rhetoric of British commentators framed the Indians according to whether they came from Canada or the United States is crucial to this book and, indeed, to affirming the point that “the transatlantic” is a greatly weakened term if it is taken to apply to British-American traffic alone.

For many British pundits, the United States offered, or threatened, a model for an expanding democracy. Their anxieties included a concern over what appeared to be a destabilizing dissolution of boundary lines between classes and the knock-on effects of a rapidly growing economy. The responses in political and financial spheres had their counterparts at a more popular level and were translated into worries about, and a fastidious repulsion toward, commercialism, rampant consumerism, the brashness of the moneyed, and a lack of genteel femininity among American women.¹¹ Even the commodification of Indian artifacts, on which a large number of travelers remarked, could be seen to stand for America’s compulsive drive toward money making. Moreover, by the end of the century, the territorial ambitions of the United States increasingly began to look like a form of imperialism that had the potential (unlike earlier westward expansion) to threaten existing British interests—to the point where it became increasingly apparent, in global terms, that Britain had more to gain from treating the United States as an ally than as a rival. The ever closer literary parallelism of British and American modernists in relation to the Indian stands in a synecdochic relationship to the two countries’ political positioning: this is the moment when the distinction between British and American attitudes toward Native Americans becomes far less clear cut. But before this point was reached, the following question was frequently posed, both overtly and implicitly: if this is what could happen when a younger branch of the family struck out for independence, what conclusions might be drawn about the futures of other territories and the growing demands for autonomy that were being voiced by settlers, by their dependents, and by indigenous peoples themselves? During the long nineteenth century, these questions surface in relation to a number of such peoples, whether Australian Aborigines or New Zealand Maori, the native inhabitants of India or—rumbling and longer-standing undercurrents much closer to home—the Scottish Highlanders and the population of Ireland.

Given such contexts, British perceptions of how the Americans managed their interactions with Indians had complex resonances. Attitudes toward native land rights—or, rather, dispossession—and their perceived inhumanity, greed, and sustained duplicity in such matters could be taken as symbolizing a whole range of American behaviors and outlooks. Some travelers interpreted the poverty and alcoholism they witnessed among Indians on the fringes of white towns as evidence of the race’s

innate “degeneracy” and an indication of its inevitable demise. But others saw the same conditions as evidence of a callous willingness to exploit the vulnerable for economic ends, something also observed in the maladministration of a number of Indian agents charged with the distribution of shoddy goods and inadequate resources on the new reservations.¹² The treatment of Indians could easily be juxtaposed with the much vaunted democratic principles of the young nation, and in this respect parallels were drawn with the hypocrisy and lack of attention to human rights on the part of those who supported slavery. As will become apparent, many of those who, in their imaginative poetry and prose, wrote most sympathetically about the Native American also protested forcefully about slavery’s inhumanity. But whether one looks at the United States from the point of view of those British people who abhorred the practice—or, for that matter, who supported it on economic and even social grounds—the figure of the African American did not carry with it the same complicated, and often contradictory resonances of national identity.

Some very valuable recent work has demonstrated the place that the Indian holds in what Lauren Berlant has so usefully termed the “national symbolic”¹³ and the part the iconic Indian played in the post-Revolutionary conceptualization of national identity has become increasingly apparent. As Philip Deloria points out, the frequency with which Indians appear, in British political prints of the mid-eighteenth century, “to symbolize the colonies as alien and uncivilized and therefore needful of (and deserving) the rule of empire” in fact aided their adoption as a national symbol by republicans wishing to borrow their connotations of willfulness, determination, accomplished oratory, and physical strength. Their images decorated military flags, newspaper mastheads, coins, and a large number of handbills.¹⁴ Werner Sollors, in *Beyond Ethnicity*, helpfully summarizes the Janus-headed situation of the new Americans of the 1770s:

The American revolutionaries . . . found themselves in a double role as republicans: on the one hand, they overthrew and usurped Indian legitimacy—perceived in European terms as the doomed role of an aristocratic nobility of chieftains—in the name of European republicanism; on the other hand, they defied the parental authority of the mother country by invoking the spirit of the Indian and by symbolically “acting Indian” in clothing and military strategy. The settlers were metaphoric “Indians” in their attempts to define themselves as “non-British,” as “Americans” (a term originally applied exclusively to the Indians); but they were emphatically European when they identified with the destined mission of republicanism against aboriginal

legitimacy. Americans could conceive of themselves both as Tammanies following the westward course of empires and as frontiersmen pitted against a savage wilderness.¹⁵

Some commentators, such as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Susan Scheckel, have written of the prominent place the Indian occupied among the range of Others against whom Americans defined themselves, and here, as elsewhere, the resonances of those binary oppositions associated with the Indian—nobility and cruelty—have been extensively explored. “Crowding the pages of political pamphlets, broadsides, sermons, “even dictionaries and geographies,” Smith-Rosenberg writes, “a host of negative others worked to solidify the new American subject[:] . . . sybaritic British aristocrats, wild European revolutionaries, deceitful men of credit and commerce, seductive and extravagant women. . . . Shadowing all these negative others, however, was a still more sinister, primeval figure—the savage American Indian warrior.”¹⁶ Yet Philip Deloria and Cheryl Walker, among others, have recently observed how during the nineteenth century, the figure of the Indian *did*, in fact, become identified with America—whether it stood symbolically for a powerful connection with the land or for resolution and strength. A figure from the ancient past, it allowed American authenticity to be located within a mythology, within history.¹⁷ Scheckel’s invocation of Anne Norton’s remarks about liminal figures in Norton’s *Reflections on Political Identity* is, in its turn, extremely helpful when it comes to recognizing the flexibility of Indians within the construction of national identity. “Liminars,” Norton postulates, “serve as mirrors for nations. At once other and like, they provide the occasion for the nation to constitute itself through reflection upon its identity. Their likeness permits contemplation and recognition, their difference the abstraction of those ideal traits that will henceforth constitute the nation.”¹⁸

But it would be highly erroneous to view this process as one-sided. Walker makes the crucial point that although it had already been noted how during the nineteenth century, the United States was “actively engaged in the process of constructing a sense of ‘nationness’ through iconography, art, writing, rituals, speeches, institutions, and laws,” what had not been adequately perceived prior to her own work was the fact that Native Americans “also participated in this cultural process, sometimes in order to distinguish themselves from the invaders but sometimes in the interests of revising notions of America to include the tribes themselves.”¹⁹ The degree to which those Indians who visited Britain in this period possessed agency when it came to determining the impression that they made, and the degree to which this offset the ways in which they were manipulated by others for ideological and commercial purposes,

will be a central question for this book. Their presence, moreover, gave a material reality, however mediated by the conditions of performance, to a people far more frequently encountered on the printed page. Lucy Maddox has recently written of the importance of understanding “the extent to which Indian people were performing their histories, their successes and failures, their political appeals, and their individual and collective identities before a largely white American public” in order to make an assessment of the nature and form of American Indian intellectual activity from the 1890s through the early decades of the twentieth century.²⁰ In this book, I maintain that the capacity of Indians to inhabit British public, intellectual, and social spaces attests to their participation not just on the troubled terrain of the United States and Canada, but within a yet broader transatlantic context of developing modernities.

This argument is dependent, of course, on the adoption of a pan-Indian stance, something that must be balanced against the continual need to be alert to the demands of tribal specificity, for the use of the term “Indians” is inevitably problematic. It may be a pejorative instrument (and in the nineteenth century, it frequently was, albeit often unintentionally), or it may signify the recognition of a homogenizing stereotype; or—more positively—its employment may be a gesture of political and ethnic unity and solidarity.²¹ During the nineteenth century, all kinds of difference were subsumed under the generic label, as one might suspect. Yet it is encouraging to find that, throughout the period, the idea of the universal Indian was challenged in a number of ways. At the beginning of the century, the recognition of distinctions between tribes was frequently related to a discrimination between political allies and enemies, whether current or in the recent past. By the midcentury, the development of anthropology as a distinct field of inquiry (aided by the publication in 1841, in London, of George Catlin’s *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*) led to an increasing emphasis on recognizing and recording specific customs, beliefs, and legends. This was given urgent and poignant emphasis by the recurrent lament that these peoples were rapidly hastening toward extinction. Such detailed information also animated the pages of some travelers’ accounts, especially those who made the journey to the lands west of the Mississippi. The more firsthand contact such travelers had with Indians, the more likely they were to distinguish carefully between tribes, and even between different bands of the same tribe. This gives a compelling edge to the accounts of, for example, sportsmen whose successful hunting depended on working alongside Indian guides and those of missionaries.

Nonetheless, within popular usage, “Indian” almost invariably signified uncouth, untamed, “uncivilized.” It was not just employed in rela-

tion to the aboriginal inhabitants themselves, but could be casually extended to anyone from over the Atlantic. The English aristocracy in William Thackeray's historical novel *The Virginians* (1857–59) might be able to brandish around the names of various tribes, but this is done only to intensify the unsuitability of their visiting American cousin Harry and to underscore his unfamiliarity with their mid-eighteenth century parochial outlook: a snobbish inwardness that Thackeray himself is at pains to satirize. So in chapter 13, when Fanny is instilling in Harry the basics of the minuet, her boorish brother sneers: “‘Infernal young Choc-taw! Is he teaching Fanny the war-dance?’”²² Nor is their mother any better: “‘You booby!’ she begins to her adored Fanny. ‘You double idiot! What are you going to do with the Huron? You don’t want to marry a creature like that, and be a squaw in a wigwam?’” (122). In chapter 17, she—and Thackeray—are still laboring the joke, calling Harry “the Iroquois” and warning Fanny that if she were to marry him, she would have to live in a country “‘with Indian war-whoops howling all round you: and with a danger of losing your scalp, or of being eat up by a wild beast every time you went to church’” (146). In Anthony Trollope’s *The Eustace Diamonds* (1871–73), the American Lucinda Roanoke is critiqued in an even more complex derogatory way, native epithets being blended with African American racist slurs. As Kathy Psomiades has put it: “The black hair, ‘broad nose,’ and ‘thick lips’ that Lucinda shares with her aunt; the epithet ‘savage’ so frequently applied to her; the Native American word that stands as Lucinda’s patronym all conspire to racialize, primitivize, and archaize her.”²³

This condescension lasted right through the nineteenth century, and not just in fiction. American women complained that they were customarily thought of as raw and unmannerly by comparison with their British counterparts. Jenny Churchill, the American-born mother of Winston, recollected late in her life that “in England, as on the Continent, the American woman was looked upon as a strange and abnormal creature, with habits and manners something between a Red Indian and a Gaiety Girl. . . . No distinction was ever made among Americans: they were all supposed to be of one uniform type.”²⁴ Or, if the visitors were not categorized as natives themselves, they were popularly presumed to live under constant threat from them, in a way that managed to damn their whole country as backward. In 1897 Consuelo, Duchess of Marlborough, experienced her new mother-in-law, Lady Blandford, making “a number of startling remarks” to her “revealing that she thought we all lived on plantations with Negro slaves and that there were red Indians ready to scalp us just around the corner.”²⁵ Such attitudes are deliberately played upon, and satirized, by Henry James in *The Portrait of a Lady*

(1881), when he has his more mentally agile Americans turn the tables on their English detractors. Lord Warburton initially treats Isabel with considerable social superiority, educating her in “the peculiarities of English life” as though she had no experience or imagination: “‘He thinks I’m a barbarian,’ she said, ‘and that I’ve never seen forks and spoons’”; and she asks him artless questions for the pleasure of hearing him answer seriously. Then when he falls into the trap, “‘It’s a pity you can’t see me in my war-paint and feathers,’ she remarked; ‘if I had known how kind you are to the poor savages I would have brought over my native costume!’”²⁶ This extension of the Indian to act as a symbol for all Americans is in part, of course, an indication that its capacity to stand for national identity very readily crossed the Atlantic. But it also points to a crucial difference between British and American appropriations of the figure. In the United States, the Indian was inseparable—whether positive or negative associations came into play—with the nation’s sense of itself. But in Britain, the figure was far more protean. The general connotations of nobility, of savagery, and of the nostalgia attendant on imminent extinction could be adopted extremely easily for a number of ends that had nothing whatsoever to do with the self-image of the United States. Instead, this readily malleable icon facilitated, but was secondary to, discussion or amplification of a whole range of issues, from sentimentality to violence, or from democracy to the woman question.

Moreover, even if British writers could borrow the figure of the Indian as a ready-made stand-in for generic American uncouthness—or for other aspects that they believed characterized the United States as a nation—the grouping at the base of the Albert Memorial serves as an important reminder of the contemporary recognition that Indians are not just found within that country, that the associations set in train by the word “Indian” do not just apply to the native inhabitants of the United States, and, implicitly, that the boundaries of Indian nations do not correspond with other international borderlines. Indigenous peoples are found from the northern shores of the continent down to Tierra del Fuego, and at one time or another, all, in undifferentiated fashion, are given the label “Indian.” Witness Wordsworth’s “Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman” (1798), its snowy scenario derived from Samuel Hearne’s *Journey from Prince of Wales’s Fort in Hudson Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795), together with the fact that Darwin, and many others, used the term to describe natives throughout South America, right down to the plains of Patagonia and beyond.

Nonetheless—although I will have something more to say about Central and South America in a moment—the main focus of this book falls on the exchange of representations and points of view in the northern hemispheric transatlantic space. As we have seen, the United States in-

creasingly employed the iconic Indian as a signifier of nationhood, and images of indigenous inhabitants were, likewise, called upon by those who wrote about Canada. Some of these authors were immigrants, others—including many administrators—were visitors who did not settle permanently. But there was a remarkable similarity between the views expressed by those who lived permanently in Canada (often recognizing their familial, political, and emotional ties to Britain) and those who spent a shorter spell of time there. The figure of the Indian often acted as shorthand for certain features that were thought to characterize the settler colony. Above all, the ready cooperation of First Nations people in hunting, trapping, transportation, and trading (and in taking action against the French) was emphasized; they thus could be made to appear both in possession of necessary survival and specialist skills and willing to harness these to Britain's economic ends. More symbolically, the figure suggested that the settler colonists themselves shared something of the courage, the hardiness, the endurance, the nobility, and the *manliness* of the land's original occupants.

One should not let the celebratory rhetoric and imagery blind one to the very legitimate grievances borne by First Nation peoples. In 1815 they constituted at least one-fifth of the population; by 1911 their numbers had halved to just over 100,000—at the time, barely 1 percent of Canada's total. As in the United States, disease had devastating effects. Tribes who sold their lands were kept waiting, sometimes indefinitely, for payment.²⁷ Nonetheless, the dominant and frequently reiterated British viewpoint was that their position was vastly preferable to that of Indians on lands that had passed from British jurisdiction. "A survey of the North American Indian's history brings out a contrast between his treatment at the hands of the white man above and below the forty-ninth parallel so striking as to call for explanation,"²⁸ writes the Canadian J. Macdonald Oxley in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1889. He claims that both the French and the activities of the Hudson's Bay Company (trading from around 1677 and bought out by the Canadian government in 1868) had prepared the ground for smooth interracial contact.²⁹ He argued that initial Indian relations with the British benefited enormously from the administrative wisdom of Sir William Johnson and from his organization in 1764 of a convention of Indian tribes at Niagara. This, combined with his own conciliatory spirit, had laid the foundation—Oxley now falls into rose-tinted prose—"for a friendly feeling towards British authorities, which, thanks to the unswerving good faith practised by them ever since in all dealings with their aboriginal subjects, has been extending and deepening without check or interruption" (195). He does not pause to consider the emotions that may in fact have been precipitated by the confinement of many bands to reservations and then, starting

with the 1869 Gradual Enfranchisement Act, by the pressures put on native men to relinquish their lands. Rather, he congratulates Canada on the fact that her Indian subjects “have not yet been made to feel that they are being crowded out by the white man” (197), their freedom for hunting and fishing vastly superior to that of the Indian in the United States.

The belief that Britain’s attitude toward “her” Indians was far more accommodating and humane than that expressed through the policies of the United States was revitalized by the episode involving the Sioux war chief Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull crossed into Canada in late May 1877—eleven months after the battle of Little Big Horn and his victory over Custer. Preceded by several bands of Sioux, the arrival of Sitting Bull and his followers brought the number of American Indians in Canada to around five thousand; they attempted to occupy the same area of southern Saskatchewan that was being hunted by indigenous peoples. While Sitting Bull would have preferred to have been recognized as a Canadian subject, John A. Macdonald’s government was not prepared to go that far, although it seems that the Sioux leader was told that he could stay in Canada as long as he conducted no border raids and lived according to Canadian law. Eventually, in July 1881, Sitting Bull followed many of his people back over the border into the new reserves of North Dakota, convinced that this was the only viable alternative in the face of dwindling food resources. The Canadian version of events, however, both at the time and subsequently, has tended to attribute this peaceful outcome of a potentially explosive situation to the calm diplomatic handling of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, putting forward their combination of patience and courage as a far more effective means of handling the Indian than the measures the American military adopted.³⁰ These tactics—explained in terms of character traits rather than armed strategy—were described in words that emphasized the power of those attributes of tactful understanding and of a gradualist building of trust, which had been seen as distinguishing the successful missionary in Canada since the early decades of the nineteenth century. As Ged Martin has argued, in many ways the real importance of British North America to the British lay not so much in questions of investment, or trade, but in its southern neighbor, the United States, and the ideological challenge which that country lay down to British monarchical institutions—including, by extension, the institution of empire and the assumptions of benevolence, obligation, or duty toward colonized peoples who were commonly considered, at least in theory, to go along with it.³¹

Native peoples did not uniformly share these perspectives, by any means. While some, like the Ojibwa William Wilson in his 1838 poem

“England and British America,” could chirpily proclaim, “Hail to thee, Canada! the brightest gem/That decks Victoria’s brilliant diadem,”³² others expressed far more resentment at the fact that they, or their ancestors, had given military support to the British but were now not being treated with reciprocal loyalty, or they voiced outright opposition to the newcomers who brought new social ways with them. The Englishman Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, sent to establish a sawmill on Vancouver Island, recorded his conversation with an unidentified Seshahs Indian about what he saw as an inevitable process:

“We don’t care to do as the white men wish.”

“Whether or not,” said I, “the white man will come. All your people know that they are your superiors; they make the things which you value. You cannot make muskets, blankets, or bread. The white man will teach your children to read printing, and to be like themselves.”

“We do not want the white man. He steals what we have. We wish to live as we are.”³³

However, British commentators rarely recorded such oppositional native voices. Far more common were the views expressed by the journalist William Trant, writing in the *Westminster Review* in 1895 in terms as complacent as Johnson’s. He stressed both the degree to which the native inhabitants of the provinces had become “civilised”—“they are rapidly reaching the point where the line dividing them from other citizens becomes indistinct and gradually vanishes”³⁴—and the success of the government when it came to dealing with the problems of the Plains Indians after the post-1868 western expansion and the decimation of buffalo herds. Trant does acknowledge Indian perspectives—their sense of disorientation when faced with new cultural forms, their understanding of their relationship to the land, and so on—but he nonetheless warmly praises the effectiveness of reservations, the grants of agricultural equipment made to tribal members, and the provision of education and instruction in trades. There is no mention of the establishment of federal power to depose hereditary chiefs and replace them by elected councils—dating from 1876—nor the outlawing of the potlatch and the sun dance. Rather, the tone is one of benevolent paternalism, of pride that the Indians have been “tranquillised” by a country that has been able, as it were, to read their inmost desires: “Not only is there no discontent or disaffection, but the red man has become thoroughly attached to the white man’s government. One reason for this is that the Indians had long yearned for what they got, a yearning not the less strong because it was not expressed or formulated” (520). Success is measured by assimilation, manifested in both material terms (“Some of them live in houses equal

to any, and superior to many, of those of the British settler. They have organs, melodeons, violins, stocks, sewing machines, pictures, ornaments, and others marks of civilised life” [522]), and ideological ones: the Indian’s “course is marked by a manly independence, intelligent enterprise, and unflagging industry” (523). In other words, the Indian has become the epitome of an idealized upper-middle-class Englishman—apart from the fact that he still enjoys a dinner of boiled dog. In all of this, credit is given not only to the Indians themselves, but also to the administrators in the Indian department of the Canadian government, whose activities are sharply contrasted with the bad faith generated by the U.S. government toward Indians: “There the Indian is regarded as we regard rats” (526). “It would have been our fault,” Trant concluded,

if we had looked on the Indians’ vast territories merely as outlets for our surplus population, without considering the claims of the occupiers to our aid, our protection, ay! and to our sympathy, as men with souls and as British subjects with rights. . . . Canada has saved the Indians, and in doing so she has profited herself. It is argued by many that, figures notwithstanding, the Indians are dying out. Even if this be so, surely it is better that their last words be words of thankfulness and blessings for the good done to them, rather than imprecations and curses against those whom Destiny has placed to rule over them. (527)

Responses to the native peoples of Central and South America were more diverse and more confused, if, rarely, less condescending. The confusion, in part, stems from the fact that the identification of nationhood with Indian ethnicity—or with policies toward Indians—was nowhere nearly as marked, from a British perspective, as it was in relation to the United States or Canada. As a result, stereotypes were even more frequently invoked. First, at a popular level, an Indian was an Indian: potentially cruel and violent, often a threat, but just possibly supplying the local knowledge and the tools of survival that would prove indispensable to a story’s hero when in strange lands. In such plot-driven writing, native peoples readily homogenize. A notable, but by no means atypical, example of this can be found in Wilkie Collins’s *Hide and Seek* (1854; revised 1861), when the well-traveled Mat tells his new friend Zack “about the life he had been leading in the wilds of North and South America,”

Wild, barbarous fragments of narrative they were; mingling together in one darkly-fantastic record, fierce triumphs and deadly dangers; miseries of cold, and hunger, and thirst; glories of hunters’ feasts in mighty forests; gold-findings among desolate rocks; gallopings for life from the flames of the blazing prairie; combats with wild beasts and

with men wilder still; weeks of awful solitude in primeval wastes; days and nights of perilous orgies among drunken savages.³⁵

With decided incongruity, he claims to have woken up, on one memorable occasion, in an “Indian wigwam” in the Amazon, scalped (152). Such characterization demonstrates all too readily the tendency for a composite Indian to be produced with no reference whatsoever to tribal distinctions; further, in such versions, national and geographic borderlines have ceased to matter.

Yet in other instances, such borders prove crucial. However useful to popular culture as a bloodthirsty figure when found on American soil, the Indian, once encountered or imagined farther south, could often be immediately invested with a more positive set of connotations. To some extent, this derived from a perception that the Incas and the Aztecs, in particular, were much more “civilized,” as witnessed by their well-developed (that is, amenable to Western understanding) systems of government and, above all, by their craftsmanship: their skill in jewelry and metalwork and the edifices they constructed. Moreover, the Indians could often be portrayed as victims: victims both of the Spanish, Britain’s traditional enemy, and of Catholicism.³⁶ Much of my book takes as its guiding principle the assumption succinctly voiced by Linda Colley that the British “came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores.”³⁷ The “Other” that she primarily had in mind was Catholic Europe. As I set out to show, the presence of the United States in nineteenth-century political and cultural relations complicates this conception of Otherness considerably.³⁸ Yet the sense that the American continent as a whole was an arena for working out these European relations was highly pertinent both to British engagements with the French, whether in Lower Canada, on the Canada–United States borderline, or Louisiana—to name the most obvious areas of contestation—and to the Spanish presence in Central and South America. There is a long literary history of the co-option of indigenous peoples—both in relation to the treatment they received and to the sides that they supported—in the dramatization of what were, effectively, European struggles. William Davenant’s play *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, performed at the Cockpit in 1658, helped to establish the tradition of the so-called Black Legend, with the English appearing as a Protestant foil to the Spanish, their atrocities having been publicized, above all, through translations of writings by Bartolomé de Las Casas.³⁹ Such anti-Spanish works supplied a rhetorical means of tempering English concern about the violence that was being perpetrated in their own colonies, or, as Roberto Fernández Retamar puts it, “the nascent bourgeoisie of

other metropolises who created the Black Legend” did not do so “for the benefit of those people martyred by the Spanish conquest but rather to cover up their own rapacity.”⁴⁰ The loaded political significance of those Indians who had suffered most notably and had their cultures transformed at the hands of the Spanish (and, in Brazil, of the Portuguese) helped ensure their utility for patriotic adventure fiction. Likewise, the very strangeness and remoteness of Amazonian tribes could form the basis for further speculative fictions that inevitably foregrounded British resourcefulness and bravery, advanced through the familiar combination of surviving the attacks of hostile natives and borrowing from the skills of more amenable ones. Such adventure narrative often bore a suppressed reference to other forms of exploration and writing both about indigenous peoples and about the more prosaic economic realities of Britain’s informal empire of trading interests in Central and South America.⁴¹

Yet it is not just because of a certain nineteenth-century haziness on the importance of borders when it came to imaginative works—or to understanding the nature of the “primitive”—that the indigenous peoples of these lands claim our attention here. The importance of seeing the Americas as a whole was apparent to Victorian commentators as well as to ourselves. Most prominently of all, J. R. Seeley, in *The Expansion of England* (1883), criticized that version of English history that looks at the topic in terms of England alone, rather than of England in relation to her possessions and to “the ten millions of Englishmen who live outside of the British Islands,” in Canada, the West Indies, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and India.⁴² More than this, he bids his readers to consider that the current empire is a second empire. A hundred years earlier, “we had another set of colonies,” which broke off from “the mother country,” and Seeley’s major preoccupation is to ask what we might learn from this: “The greatest English question of the future must be what is to become of our second Empire, and whether or no it may be expected to go the way of the first” (17). He acknowledges that in looking across the Atlantic, one sees that English relations with the United States were but part of a broader transatlantic stage on which the political struggles of Europe had been played. France, Spain, Portugal, and Holland were, alike, seeking economic and territorial possession; internal European animosities were duplicated within the Americas; and in turn, the New World acted upon European communities. “In one word,” writes Seeley, “the New World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries does not lie outside Europe but exists inside it, as a principle of unlimited political change” (84). What distinguishes the British Empire by 1883 is the fact that despite its shifting terrain, “it is the sole survivor

of a whole family of Empires, which arose out of the action of the New World upon the peculiar condition and political ideas of Europe” (47). Seeley acknowledges the differences set in motion by a fact succinctly set out by Walter Mignolo: “The United States constituted itself as an independent nation from a rising empire . . . whereas Latin American countries obtained their independence from two empires in decay.”⁴³

Seeley’s text put forward a set of propositions on which late Victorian expansionist imperialism was to build: the importance of Britain conceiving of itself as a dispersed world power, not an island; the importance of retaining an empire if one was to remain as a national power; and the importance of the right management of colonies so that these did not turn into another rebellious, independent-minded daughter. Although this in itself is relatively well-trodden ground, we need to recognize the importance of Seeley’s demand that we understand the Americas as a complex whole. Here, we might usefully move forward eight years from the date of publication of *The Expansion of England* to an essay authored on the other side of the Atlantic, José Martí’s “Nuestra América” (Our America), first published in *La revista ilustrada de Nueva York* in 1891. Seeley spoke from a position of institutional authority, as professor of modern history at Cambridge University; Martí, by contrast—I quote José Saldívar’s thumbnail biography in *The Dialectics of Our America*—“is an alienated Cuban, exiled in the ghettos of New York, one of the first Latin American intellectuals of his time audacious enough to confront U.S. imperial history, its imperial ethic, and its imperial psychology.”⁴⁴ Again, the metaphor of the family, and of the succoring mother in particular, figures in his discourse. But the location of origins is different. Martí berates those inhabitants of the Americas who deny their ethnic parentage: “Those born in America who are ashamed of the mother who reared them, because she wears an Indian apron; and those scoundrels who disown their sick mother, abandoning her on her sick-bed!” He deplores the “deserters” who put their mother “to work out of sight, and live[s] at her expense on decadent lands, sporting fancy neckties, cursing the womb that carried him.”⁴⁵ This attack on the United States’ blatant consumerism and dogmatic adherence to ideas of progress brings Martí close to many contemporary English critiques. But the agent of possession, in Martí’s formulation of “*our* America,” is the “we” not of the original colonizers but of the original inhabitants and their descendants, both pure-blooded and mestizo. To invoke Martí, as well as nineteenth-century British commentators, reminds us, from the start, that examining the transatlantic Indian is a project that involves not only British assessment of America’s indigenous people or the views—so far as they may be recuperated—that Native Americans held of the

British. It must also take into account the fact that the end of the nineteenth century witnessed the beginning of a pan-Indian movement that saw cross-tribal and transborder advantages in recognizing some common cause.⁴⁶ Oppression has the power to bring together as well as to fragment, and there are times when despite the necessity of recognizing the particularity of individual tribes and their histories, one must acknowledge that the term “Indian” has a political viability that transcends its currency within thoughtless popularizations.



What follows is organized in a broadly chronological way. I start by looking at the image of the Indian that the nineteenth century inherited from Romantic writing, one that emphasized the trope of the “dying Indian” as a member of a race associated with positive connotations of bravery, loyalty, dignity, and so on, and I show how it provided an opportunity for poets to exploit their fondness for the melancholic or to explore the qualities of supposedly primitive people. I trace the shift from the way in which the Indian was seen as a vehicle of rhetorical eloquence to being a figure of pathos, situating this within the changing situation of actual tribal people during the period. But the Indian carried more ambiguous associations of cruelty during this earlier period as well—an easy polarity of good and bad Indian was readily taken up by contemporary fiction. All such stereotypes were quickly unsettled, however, by contact with actual Indians, and my third chapter examines the impact made by the Ojibwa and Iowa who toured with George Catlin in the 1840s—and the impression that their travels in Britain made upon them. It is clear that they were far from impressed by their encounters with the modern metropolis. The marriage of the half-Ojibwa interpreter to a young London woman provoked considerable debate—and evidence of extreme prejudice—on mixed-race marriage, and questions of prejudice and marriage, slavery and sentiment, are taken up in chapter 4, on the portrayal of Native Americans by British women writers. This treatment was often far more radical, and far more angry—whether focusing on racial issues or on imperial ambitions in general—than that found in the work of many male authors.

Chapter 5 further develops ideas about the way in which the Indian functioned as a figure of American national identity within Britain. By the time of the 1851 Great Exhibition, America was presenting herself as a thoroughly modern country, yet the empty floor spaces within the U.S. section of the exhibition provided plenty of opportunity to assess this claim, as well as to consider the implications of unpopulated—or apparently unpopulated—space. The sculptural figure of the Wounded Indian,

which formed part of the American exhibit, was readily seized upon for its ironic potential. In the light of national self-presentation, this chapter asks whether or not the Indian was, in Britain, identified with, or against, American identity in the midcentury, a question that is highly pertinent to the reception of Longfellow's poem *Hiawatha*. The figure of Hiawatha provides an example, moreover—albeit highly fictionalized and idealized—of the ideals of noble masculinity, something that continues the emphasis on the strongly gendered way in which Native Americans were understood. In chapter 6, on British popular writing, I consider some of the means by which stereotypes of Indians that emanated from the United States circulated within Britain and were modified and filtered through domestic concerns. I first consider the influence that James Fenimore Cooper had on transatlantic adventure and historical fiction, and then pass to Charles Dickens's often contradictory treatments of native peoples, before looking at the more complicated case of Mayne Reid. This British writer of popular Westerns employed contemporary American-generated stereotypes of Indians and at times reinforced that country's message of manifest destiny, yet he also managed to question certain political and racial aspects of American life in a way that offered up a warning to his home readership. These stereotypes are read through a consideration of the shifting nuances of the idea of the "savage" in mid-Victorian Britain.

In chapter 7 I continue to explore issues of gender in relation to native peoples—in commentaries by travelers and sportsmen and, more particularly, in the use of Indian themes to comment on contemporary domestic gender debates, as in Elizabeth Gaskell's "Lois the Witch" and Gilbert Parker's 1894 novel *The Translation of a Savage*, which may be read as a reworking of the Pocahontas story. Parker wrote from a Canadian background, and British–First Nations relations come again to the fore in chapter 8, on Indians and missionaries. The missionaries in question, though, are not just the British who worked in Canada, but First Nations men who toured Britain as preachers and spokespeople. I extend the category to include George Copway, whose account of his 1850 visit to Britain, en route to the third World Peace Conference, provides an extended example of native engagement with, and enthusiasm for, modernity. This was very much at variance with the image of the Indian put across by William Cody in his Wild West Show, of course, and I address this in chapter 9. But what interests me the most, in my treatment of this spectacular show, is the resonances that the Wild West could be made to have for a number of domestic concerns—about mass culture, about gender, and, above all, about Britain's position as a world power. The parallels that could be drawn between the American frontier and various frontiers in the British Empire, together with the apparent

lessons that might be taken on board from America's treatment of her native peoples, occupy the first part of chapter 10, after which I move to a discussion of how the visits to London of Catherine Sutton, a Credit Indian, and then of the poet and performer Pauline Johnson illuminate Britain's attitudes toward First Nations people from an Indian perspective. Finally, I examine how such attitudes started to shift at the beginning of the twentieth century—partly under the influence of Western movies, partly as modernist writers and artists started to idealize the Indian for their own ends, and as other wannabe Indians, most notably Grey Owl, began to develop the association of Indianness with environmental preservation. By way of conclusion, I look briefly at some contemporary writing by native peoples—especially James Welch and Leslie Marmon Silko—that aims to reappropriate nineteenth-century transatlantic history in a range of imaginative ways.

This chapter opened by invoking a monument to mid-Victorian confidence in Britain's global centrality. It now closes with a description of a visit made to nineteenth-century America's most potent symbol of state by the most notable transatlantic writer of that century. Both the America of Henry James's fiction and the country he revisited after twenty years of living abroad and described in *The American Scene* (1907) seem to have expelled almost all consciousness of native inhabitants from the comfortable, secure bourgeois world. Yet *The American Scene* contains one particularly telling passage. James recounts going to Washington, and walking around the elegant architecture of the Capitol. He makes no direct allusion to the bas-reliefs *Preservation of Captain John Smith* (by Antonio Capellano), *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* (by Nicholas Grevelot), or *Landing of the Pilgrims* or *Conflict of Daniel Boone and the Indians* (Enrico Causici), which stand above the doors of the Rotunda.⁴⁷ Rather, his attention is drawn to the living covisitors to the city whom he encounters:

I met one morning a trio of Indian braves, braves dispossessed of forest and prairie, but as free of the builded labyrinth as they had ever been of these; also arrayed in neat pot-hats, shoddy suits and light overcoats, with their pockets, I am sure, full of photographs and cigarettes: circumstances all that quickened their resemblance, on the much bigger scale, to Japanese celebrities, or to specimens, on show, of what the Government can do with people with whom it is supposed able to do nothing. They seemed just then and there, for a mind fed betimes on the *Leatherstocking Tales*, to project as in a flash an image in itself immense, but foreshortened and simplified—reducing to a single smooth stride the bloody footsteps of time. One rubbed one's eyes, but there, at its highest polish, shining in the beautiful day, was the

brazen face of history, and there, all about one, immaculate, the printless pavements of the State.⁴⁸

James writes with the customary compression of his later prose, which allows for the simultaneous presence of contradictory motifs. He employs the inflections of someone whose viewpoint, like that of so many of his contemporaries on either side of the Atlantic, is self-confessedly modulated through James Fenimore Cooper: these are “braves” severed from their traditional habitat. But rather than exhibit signs of degeneration, they have assimilated, and they bear the tokens of modern urban life. The Indians are both consumer and curiosity. It is unclear whether the photographs in their pockets are souvenirs they have collected or cartes de visite, the fin-de-siècle equivalent of the visiting card that the Indian chief Pitchlyne handed to a surprised Dickens aboard a Mississippi river steamer.⁴⁹ Opaque, too, is the agency behind the showmanship. Is James suggesting that the Native Americans serve a federal triumphalism, tacitly proclaiming the success of policies that have prevailed in the light of racial and social predictions? Or is he indicating that their appearance acts as a defiant self-advertisement, an ironic gap opening up between their evident survival and adaptation and the principles that have underlain the previous century’s administrative decisions? The Indians themselves seem to have taken on the role of photographic illusionists, their presence creating the dramatic chiaroscuro that allows James to see with dazzling clarity the juxtaposition of native inhabitant and the “ark of the American covenant” that is the Capitol.⁵⁰ Instantly, he comes to acknowledge a vertiginous sense of historical process, and his prose tilts from the faintly condescending tones familiar from countless descriptions of Indians to something that recognizes the shocking sublimity of what American history has produced. The “brazen face” is at once the burnished skin of the Indian, a monument in living bronze whose contemporary presence ceaselessly invokes lost nobility; it suggests the unabashed continuity of the Indian in contemporary society and his refusal to become extinct; and it also stands for the shameless path that has led to the aloof architectural symbol at the administrative center of the United States. The “printlessness” of pavements, moreover, points to a double irony: the nation’s newly built floor is, as it were, virgin, untrodden land once again; nor does it bear any published record of the violence done.



Nineteenth-century transatlantic studies are a huge and complex terrain, and their importance is increasingly being acknowledged, despite the

disciplinary binarization that takes place on both sides of the Atlantic. Too frequently, the internal organization of our national academies has meant that British and American studies have been regarded as separate entities, failing to enter into sufficient dialogue with one another. This book adds to the calls that have already been made by Joseph Roach to pay full attention to the “amplitude of circum-Atlantic relations,”⁵¹ and by Paul Giles to acknowledge how “conceptions of national identity on both sides of the Atlantic emerged through engagement with—and, often, deliberate exclusion of—a transatlantic imaginary.”⁵² Focusing on the figure of the Native American in this context brings a number of advantages with it. In the first place, it grants Indians a part not previously fully acknowledged in relation to the field.⁵³ They have important roles as subjects of fascination, as figures of dread, and as symbols of a difference that is a complicated and sometimes contradictory amalgam of national and racial components. From a British point of view, the fact that Native Americans were not scripted into any specific sets of national narratives made them particularly malleable figures. As this book seeks to show, the notional Indian could be readily adapted, in a number of disparate contexts, to demonstrate a great range of clichés, presuppositions, considered analyses, and hypotheses about the nature both of the United States and the Americas more broadly. Most frequently, the Indian served the role of an ahistorical Other against which various narratives of modernity could readily be written.

But examining transatlantic relations from this angle forms only a part of my project, for Indians had a varied and significant presence in Britain and were analytical, commentating voices in their own right. They not only provided a particular slant, or slants, on British society, but were living proof that, in their capacity to react and respond to modern life, they refused to be consigned to that role of the mythical and prehistorical that was so frequently assigned them. Despite the frequent and familiar need of the modern to erect ideas of the temporal Other against which it could define itself, this Other was also undergoing a process of transformation. Of course, this is, in broad terms, a point made very familiar through contemporary histories of postcoloniality. But there are some significant differences. Native American contacts with British culture in the Victorian period demonstrate not only transformation on the part of Indians, but also well-articulated resistance to the processes of appropriation and assimilation that equate with cultural genocide. These Indians are quite definitely not allowing themselves to be consigned to oblivion, nor to occupy the mythical status of the timeless, but see themselves as members of a race that has every intention of surviving. Engagement in this transatlantic contact zone is unequivocally a two-way process, unfolding in a way that disrupts those apparently

neat binaries of “traditional” and “modern” on which conventional narratives of national progress have depended. Paul Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic*,⁵⁴ explores how, at a slightly later date, and in the context of African American culture, we see modernities evolving on several fronts simultaneously and at several, nonsynchronic speeds.⁵⁴ Looking at the Victorian period, we see how, in what we may call the space of the *Red Atlantic*, the process is already well under way.