

The Frontiersman from Lout to Hero

Notes on the Significance of the Comparative Method and the Stage Theory in Early American Literature and Culture

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THROUGHOUT THE seventeenth and most of the eighteenth centuries, the frontiersman was generally regarded as a shiftless outcast, a lout tending to criminality, a villain too lazy or too stupid or too vulgar to exist in society, and a traitor to the culture.¹ Long before the concept of the frontiersman existed, men who adopted Indian customs were regarded with suspicion and fear by their white contemporaries. In Virginia in 1612, Sir Thomas Dale punished those who 'did Runne Away unto the Indjans' in 'A moste severe mannor.' 'Some he apointed to be hanged Some burned Some to be broken upon

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¹ The only previous work I know that deals specifically with 'the emergence of the frontiersman as a heroic figure' is Jules Zanger, 'The Frontiersman in Popular Fiction, 1820-60,' in John F. McDermott, ed., *The Frontier Re-examined* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp. 141-53, where Zanger claims the heroic frontiersman emerged in response to (1) the popularity of Sir Walter Scott's Waverley novels; (2) 'the public acclaim won by Jackson's Kentucky rifleman at New Orleans'; (3) the popular images of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett; and (4) the character of Natty Bumppo in Cooper's Leatherstocking series of novels. All these influences, with the exception of the early fame of Daniel Boone, are later than eighteenth-century, the primary period that I am considering. Further, I believe that the theory of civilization hereafter presented underlies all four causes. Scott, for example, used the comparative method and stage theory in discussing his highland clansmen (often comparing them to American Indians). See Duncan Forbes, 'The Rationalism of Sir Walter Scott,' *Cambridge Journal* 7(1953):20-35.

wheles, others to be staked and some to be shott to deathe all theis extreme and crewell tortures he used and inflicted upon them To terrefy the reste for Attempteing the Lyke.' And in Puritan Massachusetts, William Bradford recorded (1629) that Edward Ashley, who was supposed to manage a fur trading post, was unfit, even 'though he had wite and abillitie enough to menage the business,' because 'he had for some time lived amonge the Indians as a savage, and wente naked amongst them, and used their maners (in which time he got their language), so they feared he might still rune into evill courses (though he promised better), and God would not prosper his ways.' William Hubbard in 1677 claimed that the Massachusetts frontier was a lawless area, where the inhabitants desired 'to shake off all Yoake of Government, both sacred and civil,' and where the whites 'transformed themselves' into the Indians whom they lived among. Hubbard therefore thought that they deserved 'as to Divine Justice' to be captured by Indians and 'to be put under the yoke and power of the Indians themselves.' Increase Mather was only slightly less vehement in his election sermon. On May 23, 1677, Mather told his political audience that the frontier settlements, which had as 'yet no publick acknowledgement of God amongst them,' were partially to blame for the Indian wars. For the inhabitants of these settlements 'lived like Heathen, without Sabbaths, without the word and Prayer, which are moral duties that all are bound to attend: and it is therefore incumbent on the Magistrates to see that they do. People are ready to run wild into the woods again, and to be as heathenish as ever, if you do not prevent it.'² Cotton Mather wrote in the *Magnalia Christi Americana* that the Maine frontiersmen had become 'too like the Indians, among

² George Percy, 'A Trewe Relacyon of . . . Virginia from . . . 1609, Until 1612,' *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 3(1922):280; William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, ed. Worthington C. Ford (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), 2:83; William Hubbard, *The Present State of New England* (London, 1677), 2:78, ed. Samuel G. Drake as *The History of the Indian Wars in New England* (Roxbury, Mass., 1865), 2:257; Increase Mather, *A Call From Heaven . . . and a Discourse concerning the Danger of Apostacy* (Boston, 1679), p. 75.

whom they lived . . . and instead of erecting churches among themselves, they neither Christianized the pagans, nor, by avoiding the vices which they rather taught the *Pagans*, did they take a due course to preserve themselves from losing *Christianity in Paganism*.³

In the eighteenth century, Gov. Alexander Spotswood of Virginia wrote (1717) that 'the Inhabitants of our Frontiers are composed generally of such as have been transported hither as Servants, and being out of their time, settle themselves where Land is to be taken up that will produce the necessarys of Life with little Labour. It is pretty well known what Morals such people bring with them hither, which are not likely to be much mended by their Scituation, remote from all places of worship.'⁴ Col. John Barnwell of South Carolina gave his opinion of frontiersmen in 1721: 'Now these Scoutmen are a wild Idle people & Continually Sotting if they can gett any Rum for Trust or money. Yet they are greatly usefull for Such [military] expeditions as these if well and Tenderly managed, for as their chiefest Imploy is to hunt the Forest or Fish, so there is scarce One of them but understands the Hoe, the Axe, [or] the Saw as well as [they do] their Gun and Oar.'⁵

The first usage I have found of the word *frontiersman*—a usage that antedates any recorded in the *OED* or the dictionaries of Americanisms—occurs in the 'Seaman's Journal,' a diary kept by someone in the navy (perhaps a midshipman) accompanying General Braddock in the early summer of 1755. He encountered Thomas Cresap on the Maryland frontier and recorded, 'Here lives one Colonel Cressop, a Rattle Snake Colonel, and a vile Rascal; calls himself a Frontier man, as he

³ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702; repr. Hartford, 1820), 2:499. For a similar expression by Mather, see his *The Way to Prosperity* (Boston, 1690), p. 27. See also Clifford K. Shipton, 'The New England Frontier,' *New England Quarterly* 10(1937):25-36, esp. p. 28 and notes 11 and 12.

⁴ R. A. Brock, ed., *The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood*, 2 vols. (Richmond, 1882-85), 2:227.

⁵ *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 27(1926):193.

thinks he is situated nearest the Ohio of any inhabitants of the country.⁶ Even Benjamin Franklin had, on occasion, a low opinion of the backsettlers: 'Our Frontier People are yet greater Barbarians than the Indians.'⁷

The southern coinage for a frontiersman was a *buckskin*. In the earliest recorded usage (1744), Dr. Alexander Hamilton of Maryland put on a timorous young Massachusetts man who 'had a curiosity to ride to Maryland but was afraid of the terrible woods in the way.' Hamilton told him that 'the most dangerous' wild beasts in the woods were the *buckskins*, a combination 'betwixt a man and a beast.'⁸ A *buckskin* came to mean any person native to what is now the American South, but it generally had unpleasant connotations, as Philip Vickers Fithian's Virginia diary of September 3, 1774, testifies. Commenting on the possible trivial causes of fighting among the backsettlers, he says that fights can be caused because one man 'in a merry hour' calls another 'a *Lubber*, or a *thick-Skull* or a *Buckskin*, or a *Scotchman*.'⁹ Charles Woodmason's entire 1760s journal is a

⁶ Winthrop Sargent, *The History of an Expedition against Fort Du Quesne in 1755, Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* 5 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1855):372. In the shorter version of the 'Seaman's Journal,' the quotation reads, 'There lives Colonel Creasap, a RattleSnake, Colonel, and a D——d Rascal; calls himself a Frontiersman, being nearest the Ohio.' Archer B. Hulbert, *Braddock's Road and Three Relative Pieces* (Cleveland: A. H. Clark Co., 1903), p. 89. For the relationship between the two versions of the 'Seaman's Journal,' see Paul E. Kopperman, *Braddock at the Monongahela* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), pp. 243-45.

⁷ Leonard W. Labaree et al., eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 13:416. On July 2, 1756, Franklin referred to 'our Indian Traders' as 'the most vicious and abandoned Wretches of our Nation'; and, in 1760, he wrote that 'the people that inhabit the frontiers, are generally the refuse of both [French and English] nations, often of the worst morals and the least discretion, remote from the eye, the prudence, and the restraint of government.' *Papers*, 6:469; 9:65.

⁸ The three earliest-known usages are Carl Bridenbaugh, *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton 1744* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), p. 123; Edward Kimber, 'Observations in Several Voyages and Travels in America,' *London Magazine* 15 (Nov. 1746):572; and 'Narrative of Alexander Stewart,' *Maryland Historical Magazine* 1 (1906):350-51 (from 1747). The Reverend Thomas Cradock, in his satirical 'Eclogues Imitated from Vergil,' Cradock Papers, Maryland Historical Society, defines 'buckskin' in the 8th eclogue, ll. 34-35, n. 'd', as 'A Name, given the Country-born in Derision, from the great number of Deer in the Country.'

⁹ John Rogers Williams, ed., *Philip Vickers Fithian: Journals and Letters 1767-1774* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1900), p. 242.

sustained diatribe against the South Carolina backwoodsmen. Here is a typical passage, recorded on August 16, 1768: 'I found a vast Body of People assembled—Such a Medley! such a mixed multitude of all Classes and Complexions I never saw. I baptized about 20 Children and Married 4 Couple[s]—Most of these People had never before seen a Minister, or heard the Lords Prayer, Service or Sermon in their Days. I was a Great Curiosity to them—and They were as great Oddities to me. After Service they went to Revelling Drinking Singing Dancing and Whoring—and most of the Company were drunk before I quitted the Spot—They were as rude in their Manners as the Common Savages, and hardly a degree removed from them. Their Dresses almost as loose and Naked as the Indians, and differing in Nothing save Complexion.'¹⁰ One final example will suffice: Gov. Peter Chester of West Florida wrote in 1773 that the Indian traders were a 'Vile Race . . . whose Manners, Discourses, and way of Life is such, that a relation of it in the most favourable manner, could not fail to shock Humanity, nay, the very savages are scandalized at the Lives of those Brutes in human Shapes.'¹¹

From these and similar expressions we can see that the frontiersman is characterized as a lout for various reasons, including the aristocratic prejudices of such people as Spotswood and Chester, and the religious beliefs of Hubbard, the Mathers, Spotswood, and Woodmason. But the major reason for the indictment is clearly the speaker's ethnocentrism. The most damning, the ultimate indictment of frontiersmen is that they are like Indians.¹² The frontiersman's acculturation to Indian

¹⁰ Richard J. Hooker, ed., *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), p. 56.

¹¹ *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Dunbar Rowland, ed., Centenary series, vol. 5 (Jackson, Miss., 1925): 180.

¹² Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), comments on the whites' fear of Indian acculturation. (See his index under *acculturation*, *fear of* and *Indianization*; and see especially p. 126 where he shrewdly comments that 'the evolution of an acculturated American mythology is in part the story of our gradual acceptance of the frontiersman as a hero rather than a racial traitor.')

customs and manners was a fearsome spectacle to the ordinary seventeenth- and eighteenth-century white American. Such acculturation suggested that the degeneration of man was happening before the beholder's eyes—not over a period of centuries but within the span of less than a generation. And from their ethnocentric point of view, the colonists had good reason to fear that they might lose their European heritage and become white savages, like the mythical Welsh descendants of Prince Madoc.¹³ All colonists knew that most whites who spent considerable time in captivity refused later opportunities to return to white civilization. For the ethnocentric white American of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this fact caused considerable puzzlement, and, as the above quotations testify, fear. For the Indianization of white Americans called into question (though few whites other than Colden, Crèvecoeur, and Franklin were willing to admit it) the superiority or even the adequacy of white civilization.

It was an upsetting and fearful thought. The common record of white exposure to Indian culture found its literary form in the captivity narrative, where Indian civilization was featured as barbarian savagery. For the unwritten but supreme purpose of the Indian captivity narrative was to reassure the colonists of white civilization's superiority by portraying the miserable condition of Indian existence and by holding up for emulation those whites who returned to white culture.¹⁴ Thus, so long as

¹³ The best brief accounts of the Madoc legend are by David B. Quinn, in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. 'Madoc (Madog ab Owain Gwynedd)'; and by Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages 500-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 84-87 and 106-197. Two appearances of the Madoc legend in colonial America not cited by Quinn, Morison, or by any of their sources are [Richard Lewis], 'Upon Prince Madoc's Expedition to the Country Now Called America, in the 12th Century,' *American Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 26, 1733/4; and Morgan Edwards, *Materials Towards a History of the Baptists in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1770), pp. 128-29.

¹⁴ James Axtell, 'The White Indians of Colonial America,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 32(1975):55-88, where the major previous scholarship on 'white Indians' is noted. The first European to be Indianized that I have come across was Gonzalo Guerra. He was captured by Indians in 1511 and refused repatriation in 1519. See Stanley L. Robe, 'Wild Men and Spain's Brave New World,' in Edward Dudley

Indian acculturation presented a fearsome prospect to whites, the frontiersman could only be regarded with horror.

But what a change occurs in the descriptions of the frontiersman in the nineteenth century! Although some writers still regard the frontiersman with puzzlement and horror, he is frequently portrayed as a hero, a modern reincarnation of the classical heroes of Greece or Rome.¹⁵ Melville writes, 'Though held in a sort a barbarian, the backwoodsman would seem to America what Alexander was to Asia—captain in the vanguard of conquering civilization.'¹⁶ Moreover, the frontiersman is supposedly a species indigenous to America. Again, let Melville bear witness. In a review of Francis Parkman's *The California and Oregon Trail*, he writes of the hunter and trapper Henry Chatillon: 'He belongs to a class of men, of whom Kit Carson is the model; a class, unique.'¹⁷ In the writings of Washington Irving, Timothy Flint, James Kirke Paulding, Judge James Hall, James Fenimore Cooper, and most later American writers, including Thoreau, William Gilmore Simms, Thomas Bangs Thorpe, and Melville, the frontiersman is often a hero and always a unique American phenomenon.¹⁸

and Maximillian E. Novak, eds., *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), pp. 49–50. There is a large secondary literature on Indian captivities. Three good studies are Roy Harvey Pearce, 'The Significance of the Captivity Narrative,' *American Literature* 19(1949):1–20; David L. Minter, 'By Dens of Lions: Notes on Stylization in Early Puritan Captivity Narratives,' *American Literature* 45(1973):335–47; and Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, passim.

¹⁵ For one good account of the emerging frontier hero, see Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, pp. 268–368. Slotkin emphasizes the importance of John Filson's Boone narrative in *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucky* (Wilmington, Del., 1784). Richard M. Dorson, 'Davy Crockett and the Heroic Age,' *Southwest Folklore Quarterly* 6(1942):95–102, comments on the 'heroic' nature of the Crockett stories and, at least by implication, defines life on the frontier as America's heroic age (pp. 101–102). Zanger, 'Frontiersman in Popular Fiction,' documents the popular reception of the frontiersman as hero.

¹⁶ Herman Melville, *The Confidence Man*, ed. Elizabeth S. Foster (New York: Hendricks House, 1954), p. 164.

¹⁷ Review in *The Literary World* 6, no. 113 (Mar. 31, 1859), p. 292.

¹⁸ See the discussions of these writers in Harold A. Blaine, 'The Frontiersman in American Prose Fiction, 1800–1860,' Ph.D. diss., Western Reserve University, 1936; and in Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*.

I hope to explain the underlying reasons for the volte-face between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. But before considering the key American works, I should comment on the English and European background. The underlying reason for the colonists' change in attitude toward the frontiersman is, I believe, the change in philosophy of civilization from a belief in degeneration to a belief in progress.¹⁹

For my thesis, the most important aspect of the theory of progress is the idea of society's cultural evolution.²⁰ Belief in social and cultural evolution was frequently implied in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the way such writers as Hobbes and Locke used the comparative method, wherein the conditions or the customs of the American Indian were compared to those of European man at some time in the past.²¹

¹⁹ The standard early study is J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress* (London: Macmillan, 1920). See also the excellent anthology compiled by Frederick John Teggart, *The Idea of Progress*, rev. by George H. Hildebrand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949).

²⁰ Frederick John Teggart, *Theory and Processes of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945), passim, but esp. pp. 92 ff.; Kenneth E. Bock, *The Acceptance of Histories: Toward a Perspective for Social Science, Publications in Sociology and Social Institutions*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), passim, but esp. pp. 48-78; Elman R. Service, 'Cultural Evolution,' *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 17 vols. (New York: Macmillan Co. and The Free Press, 1968) 5:221-28.

²¹ The term *comparative method* has two meanings. It primarily refers to the belief or assumption that, since human societies in various places and times have manifested similar traits, certain laws or generalizations are implied concerning the changes within society; and that these laws, if true for one society, are probably also true for another society, even though the societies exist in widely separated eras or areas. The secondary meaning is simply the remarking of the (perhaps surprising) similarities between two different societies in widely separated times or places. Although the laws or generalizations were rarely formulated before the mid-eighteenth century, writers who used the comparative method before that time usually implied the existence of such laws or generalizations, even though the writers were not certain what they were. In other words, early usages of the comparative method seem to have been fraught with significance to the users and seem to have been striving toward the primary meaning.

In Chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that 'the life of man [is] solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.' One of his proofs of this thesis uses the comparative method: 'It may peradventure be thought, there was never such time, nor condition of warre ("every man, against every man") as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many places where they live so now. For the savage people in many places of *America*, except the government of small families, the concord whereof dependeth on natural lust, have no government at all; and live at this day in

(Incidentally, I suspect not only that the necessity to account for the American Indian's condition spurred on the development of the theory of progress more significantly than did the battle of the ancients and moderns, but also that the use of the comparative method itself inherently fostered belief in progress.²²) During the eighteenth century, the stage theory of civilization was given full expression by the French philosophes, beginning with Turgot in 1750,²³ by English and American writers on population, beginning with Benjamin Franklin in 1751,²⁴ and by the Scotch common-sense philosophers, begin-

that brutish manner.' Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London and New York: Everyman, 1949), pp. 64-65. Cf. Teggart, *Theory and Process*, p. 98.

John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 357, mentions 'the Indians in America, which is still a Pattern of the first ages in *Asia and America*' (2, sec. 108); cf. 2, secs. 36 and 105, pp. 311, 355. In his introduction, Laslett claims (p. 98n) that 'Locke may be said to have done more than anyone else to found the study of comparative anthropology.'

²² The best brief account of the battle of the ancients and moderns is Richard Foster Jones, 'The Background of *The Battle of the Books*,' *Washington University Studies* 7 (1930):99-162; abridged in Jones, *The Seventeenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951), pp. 10-40.

²³ The stage theory of civilization is the assumption or belief that all human societies have gone through or are going through a similar development, and that the stages of this development follow a similar pattern in every society, even though societies exist in different stages in the modern period. There have been (and are) many stage theories, but the most common one is based on the development of societies by mode of subsistence: gathering and hunting, pasturage, farming, and commerce. Another is by mental attitudes (especially toward the supernatural), the Comteian version of which consists of three stages: theological, metaphysical, and positivist (i.e., scientific). Another is by weapons and metallurgy: stone, gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Another is by degree of social and political organization: clan, tribe, and nation. For Turgot and the French philosophes, see Bock, *Acceptance of Histories*, pp. 75-76; and Teggart, *Theory and Processes*, p. 97.

²⁴ Actually, Sir William Temple, in a variety of writings in the 1670s and 1680s, uses the comparative method and stage theory, and in his *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (1673), he applies the stage theory to population. 'I conceive the true original and ground of trade to be, great multitude of people crowded into small compass of land, whereby all things necessary to life become dear, and all men, who have possessions, are induced to parsimony; but those, who have none, are forced to industry and labour, or else to want. Bodies, that are vigorous, fall to labour; such, as are not, supply that defect by some sort of inventions or ingenuity. These customs arise first from necessity, but increase by imitation, and grow in time to be habitual in a country; and wherever they are so, if it lies upon the sea, they naturally break out into trade, both because whatever they want of their own, that is necessary to so many men's lives, must be supplied from abroad; and because, by the multitude of people, and smallness of country, land grows so dear, that the improvement of

ning with Adam Smith, Sir John Dalrymple, and Lord Kames in the 1750s.²⁵ These thinkers all used the example of the American Indian as one equation in their hypotheses of mankind's social and cultural evolution.

Since the primary reason for the negative attitudes toward the frontiersman was his Indian acculturation, it seems poetically just that his rehabilitation should result from the appli-

money that way is inconsiderable, and so turns to sea, where the greatness of the profit makes amends for the venture. . . . This account of the original of trade agrees with the experience of all ages, and with the constitutions of all places.' Sir William Temple, *Works*, 4 vols. (1814; rpt. New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 1:164.

In his 1751 essay on American population, Benjamin Franklin succinctly stated the relationship between population and the mode of subsistence: 'The Hunter, of all Men, requires the greatest Quantity of Land from whence to draw his Subsistence, (the Husbandman subsisting on much less, the Gardner on still less, and the Manufacturer requiring least of all).' Slightly later, Franklin commented, 'I am apt to imagine that close Societies subsisting by Labour and Arts arose first not from choice, but from necessity: When numbers . . . were crowded together into some narrow Territories.' And Franklin again stated the relation between population and socioeconomic stages in his Canada pamphlet, 1760: 'It is a striking observation of a very *able pen*, that the natural livelihood of the thin inhabitants of a forest country, is hunting; that of a greater number, pasturage; that of a middling population, agriculture; and that of the greatest, manufactures.' Leonard W. Labaree et al., eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 4:228, 482; 9:73-74. The editors of the *Papers* note that they 'have not identified precisely the "*able pen*" BF had in mind,' but that it could have been David Hume or Anne Robert Jacques Turgot. I suspect, however, that the 'able pen' was Franklin himself, who was paraphrasing from his 1751 *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind*. Since Hume and Turgot both wrote (or, at any rate, published) after 1751, where did Franklin get the idea of the relationship between the stage theory and population in 1751? Although Temple and Locke both connect population with the mode of subsistence (and so did Grotius and Pufendorf, earlier), none of these writers states the stages and the relationship so clearly. Nor does Montesquieu, though he probably comes closest. See *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), trans. Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner, 1949), 1:275 (Book 18, no. 10: 'Of Population in the Relation it bears to the Manner of Procuring Subsistence'). Evidently Franklin has (as he nearly always does) improved upon his sources.

Robert Wallace was a Scotch clergyman and probably should be grouped with Hume and the Scotch philosophical historians. Wallace, *A Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind* (1753; rpt. Edinburgh, 1809), p. 15: 'A rude and barbarous people, living by hunting, by fishing, or by pasturage, or on the spontaneous product of the earth, without agriculture, can never be so numerous as a people inhabiting the same tract of land, who are well skilled in agriculture, as uncultivated can never maintain so many inhabitants as cultivated lands.' See also David Hume, 'Of Commerce,' *Political Discourses* (Edinburgh, 1752), pp. 4-5.

²⁵ Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 99-130; Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), pp. 47, 104, 109-13. See also Duncan Forbes, ' "Scientific" Whiggism: Adam Smith and John Millar,' *Cambridge Journal* 7(1954):643-70.

cation to the frontiersman of a syndrome of ideas that had gradually developed about the American Indian during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. These ideas concerning the place of the Indian in the scheme of what Dugald Stewart called the conjectural history of civilization appear in Crèvecoeur, who applies them to American civilization and specifically to the frontier and the frontiersman.²⁶ Although other factors contributed to the change in the attitudes toward the frontiersman, the theories set forth in Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) give the key paradigm for the interpretation of the frontiersman's role in American society. I don't want to give the impression that Crèvecoeur alone is responsible for the change. It would have happened if he had never written. But he first, clearly, and at the same time very complexly, interprets American society and culture according to a model that aggrandizes the role of the frontier and the frontiersman.

One indication of the change in attitude and of the reasons

²⁶ Dugald Stewart, the first and greatest historian of the Scottish Enlightenment, defines 'Theoretical or Conjectural History' in his 'Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith.' Stewart, *Collected Works* (Cambridge, Mass.: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), 7:31-32. Teggart and Bryson, among others, have commented on Stewart's definition. Teggart, *Theory and Processes*, pp. 92 and 97; Bryson, *Man and Society*, pp. 87-89. Ronald L. Meek, however, has recently argued that Stewart's phrase should not be applied to the socioeconomic stage theory because Stewart meant the phrase to describe the use of the conjecture *where historical evidence was lacking*. And Meek finds evidence of the existence in many societies of the process of development of the four stages. Meek, *Social Science*, pp. 232-40. But Stewart wrote that conjectural history is characterized by the use of 'the detached facts which travels and voyages afford us' when 'direct evidence' is wanting; and that, in such cases, information from 'travels and voyages' may 'serve as land-marks to our speculations.' Stewart is clearly describing the comparative method, as we have defined it in its primary meaning. Since Stewart and Millar used the comparative method to construct the mode-of-subsistence stage theory of civilization, it seems reasonable to say that by 'Theoretical or Conjectural History' Stewart in fact meant that he was using the comparative method to document the socio-economic stage theory of civilization. At any rate, conjectural history has generally been used as a synonym for the stage theory of civilization, and this is, in effect, the usage I follow.

Although Parrington claimed that Crèvecoeur was profoundly influenced by the frontier, he does not explain how; and I'm afraid that Parrington's remarks simply reveal that he was trying without success to apply the Turner thesis. Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents of American Thought: The Colonial Mind* (1927; rpt. New York: Harvest Books, 1954), pp. 143-50.

for the change may be deduced from the diction used to denominate the *frontiersman*. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, frontiersmen were commonly called *backsettlers*, *backwoodsmen*, *Indian traders*, *rangers*, *scouts*, *bushmen*, *bushwackers*, *foresters*, *woodrunners*, and *woodsmen*.²⁷ But in the nineteenth century, words with more positive, even glamorous associations were also commonly used: *frontiersman*, *pathfinder*, *pioneer*, and *trailblazer*. The shift in perspective, in the way the frontiersman was viewed, can be found in microcosm in the gradual change from *backsettler* and *backwoodsman* to *frontiersman*—from *back* to *front*.²⁸ As John Witherspoon pointed out in 1781, the distinction between *backsettlements* and *frontier* was a matter of perspective. Witherspoon preferred *frontier* to *backsettlements* because the area called the frontier was 'advancing' (his word) to the west.²⁹ Witherspoon did not further analyze the perspectives implicit in the diction, but I believe that the preference for *frontier* and *frontiersman* implies the supposed progress of the white civilization into America's continent and echoes the old *translatio imperii* notion of the westward course of empire, a popular literary motif in Revolutionary America.³⁰ Implicit in Witherspoon's preference is the

²⁷ See these entries in William Craigie and James R. Hubbert, eds., *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles*, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938-44). The only one of these words that has been given special attention is *frontier*. Fulmer Mood, 'Notes on the History of the Word *Frontier*,' *Agricultural History* 22(1948):78-83; and John T. Juricek, 'American Usage of the Word "Frontier" from Colonial Times to Frederick Jackson Turner,' *Proceedings of the American Philological Society* 110(1966):10-34.

²⁸ Edwin Fussell, *Frontier: American Literature and the American West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 15, earlier made this point.

²⁹ Mood, 'Notes on . . . *Frontier*,' p. 79, quotes Witherspoon's discussion.

³⁰ The best-known single statement of the *translatio* motif is Bishop George Berkeley's 'Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America' (publ. 1752). See Rexmond C. Cochrane, 'Bishop Berkeley and the Progress of the Arts and Learning: Notes on a Literary Convention,' *Huntington Library Quarterly* 17 (1954): 229-49.

The most famous seventeenth-century expression of the *translatio* motif was George Herbert's 'Religion stands on tip toe in our land, / Ready to pass to the American strand.' For some notes on its popularity in seventeenth-century America, see Abram E. Cutter, 'Poetical Prognostics,' *New England Historic and Genealogical Register* 27(1873):347-51. A famous American version of the *translatio* motif, supposedly an early carving on Plymouth Rock, first appeared in the *Boston Newsletter*, Sept. 3, 1730:

idea that the frontiersman is advancing civilization, whereas the word *backsettler* suggests that the frontiersman is fleeing from, and thus retarding, civilization.

Let me now very briefly describe the fundamental quarrel that had grown up about the origin of the American Indian and, consequently, the origin of man.³¹ The American Indian posed an overwhelming question for Renaissance philosophers. Where did he fit in the Christian dogma of man's monogenesis? If the Indian were human (and some theorists argued that he was not), was he descended from Noah? Or was he descended from Adam through some channel other than Noah? Were the Indians Hebrews, as James Adair believed, descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel?³² And why did the In-

'The Eastern World enslav'd, it's Glory ends; / And Empire rises where the Sun descends.' Chief Justice Peter Oliver recorded that he read the following version in a Derbyshire Inn: 'The Eastern Glory is lost: its Power ends / An Empire rises where the Sun descends.—E.G. An American rebel, Sept. 12, 1773, was here.' Lewis Einstein, *Divided Loyalties* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1933), p. 359. The version of this 'Plymouth Rock' couplet recalled by John Adams in 1807 differs yet again: 'The eastern nations sink, their glory ends, / And Empire rises where the sun descends.' Adams, *Works*, ed. Charles Francis Adams, 10 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1850-56), 9:600.

The first scholar to discuss the *translatio* motif in early American literature was Samuel L. Knapp, 'Prophetic Calculations Fulfilled,' *New York Mirror*, 14 (Sept. 24, 1836):100. The late Professor Theodore Hornberger called attention to this theme in his lectures on early American literature, and three of his students have published on the idea. See Lewis P. Simpson, *The Federalist Literary Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), pp. 31-43; J. A. Leo Lemay, *A Calendar of American Poetry in the Colonial Newspapers and Magazines* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1972), s.v. 'translatio' in the subject and genre index; Lemay, *Men of Letters in Colonial Maryland* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1972), s.v. 'translatio' in the index; and William D. Andrews, 'William Smith and the Rising Glory of America,' *Early American Literature* 8 (1973):33-43. Of course other modern scholars have also commented on the importance of the theme in early American literature, notably Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1976), s.v. 'translatio studies' in his index.

³¹ For classic early treatments of the Indian, see Montaigne's 'Des Cannibales' and Shakespeare's *Tempest*. For modern interpretations, see Henri Baudet, *Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts on European Images of Non-European Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); and three essays in Fredi Chiapelli, ed., *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): Aldo Scaglione, 'A Note on Montaigne's *Des Cannibales* and The Humanist Tradition,' 1:63-70; A. Bartlett Giamatti, 'Primitivism and the Process of Civility in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*,' 1:71-82; and Paul A. Jorgensen, 'Shakespeare's Brave New World,' 1:83-89.

³² Don Cameron Allen, *The Legend of Noah* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,

dian differ so from the European in manners, customs, and culture? John Rastell posed the problem in his early sixteenth-century play *A New Interlude and a Mery, of the Nature of the Four Elements* (London, c. 1517–27): ‘But how the people furst began / In that country, or whens they cam, / For clerkes it is a questyon.’ The popular answer during the Renaissance and through the seventeenth century was that the Indian had degenerated from the condition of man described in the Bible.³³ But by the eighteenth century, a conflicting hypothesis was displacing the earlier one. The new hypothesis held that Western man had evolved through a series of cultural stages. Thus the American Indian existed in a state of society comparable to one that European man had gone through in the past. Although this stage theory of civilization implied the polygenism of mankind, the early Christian writers generally did not face the implication. Those who did, got around it by arguing for cyclic stages of progress and degeneration in man’s history.³⁴

The development both of the theories of mankind’s polygenism and of the nature of change in society is inextricably tied to the use of the comparative method. Although I cannot take

1949), pp. 113–37; Lee Eldridge Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967).

³³ John Rastell’s *New Interlude* has been reprinted several times. See George Watson, *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* 1 (Cambridge: University Press, 1974):1405. Although the theme of man’s degeneration is pervasive in Renaissance and seventeenth-century history and literature, it has been comparatively little studied. It was one of the two theories of history widely accepted (the cyclical theory was the other) before the rise of the theory of progress. Its best embodiments are in the classical doctrines of the Golden Age and in the Christian idea of the Garden of Eden.

³⁴ Classical writings on the antiquity of Egyptian and other Near Eastern and Asian civilizations also called biblical chronology and the biblical doctrine of monogenism into question. Such writings were gathered together and widely circulated in the Renaissance in Christian refutations, including St. Augustine’s *Of the City of God* (especially with the notes of Ludovicus Vives) and Philip Mornay’s *A Work Concerning the Trueness of Christian Religion* (London, 1587). See Ernest A. Strathmann, *Sir Walter Raleigh: A Study in Elizabethan Skepticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), pp. 199–200. And see n. 39, below.

The polygenist position (as it concerned mankind in the New World) was first set forth at length by Isaac de la Peyrere, *Prae-Adamitae* (Amsterdam, 1655) and was vigorously supported by Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man* (Edinburgh, 1774). Huddleston, *Origins*, pp. 139–43.

the time here to trace the history of the comparative method and the stage theory as applied to the American Indian,³⁵ I will briefly document two of its highlights, the first in Renaissance 'American' art and the second in eighteenth-century American literature.

Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, the French artist who accompanied René de Laudonnière to Florida in 1564–65, subsequently painted at least one picture of what he imagined an early inhabitant of Britain must have looked like. His portrait of the young Pictish woman is an imaginary creation, based in part upon prior Renaissance preconceptions of early Britons, but the portrait is also strongly influenced by Le Moyne's observations and drawings of American Indians.³⁶ Two decades later, John White, English artist and governor of the ill-fated Roanoke colony, after painting a number of scenes of American Indian life and of individual American Indians, also attempted a series of pictures (at least one of which simply copies Le Moyne's portrait) of the primitive Picts and other early Britons.³⁷ Thomas Harriot printed five of these drawings, engraved by De Bry, as an appendix to the folio edition of *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590).³⁸ According to Harriot's note introducing the appen-

³⁵ I have in hand, however, a study of the vogue of Indian speeches in early American literature which contains numerous examples of the comparative method. And for an examination of the development of the mode-of-existence stage theory in connection with the American Indian, see Meek, *Social Science*, passim, but esp. pp. 131–76.

³⁶ Le Moyne De Morgues's 'Young Pictish Woman' is reproduced in Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, ed. Paul Hulton (1590; rpt. New York: Dover, 1972), p. xii.

³⁷ Paul Hope Hulton and David Beers Quinn, *The American Drawings of John White*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 1:147–51; 2: plates 64–68 (in color); plates 138–43 (facsimile of De Bry's America); and plates 149–50 (possible sources and influences).

³⁸ David Beers Quinn, *The Roanoke Voyages 1584–1590*, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1955), 1:480, n. 4, proves that Harriot wrote the notes that accompany De Bry's engravings of John White's drawings. The De Bry engravings of John White's 'Picts' are in Harriot's *Briefe and True Report* (1590), as an appendix (Dover ed., pp. 75–85). See also David Beers Quinn, 'Thomas Harriot and the New World,' in John W. Shirley, ed., *Thomas Harriot: Renaissance Scientist* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 36–53.

dix, the pictures were included 'to shoue how that the Inhabitants of the great Britannie have bin in times past as saufage [savage] as those of Virginia.' As a frontispiece to *A Briefe and True Report*, Harriot featured De Bry's engraving of Adam and Eve, thereby suggesting that the present-day American Indians, like the ancient Britons, were in a state not far removed from that of the first human beings in the garden of Eden. Thereby, too, Harriot and De Bry protected themselves from the possible charge of heresy, for the frontispiece implies that both the American Indians and the ancient Britons were somehow descended from Adam and Eve. It seems especially fitting that Thomas Harriot, one of the Renaissance's daring freethinkers,³⁹ should write the book in which these portraits

³⁹ Harriot was infamous among some of his contemporaries for believing that men existed before Adam. Thomas Nashe, in *Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Diuel* (London, 1592), glanced at Harriot when he wrote, 'I heare say there be Mathematitions abroad that will proouue men before Adam.' And in *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* (London, 1593), Nashe repeated his charge: 'Impudently they persist in it, that the late discouered Indians are able to shew antiquities thousands before Adam.' Ronald B. McKerrow, ed., *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 2d ed., ed. F. P. Wilson (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 1:172; 2:116; see esp. Supplement, 29-30. That Harriot himself believed Nashe was referring to him in *Pierce Penilesse* is proven by David B. Quinn and John W. Shirley, 'A Contemporary List of Harriot References,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 22(1969):19-20. And the quotation from *Christs Tears* makes it certain that Christopher Marlowe, in his 'Atheist Lecture,' was referring to American Indians, rather than natives of India, when he said 'That the Indians and many Authors of antiquity haue assuredly written of above 16 thousand yeares agone whereas Adam is proued to haue lived with 6 thowsand yeares.' Cf. Paul H. Kocher, 'Backgrounds for Marlowe's Atheist Lecture,' *Philological Quarterly* 20(1941):305-307. Strathmann, *Sir Walter Raleigh*, pp. 201-202, has suggested that Marlowe and Harriot may have had in mind the Aztec mythology, as reported in Francisco López de Gómara, *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of Weast India, now called New Spayne* (London, 1578), pp. 370-78, or the version of the Aztec five ages as described by Montaigne in the conclusion of his late essay 'Of Coaches.' Strathman, however, thinks it more probable that the New World reports of men before Adam 'stem from the oral, rather than the written reports of voyagers.' If this is so, the reports may well have been founded upon the Spanish suppression of the Aztec calendar stone, for Giordano Bruno seems to have the Aztec calendar stone in mind when he cites the Aztec ages in his repudiation of biblical chronology. Giordano Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* (1584), trans. and ed. Arthur D. Imerti (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1964), pp. 250 and 307 (n. 52). Although he omits the possible Aztec influence upon Harriot and Marlowe, Benjamin Keen does take up the Aztec influence upon Montaigne and Bruno. Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1971), pp. 156-62, 172. For a conservative overview of Harriot's religious attitudes (but one which deals splendidly with Harriot's anti-Genesis at-

first make a public appearance. The appendix of images of the Picts suggests an answer to the intellectual puzzle of man's origins and of the condition of the American Indian. The suggested answer is that mankind is evolving, that some humans in some areas have evolved further or faster than others (the inhabitants of England were barbarians at the time of the flourishing of Roman civilization), and that the American Indians in the sixteenth century are comparable to the Picts in the first century B.C. This explanation emphasizes the development of man, not his degeneration. It thus contradicts the biblical account of both the creation of the world and the origin of man. My opinion of the engravings' implication is open to scholarly dispute, but one result of the engravings—upon which, in part, I base my opinion—is beyond dispute. They changed the way Western man perceived the ancient Britons. Thereafter, the American Indian became the 'pattern for ancient Britons.'⁴⁰

My second highlight is not Joseph François Lafitau's *Moeurs des Sauvages Américains, comparées aux Moeurs des Premiers Temps* (Paris, 1724), even though Lafitau's work is the most thorough and consistent application of the comparative method in the early eighteenth century and even though Lafitau is regarded by William N. Fenton and some other anthropologists as the founder of social anthropology.⁴¹ But as Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Adams, 'unluckily Lafitau had in his head a preconceived'⁴² religious theory, into which he attempted to

omism), see Jean Jacquot, 'Thomas Harriot's Reputation for Impiety,' *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 9(1952):164-87. For guidance in the Harriot bibliography, I am indebted to my colleague Dr. John W. Shirley.

⁴⁰ Thomas Downing Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London: Methuen, 1950), pp. 123-25. Kendrick wrote before the Le Moyne painting came to light, and it may be argued that Le Moyne, rather than John White or Thomas Harriot, deserves the credit for making the Indians the 'pattern for ancient Britons'—but it was the publication of these engravings that mainly influenced succeeding generations, not the single fact that Le Moyne (and, possibly, John White) painted them.

⁴¹ See William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore, eds., Joseph François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974), 1:xxix-cxix.

⁴² Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 2:305.

fit the American Indians. Lafitau believed in the degeneration of man. He used the comparative method to prove that vestiges of Christianity's revelations could be found throughout history and throughout the world, even among the beliefs of the ancient Spartans, the Chinese, and the Iroquois. His work is important for his careful observations of the Iroquois, but not for his theory of history, which was old-fashioned, if not obsolete, by the eighteenth century.

The first American writer to make sustained use of the comparative method and stage theory in a thoroughly Enlightenment manner was Cadwallader Colden, physician, philosopher, and scientist, but best known as a New York politician and as an early correspondent of Benjamin Franklin. Published in New York in 1727 and republished in London twenty years later in a revised and enlarged edition, Colden's *The History of The Five Indian Nations* is, I believe, the most significant colonial American book about the Indian.⁴³ It influenced American, Scottish, English, and Continental Enlightenment writers.⁴⁴ In the dedication of the 1727 edition, Colden several times compares the Five Nations to the Greeks and Romans, specifically claiming that the classical peoples were 'once as much Barbarians as our Indians now are.' In the preface, Colden apologizes for devoting large sections of the book to the actions of a single man or a small party of Indians. (Of course he knew that this was exactly the technique of Homer and the epic writers.) He justifies himself partly by saying that much Indian history would be lost if he omitted such actions and partly by an argument using the comparative method: 'I believ'd likewise, that some would be curious to know the Manners and

⁴³ See the brief discussions of Colden in Moses Coit Tyler, *A History of American Literature, 1607-1765* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1949), pp. 446-47; Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization*, rev. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), pp. 45-46; and Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, pp. 199-201.

⁴⁴ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), ed. Duncan Forbes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), pp. 85, 86, and 91, cites Colden, as does the author of the article on the Iroquois in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*.

Customs of the Indians, in the Publick Treaties especially, who could not be satisfied without taking Notice of several minute Circumstances, and some things otherwise of no Consequence. We are fond of searching into Remote Antiquity, to know the Manners of our Earliest Progenitors: if I be not mistaken, the Indians are living images of them.'

Following the dedication and preface, the 1727 edition contains an introduction giving 'A short View of the Form of Government of the Five Nations.' Seventeenth-century American works dealing with the Indian, like William Wood's *New England Prospect* (London, 1634),⁴⁵ Roger Williams's *A Key into the Language of America* (London, 1643),⁴⁶ or John Josselyn's *An Account of Two Voyages* (London, 1674),⁴⁷ typically say that the Indian governments are monarchies; but most eighteenth-century writers claim that the Indians are not monarchists but republicans, and their government, a commonwealth. In this, of course, they follow the lead of John Locke, who wanted to prove that the original social contracts were democratic, and who formulated the Enlightenment's quintessential aphorism of the comparative method: 'Thus in the beginning all the World was America.'⁴⁸ Colden claims that he includes a discussion of the Indians' government because it reveals the nature of the original government of Western nations. And he implies that the original, 'natural' government he describes is the model for the ideal that should exist in present-day civilized nations. 'As I am fond to think, that the present state of the *Indian Nations* exactly shows the *most Ancient* and *Original Condition* of almost every Nation; so I be-

⁴⁵ William Wood, *New England's Prospect* (London, 1634), pt. 2, chap. 10.

⁴⁶ Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America* (London, 1643), chap. 22.

⁴⁷ John Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages* (London, 1674), p. 146.

⁴⁸ Locke, *Two Treatises*, ed. Laslett, p. 319. John Dunn, 'The Politics of Locke in England and America in the Eighteenth Century,' in John Yolten, ed., *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 45-80, claims that Locke had little influence in America before 1750; but Dunn overlooks numerous references to Locke in the newspapers and pamphlet literature, as well as such uses of Lockean thought as that by Colden in his *History*.

lieve, here we may with more certainty see the Original Form of all Government, than in the most *curious Speculations* of the Learned; and that the Patriarchal, and other *Schemes* in Politics are no better than *Hypotheses* in *Philosophy*, and as prejudicial to real Knowledge.'

Colden here attacks Locke as well as Filmer, for Locke had written that 'in the primitive, patriarchal, Old Testament stage in Europe we once lived as the American Indians now do.' And so Colden argues that because of his study of the Indian tribes (and by using the comparative method), he knows, better than Locke, Filmer, or any other English or European author, the nature of Western man's original social contracts.⁴⁹ (As amply demonstrated in his attempt to refute Isaac Newton, Colden did not lack audacity in his undertakings or courage in his convictions, even when no one else could understand him and even when Benjamin Franklin seemed to doubt that his mathematics *could* be understood.⁵⁰)

The significance of Colden's *History* for my thesis is three-fold. First, by his attitude toward the Five Indian Nations and by writing a book about Indian history, he shows that Indian society and history are worthy subjects in and for themselves. Second, in his comparisons and uses of the comparative method, he claims that the Indians are living in the 'heroic' age of civilization. And third, he repeatedly states that Indian social and political organizations and Indian oratory are similar to Western man's earliest achievements in these fields. He thus implies the cultural evolution of man, and directly argues that the Indian is a contemporary example of civilization's earliest stage.

As long as cultural evolution was primarily identified with and applied to the American Indian, it was of minor importance

⁴⁹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, ed. Laslett, p. 98. For a brief discussion of the various theories of governmental origin, see 'The Traveller and the Science of Government,' in P. W. Frantz, *The English Traveller and the Movement of Ideas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1934). For Colden's remarks see his *History*, pp. 126-27, and for their context, pp. 120-38.

⁵⁰ See Franklin to Colden, July 10 and Oct. 16, 1746; Franklin, *Papers*, 3:80-82, 89-93.

to American literature. Enlightenment writers might satisfactorily fit the Indian into their world view by believing that he was like the Western man of some prior time or by claiming that he had degenerated through the influence of his environment; but most Americans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries primarily viewed the Indian as a dangerous enemy.⁵¹ Intellectuals could philosophize about the Indian as a present-day embodiment of the classical heroes, and such Virginia aristocrats as Robert Beverly and William Byrd could recommend intermarriage between whites and Indians as the answer to the threat of Indian warfare;⁵² but Americans commonly viewed Indians as devils, who tortured their prisoners to death and scalped their kills.⁵³ According to an image created by William Bradford and borrowed afterward by a series of colonial writers, the Indians were demons who danced in hell fires even while they were themselves burning to death.⁵⁴ In the

⁵¹ Even in 1638, William Bradford comments that the 'rude and ignorant sort murmured that any English should be put to death' for murdering an Indian. Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation* 2:267-68. See also Keith Glenn, 'Captain John Smith and the Indians,' *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 52(1944):228-48; and Gary B. Nash, 'The Image of the Indian in the Southern Colonial Mind,' in Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak, eds., *The Wild Man Within* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), pp. 55-86.

⁵² Robert Beverly, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, ed. Louis B. Wright (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), pp. 38-39. Louis B. Wright, ed., *The Prose Works of William Byrd of Westover* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 38. And in a letter of March 30, 1757, Peter Fontaine, probably reflecting Beverly, also recommends intermarriage. Ann Maury, *Memoirs of a Huguenot Family* (New York: Putnam's, 1852), p. 349.

⁵³ Nathaniel Knowles, 'The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America,' *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 82(1940):151-225.

⁵⁴ William Bradford comments that when the Narragansett Indians saw their traditional enemies the Pequots 'dancing in the flames,' the Narragansetts taunted them. Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation*, ed. Ford, 2:252; in Nathaniel Morton, *New-Englands Memoriall* (Cambridge, Mass., 1669), pp. 101-102. See Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Hartford: Silas Andrus & Son, 1853), 2:555 (where Mather puns on the lives lost in 'The *beat* of this action') and 556 (where the Indians who found 'their countrymen terribly barbikew'd . . . howl'd, . . . roar'd, . . . stamp'd . . . Tore their hair, . . . and were the pictures of so many devils in desperation'). And Leonard W. Labaree et al., eds., *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 198: 'Their dark-colour'd Bodies, half naked, seen only by the gloomy Light of the Bonfire, running after and beating one another with Fire-brands, accompanied by their horrid Yellings, form'd a Scene the most resembling our ideas of Hell that could well be imagin'd.'

colonial period (and frequently thereafter, especially on the frontier), the Indian was—despite Cadwallader Colden—generally thought to be a villain.⁵⁵ Because of the popular attitudes, the Indian was a poor choice as a hero for early American literature. And yet, intellectually, according to the stage theory and the comparative method, the Indian was the stuff of which epic heroes were made.⁵⁶ This predicament existed when Crèvecoeur took up the idea of the comparative method and stage theory (which had grown up about the figure of the American Indian) and applied this intellectual framework to the frontiersman. Crèvecoeur thus opened the way for a new popular hero of American literature and culture, one who was both indigenous to America and yet clearly intellectually allied to the epic heroes of the great Western literary tradition.

The main purpose of Crèvecoeur's *Letters* was to analyze the emerging American civilization⁵⁷ and thereby to provide an accurate sketch of the general development of civilization.

⁵⁵ Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: Norton, 1976), passim, shows how the historians of colonial America, and especially the Puritan historians, have consistently viewed the Indian as a moral, as well as a technological, inferior. But Lewis O. Saum, working mainly with nineteenth-century materials, shows how the fur traders sometimes viewed the Indian as noble savages—and sometimes as beasts. *The Fur Trader and the Indian* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965).

⁵⁶ The numerous uses of the comparative method in colonial American literature, whereby Indians are compared to Greek and Roman heroes, constitute overwhelming proof. The Enlightenment theories on the nature of early language and on the origins of the poetic genres also tended to ennoble the speeches and the songs of the Indians. See Hugh Blair, 'Lecture 6: Rise and Progress of Language'; and 'Lecture 38: Origin and Progress of Poetry,' in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1767; rpt. New York, 1824) esp. pp. 60, 379–80. The subject is surveyed in Lois Whitney, 'English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origins,' *Modern Philology* 21 (1923–24):337–78; Roy Harvey Pearce, 'The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists: Some Reconsiderations,' *ELH: A Journal of English Literary History* 12 (1945):203–220; and Floyd G. Lounsbury, 'One Hundred Years of Anthropological Linguistics,' in J. O. Brew, ed., *One Hundred Years of Anthropology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 161–66. The best overview of primitivism in eighteenth-century theories of poetry and literature is Rene Wellek, *The Rise of English Literary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), pp. 61–94; and see also Wellek's 'The Supposed Influence of Vico on England and Scotland in the Eighteenth Century,' in Georgia Tagliacozzo and Hayden V. White, eds., *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), pp. 215–23.

⁵⁷ Elayne Antler Rapping, 'Theory and Experience in Crèvecoeur's America,' *American Quarterly* 19 (1967):707–718, similarly views Crèvecoeur's purpose.

Crèvecoeur attempted to reconcile Enlightenment ideas with American actualities, and tried to show how opposing Enlightenment ideas could be true under particular circumstances.

The *Letters* is a work of innumerable contradictions, for it endeavors to prove the truth of such diametrically opposite theories as Hobbes's doctrine that the state of nature is a state of war with Locke's belief that the state of nature is normally a condition of equality and rationality among individuals.⁵⁸ Crèvecoeur also attempts to justify both the popular French belief in the *degeneration* of man in America⁵⁹ with the nationalistic American belief in man's *regeneration* in America. (The play on words is Crèvecoeur's.⁶⁰) One of the many ironies in this supremely intellectual handling of Enlightenment theories about nature, man, and civilization is that the author is supposedly a simple Quaker farmer, named James. But, of course, Crèvecoeur knew that his best readers—men like the abbé Raynal, to whom he dedicated the book, or like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom read it and came to be numbered among his friends⁶¹—would recognize and ap-

⁵⁸ Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, ed. Warren Barton Blake (London: Dent, 1912). For Locke, see pp. 15 ('Tabula Rasa'), 20 ('spontaneous impressions'), 24–25 ('the bright idea of property . . . has established all our rights'); 59 ('The fee simple and absolute property'); and 225–26 ('The surplus could be then realized into solid wealth'). For Hobbes see pp. 46 ('they are often in a perfect state of war'); 51–52 ('surrounding hostility in'); 104 ('So prevailing in the disposition of man to quarrel, and shed blood'); 167 ('man an animal of prey, seems to have rapine and the love of bloodshed implanted in his heart'); Letter X, pp. 174–81, portraying the state of nature as a state of war); 198–99 ('what is man when no longer connected with society'); 210 ('we are born to be victims of diseases and passions, of mischances and death').

⁵⁹ For a history of the idea, see Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750–1900*, trans. Jeremy Moyle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

⁶⁰ Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, p. 42: 'Every thing has tended to *regenerate* them' (my emphasis). See the repetition of *new* on pp. 42 ff. and the use of the word *degenerate* on pp. 53, 54, 55, and 216. See also notes 70 and 72, below.

⁶¹ Since the correspondence of Franklin and Crèvecoeur is but poorly represented in the old editions of Franklin's writings (e.g., Albert H. Smyth, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* [1907; repr. New York: Haskell, 1970], 8:297–98, 307–308; 9:20–21, 147–49, 636 [containing Franklin's letters of Sept. 2 and Sept. 21, 1781; c. Dec. 1783 and Feb. 16, 1788]), it is necessary to turn to other sources. There are summaries and quotations of their correspondence in the two early twentieth-century editions of Crèvecoeur's *Letters* (ed. Ludwich Lewisohn, London: Chatto & Windus, 1908, pp.

preciate not only his deliberate Voltaireian choice of the Pennsylvania 'Good Quaker' as a persona,⁶² but also his effort to reconcile the conflicting Enlightenment theories of society and civilization.

Crèvecoeur's synthesis fundamentally reflects Montesquieu's environmentalism, which, of course, directly descends from John Locke's investigation into human psychology and epistemology.⁶³ Even the structure of Crèvecoeur's *Letters* mirrors Montesquieu's environmentalism, for it is organized geographically. Crèvecoeur first characterizes at length the three Atlantic sections of the United States—our now traditional distinctions of New England, the Middle Colonies, and

331-48; and ed. Blake, pp. 242-46); the story of their relationship is well told by Claude-Anne Lopez, *Mon Cher Papa: Franklin and the Ladies of Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 158-67; and see also Julia P. Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916). Many of the materials for the relationship between Crèvecoeur and Jefferson have been published in Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. Jefferson evidently corrected some errors in the French edition of the *Letters* (2 vols., 1784). See Crèvecoeur to Jefferson, May 18, 1785, *Papers*, 8:155-56. The two collaborated on an essay in the *Journal de Paris*, Jan. 31, 1787; see Jefferson to Crèvecoeur, Jan. 15, 1787, *Papers* 2:43-45. Jefferson gave Crèvecoeur a copy of his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, *Papers*, 2:253. And Crèvecoeur gave him a copy of the second French edition of *Les Lettres*, April 16, 1787, *Papers*, 2:294-95.

⁶² The *locus classicus* for the 'Good Quaker' is Voltaire's first four letters in his *Lettres Philosophiques* (Rouen, 1734). See Edith Philips, *The Good Quaker in French Legend* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932). Philips discusses Crèvecoeur's *Letters* on pp. 110-16, pointing out that it was 'one of the most popular as well as one of the most discussed books of the latter part of the eighteenth century,' p. 110; and Durand Echeverria, *Mirage in the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 15-19.

⁶³ Crèvecoeur directly names Montesquieu on p. 205. Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (New York: Crowell, 1968), argues that Locke 'provided the metaphysical foundation upon which anthropologists . . . were to rear the first formal definitions of culture,' pp. 10-11; and further that Locke is responsible for the belief that 'no social order is based upon innate truths; a change in the environment results in a change of behavior,' p. 12. Montesquieu's environmentalism has other antecedent sources (see Fontenelle, cited immediately below), but Lockean theory erected the first thorough philosophical foundation for the philosophy of environmentalism. Crèvecoeur's agricultural imagery engrafts the philosophy of the physiocrats onto Montesquieu's environmentalism (e.g., 'Men are like plants,' p. 44). But Crèvecoeur also knew that his intellectual peers would be reminded not only of the physiocrats and of Montesquieu, but of Fontenelle as well: Bernhard le Bouvier de Fontenelle, *Digression sur les Anciens et les Moderns*, 3 vols. (1818; repr. Geneva: Slatking Reprints, 1968), vol. 2, pt. 2, 'Different ideas are like plants or flowers which do not flourish equally well in all kinds of climates,' pp. 353-54.

the South (chaps. 4–8, 11, and 9, respectively). Although the terms for these areas had been in existence for several decades, no one before Crèvecoeur attempted to explain why they should be considered distinctive regions.⁶⁴ But he also, and more significantly, creates another geographical organization for the book, distinguishing between areas of the East and West. He applies the scheme of cultural evolution to American geography and thus creates what came to be the standard interpretation of civilization's progress in America. This paradigm of American progress is far more important to American literature and historiography than any later model, and, indeed, many later ones are versions of Crèvecoeur's. Among cultural paradigms that descend from Crèvecoeur, I include Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis⁶⁵ and Robert E. Spiller's theories of the cycles of American literature.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Crèvecoeur, *History*, pp. 9, 41, 44, 48, 88. See Fulmer Mood, 'The Origin, Evolution, and Application of the Sectional Concept, 1750–1900,' pp. 5–98, in Merrill Jensen, ed., *Regionalism in America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), esp. pp. 41–43, where Mood calls Jedidiah Morse 'the father of the concept of the American section,' because of his distinction between New England, the Middle States, and the South in the second edition (Boston, 1793) of his *American Geography* (1st ed., Elizabethtown, 1789). Crèvecoeur's comments were made earlier and are more complex and more subtle.

⁶⁵ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1920), pp. 1–38 (first published in 1893). In an abstract of the essay 'almost certainly written by Turner himself,' the stage theory foundations of the essay are pointed out: 'It was found that the successive frontiers revealed the progress of society, at the same time the United States could show the hunting stage, the pastoral stage, the agricultural stage, and the manufacturing stage, as the traveler crossed the continent from West to East.' Quoted by Fulmer Mood, 'The Development of Frederick Jackson Turner as a Historical Thinker,' *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 34(1943):337, from the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1894*, p. 6. Mood also (pp. 304–307) has traced Turner's theories of the stages of civilization to the mid-nineteenth-century German economist Friedrich List. But, as Fritz L. Kramer has shown, List was echoing Jacob Grimm, Alexander Von Humboldt, and Lord Kames, who had, in turn, been anticipated by Verro and by Giraldus Cambrensis. See Kramer, 'Eduard Hahn and the End of the Three Stages of Man,' *Geographical Review* 57(1967), 73–80; for List, see p. 79. Merle E. Curti, 'The Section and the Frontier in American History: The Methodological Concepts of Frederick Jackson Turner,' in Stuart A. Rice, ed., *Methods in Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 353, stresses that Turner's 'fundamental interest' was in the 'evolutionary development of society in America.'

⁶⁶ Robert E. Spiller, *The Cycle of American Literature* (New York: Mentor Books, 1957), pp. 13–16, 106–112. Spiller, one of my teachers, believes that American culture developed anew in each of America's 'frontiers.'

Crèvecoeur uses the comparative method in the first letter when James (the fictional 'American Farmer') asks his minister why people continually tour Italy. The minister replies that the travellers wish 'to trace the vestiges of a once-flourishing people now extinct' but adds that such tourists could really spend their time better in the American colonies, where they would derive 'much more real satisfaction in observing among us the humble rudiments and embryos of societies.' And the minister claims that here in America a 'reflecting traveller . . . might contemplate the very beginnings and outlines of human society, which can be traced nowhere now but in this part of the world.'⁶⁷ Thus Crèvecoeur advances the theory that society in the New World recapitulates the successive stages of society that have existed in the Old World.

When, in his third letter, 'What is an American,' Crèvecoeur attempts to define and account for the American character, he bases his definition and his answer largely upon the influence of the American environment, and particularly upon that distinctive American geographical characteristic, the frontier.⁶⁸ Like numerous previous writers, Crèvecoeur shows his belief that the American Indian represents a state of civilization comparable to that of Europeans during the heroic age.⁶⁹ But he also attempts to justify the common American scorn for the Indian by claiming that those Indians who usually come into contact with the whites have degenerated.⁷⁰ So, too,

⁶⁷ Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 10-12. Richard Lewis and James Sterling had earlier compared the possible benefits of a tour of Italy with those of a tour of America (see Lemay, *Men of Letters*, pp. 128-29, 165, 286). The comparison recalls the Ancients vs. Moderns argument, with Italy standing for the past greatness of the ancients, and with America representing the development of modern civilizations.

⁶⁸ Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 46-47, 51-55.

⁶⁹ 'Perhaps you would not believe that there are in the woods looking-glasses, and paint of every colour, and that the inhabitants take as much pains to adorn their faces and their bodies, to fix their bracelets of silver, and plait their hair, as our forefathers the Picts used to do in the time of the Romans.' England's 'inhabitants, now the favourite nation for arts and commerce, were once painted like our [Indian] neighbours.' Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 222 and 65, respectively.

⁷⁰ Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 105-107, immediately preceding his splendid *ubi sunt* lament for the vanished Indian tribes. And p. 216, where he calls the neighboring Indians a 'degenerated breed.'

Crèvecoeur maintains the traditional American contempt for the frontiersman, and he attempts to justify that contempt by ratifying the truth of the Hobbesian state of nature. Frontiersmen, he says, 'are often in a perfect state of war; that of man against man, sometimes decided by blows, sometimes by means of the law; that of man against every wild inhabitant of these venerable woods, of which they are come to dispossess them. There men appear to be no better than carnivorous animals of a superior rank, living on the flesh of wild animals when they can catch them, and when they are not able, they subsist on grain.' Slightly later, Crèvecoeur portrays the frontiersman in greater detail, calling him 'ferocious, gloomy, unsociable . . . lawless . . . [and] vicious.' Because of these epithets, scholars often cite Crèvecoeur as an opponent of an anachronistic frontier theory.⁷¹

However, Crèvecoeur's narrator, James, adds that 'my father himself was one of that class, but he came upon honest principles and was therefore one of the few who held fast; by good conduct and temperance, he transmitted to me his fair inheritance, when not above one in fourteen of his contemporaries had the same good fortune.' Thus Crèvecoeur justifies the typical American scorn for frontiersmen by the French theories of man's degeneration in America; and, at the same time, he contradicts both the French and the American notions by claiming that some frontiersmen are exceptions. 'Yet you must not imagine that every person who moves back acts upon the same principles or falls into the same degeneracy. Many families carry with them all their decency of conduct, purity of morals, and respect of religion.'⁷² In short, most frontiersmen degenerate; but some, for good reasons, do not.

⁷¹ Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 46, 51–52. Fussell, *Frontier*, p. 8; Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, p. 262.

⁷² Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 47, 54. He plays with the word *degenerate* and contrasts it with the new man, the American. Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 52–55; cf. pp. 42–44. And see above, notes 60 and 70. 'Every thing has tended to *regenerate* them; *new* laws, a *new* mode of living, a *new* social system,' p. 42 (my italics).

And in the final chapter, 'The Distresses of a Frontiers Man,' Crèvecoeur shows how his narrator, by using Lockean notions of value and of property, will manage to exist in the wilderness and among savages without degenerating, because he and his family will respect and accumulate property. They will thus be prepared for a renewed social contract with the civilized world, when a truly civilized world has emerged from the ravages caused by war and slavery.⁷³

Unlike John Filson⁷⁴ and James Fenimore Cooper,⁷⁵ Crèvecoeur creates no heroic frontiersmen, and unlike Cadwallader Colden, he creates no heroic Indians. But his accomplishment is intellectually more significant. According to Crèvecoeur's second geographical scheme, Americans may be divided into three groups: those who live near the sea (some of whom live by fishing and others by trade and commerce), those who live in the middle settlements between the sea and the frontier (and live by farming and pasturage), and those who live 'near the great woods, near the last inhabited districts' (and live by hunting). He uses these categories 'to trace our society from the sea to our woods' (p. 72). Every intelligent reader in 1782 would recognize these categories as the stages of socio-economic evolution—from hunting, to pasturage, to farming, and finally to commerce.⁷⁶ (Incidentally, I suspect that Crèvecoeur joins the 'stages' of pasturage and farming, which were usually considered successive, because Cornelius de Pauw had pointed

⁷³ See n. 58, above; and see Locke, *Two Treatises*, ed. Laslett, p. 319.

⁷⁴ The most detailed work on the significance of Filson's Boone narrative is Slotkin's *Regeneration through Violence*, pp. 268–326. The best edition of Filson's *Kentucke* is still Willard Rouse Jillson's (Louisville: Morton & Co., 1929).

⁷⁵ For Cooper's achievement, see three works by Roy Harvey Pearce, 'The Leatherstocking Tales Re-examined,' *South Atlantic Quarterly* 46(1947):524–36; 'Civilization and Savagism: The World of the Leatherstocking Tales,' *English Institute Essays*, 1949, ed. A. S. Downer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), pp. 92–116; and *The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization* 2d ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), pp. 196–212.

⁷⁶ Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 45–56, 54. On the stage theory, see Teggart, *Theory and Processes*, pp. 92–98; and Bock, *Acceptance*, pp. 75–85.

out that the American Indian lacked the pasturage stage.⁷⁷) Thus Crèvecoeur takes the idea of cultural evolution as it had been applied to the American Indian by previous writers and creates a model for white civilization in America. He fuses the notions of cultural evolution with Montesquieu's environmentalism and with the traditional idea of the westward movement of civilization. The result is a theory of American civilization that has been its fundamental interpretation to our day. And, in this theory, the frontiersman plays the heroic role of the pioneer.

Not only was Crèvecoeur's work itself extraordinarily popular in America, but intellectuals immediately adopted his paradigm. Benjamin Rush did so in a widely reprinted essay by 1785.⁷⁸ Brissot de Warville plagiarized Rush, as well as Crèvecoeur, in 1788.⁷⁹ Fisher Ames, Samuel Williams, Wil-

⁷⁷ Cornelius de Pauw, *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americains*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1768-69), 1:111. Lord Kames also pointed out that the American Indians lacked the pasturage stage. See Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1174), 1:44-51. Although the historians of anthropology usually say that Kames first recognized 'the absence of the herding "stage" for the New World,' he was preceded not only by de Pauw, but also by Adam Smith. See Meek, *Social Science*, pp. 117-18; Kramer, 'Eduard Hahn,' p. 78 (for quotations); and Fred W. Voget, *A History of Ethnology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), p. 290. For an overview of Kames's contributions, see George W. Stocking, Jr., 'Scotland as the Model of Mankind: Lord Kames' Philosophical View of Civilization,' in Timothy H. H. Thoresen, ed., *Toward a Science of Man: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 65-89, esp. pp. 73 ff.

⁷⁸ Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, 2 vols., *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia: 1951), 1:400-407. Butterfield points out that this essay ('An Account of the Progress of Population, Agriculture, Manners, and Government in Pennsylvania') was first written as a letter to Benjamin Vaughan, April 5, 1785 (original in American Philosophical Society; contemporary copy in the Franklin Papers, Yale University); that a revision of it was sent to Thomas Percival on Oct. 26, 1786, who had it read before the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society which later published it in the Society's *Memoirs* 3(1790):183-97; that Rush published it in the *Columbian Magazine* 1(Nov. 1786):117-22, and in his *Collected Essays* (1798; 2d ed., Philadelphia, 1806), pp. 213-25. In addition, Joel Barlow wrote in 1792 that he had seen this essay often in the American periodicals (see n. 79).

⁷⁹ Jacques Pierre Brissot de Warville, *New Travels in the United States of America 1788*, ed. Durand Echeverria (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 264-73. Joel Barlow noted in his edition (London: Joran, 1792) 1:380-31n, that he had 'seen this fanciful description many times published in America.' Evidently Barlow regarded Rush's account and its underlying notion as an absurd distortion. He commented, 'Credulity is indeed a less fault in a traveller than prejudice; but it

liam Tudor, and Frances Wright are among the American and English observers who adopted Crèvecoeur's paradigm.⁸⁰ Thomas Jefferson echoed it in his writings from 1785 onward, and in 1824 he concisely stated (using language that echoed Crèvecoeur) America's geographical recapitulation of the cultural evolution of Western society:

Let a philosophic observer commence a journey from the savages of the Rocky Mountains, eastwardly towards our sea-coast. There he would observe in the earliest stage of association living under no law but that of nature, subscribing [subsisting?] and covering themselves with the flesh and skins of wild beasts. He would next find those on our frontiers in the pastoral state, raising domestic animals to supply the defects of hunting. Then succeed our own semi-barbarous citizens, the pioneers of the advance of civilization, and so in his progress he would meet the gradual shades of improving man until he would reach his, as yet, most improved state in our seaport towns. This, in fact, is equivalent to a survey, in time, of the progress of man from the infancy of creation to the present day.⁸¹

ought, however, to be corrected. Accounts like this put one in mind of Dr. Franklin's romance of *Mary Baker*, so religiously believed and copied by the Abbé Raynal, in his *History of the Two Indies*.'

⁸⁰ Fisher Ames, 'American Literature,' *Works*, ed. Seth Ames (Boston, 1854), 2:484; Samuel Williams, *Natural and Civil History of Vermont* (Burlington, Vt., 1809), 1:226-36; William Tudor, Jr., 'An Address Delivered to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Their Annual Meeting at Cambridge,' *North American Review*, 2(Nov. 1815):13-32, esp. 19 (the Indians 'possessed so many traits in common with some of the nations of antiquity, that they perhaps exhibit the counterpart of what the Greeks were in the heroic ages, and particularly the Spartans during the vigour of their institutions'); Frances Wright, *Views of Society and Manners in America*, ed. Paul R. Baker (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 205-206.

⁸¹ Jefferson to the Marquis de Chastellux, June 7, 1785; and to Ezra Stiles, Sept. 1, 1786; *Papers*, 8:184-86; 19:316. The long quotation is from Jefferson to William Ludlow, Sept. 6, 1824. H. A. Washington, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington: Taylor and Maury, 1854), 7:377. Charles A. and Mary R. Beard called attention to this passage in *The American Spirit: A Study of the Idea of Civilization in the United States* (vol. 4 of *The Rise of American Civilization*) (New York: Macmillan, 1942), pp. 104-105, and wrote that Jefferson's source for the stage theory of man was Condorcet's *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain* (Paris, 1795). They thus credited Jefferson with introducing the stage theory and the geographical recapitulation theory into American thought. Although Henry Nash Smith found several versions of the stage theory and of the geographical recapitulation theory earlier than Jefferson's letter of 1824, he follows the Beards in believing that Con-

In connection with my earlier discussion of the implications of diction for the perception of the frontiersman, Jefferson's words are highly significant: 'Our own semi-barbarous citizens, the pioneers of the advance of civilization.' When considered simply by themselves, Jefferson's frontiersmen are 'semi-barbarous citizens'; but when considered in their relationship to the geographical, social, and political development of America, they stand revealed as 'the pioneers of the advance of civilization.' The stage theory of civilization transforms Jefferson's 'semi-barbarians' into 'pioneers of the advance of civilization.' The stage theory also underlies James Fenimore Cooper's attitudes toward the frontier and the frontiersman. Cooper's best brief presentation of his philosophy of civilization (in the opening of *The Prairie's* sixth chapter) is fundamentally merely another example of Crèvecoeur's geographical recapitulation theory.⁸²

Henry Nash Smith has pointed out that Turner's frontier thesis is self-contradictory, for it both idealizes the vanishing

dorcet's book of 1795, 'which was immediately translated into English and had two editions in the United States,' was especially important in the formulation of this dominant theory of American civilization. Smith, *Virgin Land*, pp. 254-55. Condorcet's supposed influence is also cited by Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America*, pp. 155-56; by Edwin Fussell, *Frontier*, pp. 14-15, 46-47n; and by E. N. Feltskog, in his edition of Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp. 43a, n. 5 on p. 498, and n. 13 on p. 570. Of these scholars, only Pearce demonstrates an awareness that theories of social evolution existed anywhere in the eighteenth century other than in the French tradition; and all of them overlooked the fact and the significance of Crèvecoeur's precedent. By the mid-nineteenth century, the stage theory of civilization was sometimes used as the basis for belief in mankind. In his lecture on 'Society and Civilizations' delivered in 1840 and 1841 and published in the *American Whig Review* 2(1845):80-89, John Quincy Adams combined the stage theory of man's socioeconomic development, a biblical interpretation of man's monogenism, the developing equality of the role of women, and his belief in man's innate principle of progressive improvement. The result is an impressive credo, reflecting his reading of Mandeville, Montesquieu, and the Scotch philosophers, especially Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, as well as the influence of his proto-feminist mother, Abigail (Smith) Adams. But one scholar has wittily ridiculed it, and, citing the Beards, Smith, and Pearce, has attributed Adams's credo to a combination of Condorcet and bibliolatry. See Wendell Glick, 'The Best Possible World of John Quincy Adams,' *New England Quarterly* 37(1964):3-17.

⁸² Henry Nash Smith noted the similarity between Cooper's theory of civilization in America and Jefferson's geographical recapitulation theory in *Virgin Land*, pp. 256-57.

frontier and celebrates the 'higher stage' of civilization which the disappearance of the frontier was making possible. But the inconsistency is not Turner's alone. The two ideas are opposing sides of the same coin. It is the stage theory of civilization which defines the frontier as a stage. Without the scheme—and the consciousness—of the entire stage theory, the idea of the frontier stage would not exist. The stage theory assures us that the frontier stage will and must be superseded. The idea of the frontier necessarily includes the idea of its transience. The idea of the frontier, even when the frontier existed, must, therefore, be fraught with nostalgia and sentimentality.

The frontier is also synonymous (by the doctrines of the comparative method and the stage theory) with a past age of greatness—the heroic age, supposedly the time of literature's greatest flourishing. According to a theory increasingly popular throughout the eighteenth century, the heroic age itself was responsible for the genius of Homer's poetry and for the excellence of the Old Testament writers. As Ernest Renan wrote in the nineteenth century, 'it is not Homer who is beautiful, but Homeric life, the phase in the existence of humanity described by Homer.' The language of the heroic age was commonly thought in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to be the greatest vehicle for poetry. The Reverend Nicholas Collin, in his *Philological View of Some Very Ancient Words in Several Languages* (Philadelphia, 1798), claimed that the languages of 'illiterate modern nations merit great attention, not only for their own qualities and mutual affinities, but also for the cognition they may have with ancient and modern civilized nations: Some scalping heroes of America may be kinsmen of Alexander, Caesar, and the proudest conquerors of Europe; as they probably are of Tamerlan and Ogus Chan.'⁸³ So the writers

⁸³ Smith, *Virgin Land*, pp. 299–301. In addition to n. 56 above, see Donald M. Foerster, *Homer in English Criticism* (1947; rpt., n.p.: Archon Books, 1969), passim. The Renan quotation (1852) is in Foerster, *Homer*, p. 1. For the concept of ethnographic salvage, see Jacob W. Gruber, 'Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology,' *American Anthropologist* 72(1970):1289–99. Collin, *Philological View*, p. 4.

of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America (like the anthropologists of nineteenth- and twentieth-century America who were, rightly, concerned with ethnographic salvage) commonly thought that they had a last opportunity to create and record life as it existed in the heroic age of the frontier. And part of the attraction of the frontier was that it would soon be gone, perhaps for the last time in the history of the world. Turner's inconsistencies are similar to those of Crèvecoeur, Jefferson, and Cooper, among others; for subscription to belief in the stage theory typically involves some degree of idealization of the heroic/frontier age, as well as some degree of celebration of the later stages in the history of mankind.

So long as Indian acculturation represented a fearsome prospect, the frontiersman could only be regarded with horror. Contrast the attitudes expressed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (which I began by citing) to that of Washington Irving:

The wandering whites who mingle for any length of time with the savages, have invariably a proneness to adopt savage habits; but none more so than the free trappers. It is a matter of vanity and ambition with them to discard every thing that may bear the stamp of civilized life, and to adopt the manners, habits, dress, gesture, and even walk of the Indian. You cannot pay a free trapper a greater compliment, than to persuade him you have mistaken him for an Indian brave; and, in truth, the counterfeit is complete.⁸⁴

Obviously, Indian acculturation is no longer fearful, even to such an Anglophile and aristocratic easterner as Irving. Four reasons especially underlie this change. First, Indian acculturation no longer literally or symbolically threatened white society's dominance or survival in America.⁸⁵ Second, the Indian

⁸⁴ Washington Irving, *Adventures of Capt. Bonneville*, ed. Edgeley W. Todd (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 69.

⁸⁵ Although Indian population statistics are only based on hypotheses, it is obvious that whites were overwhelmingly outnumbered by Indians in what is now the United

had become a patriotic symbol of white Americans. Of course, even in the Renaissance, the Indian queen symbolized America on world maps,⁸⁶ but by the early eighteenth century white Americans had adopted an Indian persona for English audiences, as the prefaces to Cotton Mather's *Magnalia*⁸⁷ and to Robert Beverley's *History of Virginia* prove.⁸⁸ Further, the pre-Revolutionary patriots adopting the patron saint of St.

States east of the Mississippi throughout the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth centuries. See Jennings, *Invasion of America*, pp. 16–20. It also seems to me significant that nostalgia for the vanishing Indian first appears at length in Crèvecoeur's *Letters* (1782), pp. 107–108; that Logan's speech was featured in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), pp. 63, 226–58, esp. p. 252; that Logan's speech enjoyed a great vogue in America (see Edward D. Seeber, 'Critical Views on Logan's Speech,' *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 60(1947):130–46); and that the sentimental 'Death Songs' of the Indian were most popular in the nineteenth century. Frank Elgar Farly, 'The Dying Indian,' *Anniversary Papers by Colleagues and Pupils of George Lyman Kittredge* (Boston: Guinn & Co., 1913), pp. 215–60; and Henry B. Jones, 'The Death Song of the "Noble Savage": A Study in the Idealization of the American Indian,' Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1924.

⁸⁶ Clare Le Corbeiller, 'Miss America and Her Sisters: Personifications of the Four Parts of the World,' *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 19(1961):209–223, discusses the personification in a variety of art forms. Hugh Honour has remarked, 'From the 1570s to the early nineteenth century, a woman decked in feathers symbolized the continent in innumerable allegorical paintings and sculptures, not to mention the title-pages of books and other prints, as well as decorations on ceramics, glass, silver, furniture, and textiles.' Honour, *The European Vision of America* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975), p. 4. See also three articles by E. McClung Fleming, 'From Indian Princess to Greek Goddess: The American Image, 1783–1815,' *Winterthur Portfolio* 3(1967):37–66; 'The American Image as Indian Princess 1765–1783,' *ibid.*, 2(1965):65–81; and 'Symbols of the United States: From Indian Queen to Uncle Sam,' in Ray B. Browne et al., eds., *Frontiers of American Culture*, Purdue University Studies (n.p., 1968), pp. 1–24.

⁸⁷ When Cotton Mather, in the general introduction to the *Magnalia*, referred to himself as 'one poor feeble *American*,' he was calling himself an Indian, i.e., he was modestly posing as a provincial. This usage (1702) is usually—but, I believe, mistakenly—supposed to be the earliest example of the modern meaning of *American*, as a Caucasian born in what is now the United States. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Dictionary of American English*, and *Dictionary of Americanisms*, s.v. *American*. Kenneth B. Murdock, ed., Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 1:105.

⁸⁸ In his preface to the *History*, Robert Beverley writes, 'I am an *Indian*, and don't pretend to be exact in my Language' (p. 9). See Theodore Hornberger, 'A Note on Eighteenth-Century American Prose Style,' *American Literature* 19(1938):77–78, and Robert D. Arner, 'The Quest for Freedom: Style and Meaning in Robert Beverley's *History and Present State of Virginia*,' *Southern Literature Journal* 8, pt. 2(1976):79–98, both of whom consider the implications of the supposed American provinciality.

Tammany⁸⁹ and the raiders at the Boston Tea Party disguising themselves as Indians are among the evidences that the Indian had become a symbolic assertion of American identity and patriotism. Third, the Indian was identified with nature. As the Romantic movement gained vogue, this identification made the Indian automatically good. To be sure, Robert Beverley⁹⁰ and Richard Lewis⁹¹ early in the eighteenth century and Philip Freneau⁹² during the Revolutionary period had exploited the relationship, but none of these early writers could depend on his audience's either automatically making the association or automatically thinking that the association testified to the Indian's goodness.⁹³ And fourth, and most important, the Indian had come to be identified not only as the necessary precursor of the civilized condition, but as himself existing in and representing the heroic stage of civilization.⁹⁴ This is different from being a noble savage, which may be defined as the Indian's

⁸⁹ In a letter dated Annapolis, Dec. 24, 1771 (but not published until 1792), William Eddis, *Letters from America . . . 1769 to 1777*, ed. Aubrey C. Land (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 59, described the festivities that took place on May 1, 'Saint Tamina's day.' Two broadsides record the Philadelphia celebrations on May 1, 1773 (Evans nos. 42458 and 42516). *The Fall of British Tyranny, or American Liberty Triumphant* (Philadelphia, 1776) contains a song for St. Tammany's Day. See Norman Philbrick, ed., *Trumpets Sounding: Propaganda Plays of the American Revolution* (New York: B. Blom, 1972), pp. 99-100.

⁹⁰ See Wilbur R. Jacobs, 'Robert Beverley: Colonial Ecologist and Indian Lover,' in J. A. Leo Lemay, ed., *Essays in Early Virginia Literature Honoring Richard Beale Davis* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), pp. 91-99.

⁹¹ See Lemay, *Men of Letters*, pp. 153-57, for Beverley's as well as Lewis's use of the Indian.

⁹² Lewis Leary, *That Rascal Freneau: A Study in Literary Failure* ([New Brunswick]: Rutgers University Press, 1941), discusses Freneau's various 'Indian' writings, e.g., 'The Prophecy of King Tammany' (1782), 'The Dying Indian; or the Last Words of Shalum' (1784), 'The Indian Student' (1787), 'The Indian Burying Ground' (1787), and the Tomo Cheeki essays.

⁹³ Perry Miller has shown that by the end of the first third of the nineteenth century, the association was automatic. See 'The Romantic Dilemma in American Nationalism and the Concept of Nature,' *Harvard Theological Review* 48(1955):239-53.

⁹⁴ The 'heroic' age is that time before the 'historic.' Literary theory from the Renaissance to the twentieth century commonly held that the 'heroic' age was the greatest age of poetry and of oratory. (See above, n. 56.)

representing the essential human condition.⁹⁵ With the possible exceptions of John Lawson (who was later tortured to death by Indians), Robert Beverley, and Benjamin Franklin⁹⁶ (who certainly did not believe in the idea), no colonial American ever fully expressed the noble savage concept.

Finally, I should note that two important elements in the nineteenth-century view of the frontiersman are not in Crèvecoeur. First, the frontiersman as a nostalgic portrayal of the past. Although Crèvecoeur writes that splendid *ubi sunt* lament for the vanishing American Indian,⁹⁷ it was left to later writers, such as James Fenimore Cooper, to transfer this nostalgia to the frontiersman.⁹⁸ And second, Crèvecoeur's frontiersmen do not sentimentally identify with nature. His persona James, the Quaker farmer, is the first thorough man of feeling in American literature,⁹⁹ and James identifies with and lives in harmony

⁹⁵ The *locus classicus* for the idea of the noble savage—Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada*, Part I, Act I, scene 1—reveals that the noble savage is equated with the 'natural' man: 'I am as free as Nature first made man, / Ere the base laws of servitude began, / When wild in woods the noble savage ran.' See Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *The Noble Savage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 22; R. S. Crane, review of C. B. Tinker, *Nature's Simple Plan*, in *Modern Language Notes* 39(1924): 295n; and especially John W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 4-6.

⁹⁶ See A. L. Diket, 'The Noble Savage Convention as Epitomized in John Lawson's *A New Voyage to Carolina*,' *North Carolina Historical Review* 43(1966):413-29. Jacobs, 'Robert Beverley,' pp. 94-97. And for Franklin, see his 'Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America,' *Writings*, ed. Smyth, 10:97-105. Actually, I suspect that most of the noble savage propaganda written by colonials was simply veiled deistic propaganda. A. O. Aldridge, 'Franklin's Deistical Indians,' *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 94(1950):398-410, has shown in detail how Franklin used the noble savage tradition for deistic propaganda.

⁹⁷ Crèvecoeur, pp. 102-104. Washington Irving further sentimentalizes the motif in his 'Traits of Indian Character' and 'Philip of Pokanoket,' both first published in the *Analectic Magazine* 3(1814):145-56, 502-515, and included in *The Sketch Book* (London: Murray, 1820).

⁹⁸ Most notably in the character of Natty Bumppo or Leatherstocking. The sentimentalization of Daniel Boone comes after the appearance of Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1823).

⁹⁹ Mildred Davis Doyle has examined the 'Sentimentalism in American Periodicals, 1741-1800,' Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1941. See also Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940), and 'Elements of Sensibility in *The Massachusetts Magazine*,' *American Literature* 1(1929):286-96.

with nature.¹⁰⁰ But not Crèvecoeur's frontiersmen. This element too was left to later writers to add. Indeed, Cooper makes such feeling his simple test for discriminating the bad frontiersmen (who needlessly kill animals and waste nature) from the good frontiersmen (who hold that all life and nature itself is precious, even sacred).¹⁰¹ But, of course, all this is simply to say that Crèvecoeur does not feature an individual frontiersman in the *Letters*.

Crèvecoeur's achievement, however, is remarkable. He creates the all-important belief in the frontiersman as existing in the heroic stage of society; he first views the frontiersman as the pioneer, the necessary first step, of civilization; and he invents an overall scheme of the development of American civilization that emphasizes the heroic role of the frontiersman and of the frontier. These disparate attitudes existed about the American Indian and about the conjectural history of civilization in the mid-eighteenth century. And Crèvecoeur, in his brilliant synthesis of Enlightenment thought, transfers them to the frontiersman, within the context of a patriotic, even promotional, assessment of American civilization. Thereby he forces upon his successors who adopt his paradigm of American civilization the intellectual necessity of perceiving the frontiersman's role as heroic.

¹⁰⁰ Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, p. 23: 'There is not an operation belonging to it [farming] in which I do not find some food for useful reflections. This is the reason, I suppose, that when you were here, you used, in your refined style, to denominate me the farmer of feelings.' And on p. 24, James's emotions 'thrill in my heart and often overflow in involuntary tears.' Additional sentimental passages are on pp. 15, 60, 68, 199, and 201.

¹⁰¹ See the discussion between the brutish Hurry Harry and Leatherstocking in chap. 3 of *The Deerslayer*.

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