

CHAPTER V

THE METAPHYSICS OF CIVILIZATION: "THE RED RACE ON OUR BORDERS"

Next to the case of the black race within our bosom, that of the red on our borders is the problem most baffling to the policy of our country.

—James Madison

No, no; bloodshed and warfare are not my real gifts, but peace and mercy. Still, I must face the enemy as well as another, and as for a Mingo, I look upon him as a man looks on a snake—a creatur' to be put beneath the heel, whenever a fitting occasion offers.

—Natty Bumppo,
in James Fenimore Cooper,
The Pathfinder

In 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville witnessed a "solemn spectacle" which would never fade from his memory—the arrival in Memphis of a band of Choctaws as they migrated west beyond the Mississippi River. "It was then the middle of winter," he reported, "and the cold was unusually severe; the snow had frozen hard upon the ground, and the river was drifting huge masses of ice. The Indians had their families with them, and they brought in their train the wounded and the sick, with children newly born and old men upon the verge of death." There, on the bank of the river, could be seen in brutal reality the epic process under way in America—the movement of European civilization westward. "Three or four thousand soldiers

drive before them the wandering races of the aborigines; these are followed by the pioneers, who pierce the woods, scare off the beasts of prey, explore the courses of the inland streams, and make ready the triumphal march of civilization across the desert." What struck Tocqueville was how whites, in their expansion westward, were able to deprive Indians of their rights and exterminate them "with singular felicity, tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood, and without violating a single great principle of morality in the eyes of the world." Indeed, he remarked, it was impossible to destroy men, with "more respect for the laws of humanity."¹

An Age of Confidence

Confidence, as Herman Melville observed in his novel *The Confidence-Man*, was one of the buoyant forces in American society during the era of the Market Revolution—"the indispensable basis of all sorts of business transactions" without which "commerce between man and man" would, like "a watch," run down and stop. Confidence in business and also in society generally involved both the need for moral self-assurance and the use of disguises. Like Melville's characters on board the steamboat *Fidèle*, white Americans had to have moral faith in themselves—to be assured they were innocent of brutality and sin even if they had to tell themselves they were so. And like Melville's confidence-man with his myriad of roles and masks, they employed disguises in their social and political relationships. Role-playing and the use of masks, David Brion Davis has noted, was widespread in Jacksonian society, where "individual success depended on effective presentation of self and on convincing definitions of new situations." Nowhere did whites demonstrate the importance of confidence as moral self-assurance and deception, especially self-deception, more than in their conduct toward Indians. In the removal and extermination of Indians, they were able to admire the Indian-killer and elevate hatred for the Indian into a morality—an awesome achievement which Melville analyzed in his chapters on the "metaphysics of Indian-hating."²

In this story, Melville described how disguises could be used to uncover rather than shroud reality. His confidence-man poses as a cosmopolitan gentleman in order to expose the contradictions of Indian-hating. On the deck of the *Fidèle*, a symbol of the Market Revolution, he meets a westerner who offers to tell a story about Colonel John Moredock, an Indian-hater. Though the cosmopolitan gentleman appears to be merely an interested listener, he is actually preparing to demolish the westerner's credibility in a brilliant exercise in epistemology. Even the westerner's teeth do not

escape his critical scrutiny. "And though his teeth were singularly good," the confidence-man alias cosmopolitan gentleman remarks to himself, "those same ungracious ones might have hinted that they were too good to be true; or rather, were not so good as they might be; since the best false teeth are those made with at least two or three blemishes, the more to look like life." The examination of the westerner's teeth leads the cosmopolitan gentleman to ask implicitly: What is reality? Meanwhile he listens intently as the westerner tells him about Colonel Moredock.

Indian-hating, the westerner says, is "no monopoly" of Colonel Moredock but "a passion, in one form or other, and to a degree, greater or less, largely shared among the class to which he belonged." A backwoodsman, Moredock is "self-willed," "self-reliant," and "lonely," not merely content to be alone but "anxious" to be by himself. He has a "private passion" stemming from an unforgettable outrage: His mother had been slain by Indians. The tragedy has turned him into an avenger and his rage is raised to a religious zeal. He takes a "vow," settles his "temporal affairs," and has the "solemnity" of a "monk." The armed party he leads to punish the Indians are pledged to serve him for "forty days." Moredock, in short, is a pious ascetic, seeking violent revenge, fully aware that Indian-hating requires "the renunciation of ambition, with its objects—the pomps and glories of the world. . . ." Thus, Indian-hating, the westerner explains, is "not wholly without the efficacy of a devout sentiment."

Moredock's "private passion" demands that he hate and kill Indians, not only the ones responsible for his mother's death but all Indians, the westerner continues. His entire body/self is organized to destroy: His nerves are "electric wires—sensitive, but steel," his "finger like a trigger." He seldom stirs without his rifle, almost as if the weapon were a part of his body. A superb athlete and marksman, he is a master of woodland cunning, skilled in the art of tracking Indians, "ever on the noiseless trail; cool, collected, patient; less seen than felt; snuffing, smelling—a Leather-stocking Nemesis."

A killer, Moredock is, nonetheless, an example of "something apparently self-contradicting," the westerner adds. He and "nearly all Indian-haters have at bottom loving hearts." Moredock himself is "not without humane feelings"—"no cold husband or colder father, he." Indeed, with nobody, "Indians excepted," does he conduct himself other than in a courteous manner. Moredock is also greatly respected in white society; "famous" in his time, he is even pressed to become a candidate for governor of Illinois. The high regard Moredock enjoys is well deserved, for he has opened the West for settlement and American white progress, serving selflessly as the "captain in the vanguard of conquering civilization" and as the "Path-

finder, provider of security to those who come after him." After the westerner completes his story, the cosmopolitan gentleman, wondering how a monomaniac killer could be a good father and an esteemed citizen and how hatred for Indians could be a metaphysics for civilization, asks skeptically: "If the man of hate, how could John Moredock be also the man of love?"³

What Melville was observing here, through the confidence-man, was the metaphysics of Indian-hating. His westerner is not merely telling an interesting story about Colonel John Moredock: He is also offering a metaphysical justification for the destruction of Indians. While Melville provided a much-needed criticism of Indian-hating, he missed an opportunity to reveal an even more complex dimension to this phenomenon. Separating the westerner from Colonel Moredock, Melville failed to note a perverse possibility—the combination of both the metaphysician and the Indian-hater in the same person. Such an integration occurred in reality and could be found in the life of Lewis Cass.

A colonel under General William Henry Harrison during the War of 1812, Governor of Michigan Territory from 1813 to 1831, and Secretary of War under President Andrew Jackson, Cass led troops in battles against Indians, concluded treaties with them, and helped to remove them beyond the Mississippi River. He also articulated a metaphysics for his actions: While he was governor, Cass wrote an essay on "Policy and Practice of the United States and Great Britain in their Treatment of Indians," published in the *North American Review* in 1827; and shortly before he became Secretary of War, he wrote another essay, succinctly titled, "Removal of the Indians."

The presence of Indians in nineteenth-century America, for Cass, was a "moral phenomenon." They had been in contact with whites and civilization for two centuries, and yet they had not advanced in their "moral qualities." Cass found this condition puzzling. "A principle of progressive improvement seems almost inherent in human nature," he wrote. "Communities of men, as well as individuals, are stimulated by a desire to meliorate their condition." "Meliorate" had a republican and Jacksonian meaning for Cass: to strive "in the career of life to acquire riches, or honor, or power, or some other object. . . ." But there was

little of all this in the constitution of our savages. Like the bear, and deer, and buffalo of his own forests, an Indian lives as his father lived, and dies as his father died. He never attempts to imitate the arts of his civilized neighbors. His life passes away in a succession of listless indolence, and of vigorous exertion to provide for his animal wants, or to gratify his baleful passions. . . . Efforts . . . have not been wanting to teach and reclaim him. But he is perhaps destined to disappear with the forests. . . .

The forests, Cass continued, could not be abandoned to "hopeless sterility," but must give way to the "march of cultivation and improvement."⁴

Thus, as it turned out, Cass—a one-time Colonel Moredock or Indian-fighter—had become a westerner or metaphysician of Indian-hating. What happened to Cass suggests the complex processes at work in Indian-white relations during the age of the Market Revolution. And like Melville's confidence-man, we realize the need to examine more closely and critically the metaphysics of Indian-hating.

But, as we turn to a scrutiny of Robert Montgomery Bird and Andrew Jackson, we quickly discover how difficult is our task and how puzzling is reality. The problem is an epistemological one. Bird and Jackson were disguise artists; they used the techniques of confidence to cover up rather than to expose the crimes and moral absurdities of the market society. As the author of the popular Indian-hating novel, *Nick of the Woods, or the Jibbenainosay*, published in 1837, Bird presented a moral justification for the extermination of Indians. As the conqueror of the Creeks in the War of 1813-14 and as the President of the United States responsible for Indian removal, Jackson developed a philosophical explanation which transformed Indian deaths into moral inevitability. In their exercise of confidence—the use of disguises in the quest for moral self-assurance—both men had formulated a metaphysics of Indian-hating that sprang from as well as sustained the material base of the Market Revolution.

Jibbenainosay: Indian-Hating in Fantasy

As a metaphysician of Indian-hating, Bird was more ingenious than Melville's westerner. In *Nick of the Woods*, published during the era of Indian removal and reprinted more than twenty-one times, he justified as well as condemned the violence and hate whites were directing against Indians. How this contradiction developed in Bird is revealed in an examination of his private letters, childhood writings, later unpublished fictional works, and the novel itself. In reality, Bird was hardly the simple anti-Indian writer he appeared to have been and even thought he was. Indeed, in his effort to degrade Indians, Bird used such a multitude of masks and deceptions that he became involved in an exercise in confidence more subtle and bizarre than he himself may have fully realized.⁵

Actually Bird did not grow up on the frontier, and his contact with the wilderness and Indians was extremely limited. He was born in New Castle, Delaware, in 1806, into a family which had lived on the eastern seaboard and in settled society for generations. A Whig, Bird identified with the

gentility and order of an established social hierarchy, and felt uncomfortable in the society of the Market Revolution, where the pursuit of money and social mobility seemed to have possessed Americans. Financially unsuccessful as a doctor in Philadelphia and uncertain about medicine as a career, he gave his practice up after one year and decided to become a novelist and playwright—a decision which would lead him to reflect on the meaning of the Market Revolution and its impact on white as well as Indian society.

Writing, for Bird, was a way out of the "distasteful" world of business which prevailed in the new market society. He did not have, his wife later reported, "the American propensity and talent for making money." His "soul full of poetry" and his "brain stored with book-learning," he was "ignorant as a child or a woman of all business matters." Still, as a writer, Bird discovered he had not freed himself from the market, and found himself unhappily dependent on profit-oriented publishers. He was told it was necessary for an author to "sacrifice" his first book and give it to the publisher for "nothing." And he complained: "This seems to be a pretty state of things indeed, that an author should give a bookseller one book for the privilege of selling him a second. . . ." Regretting his "misfortune of being unknown," Bird viewed the market as a pernicious influence on literature and American letters in general.⁶

As a novelist in a society of enterprise, Bird believed the American writer had to overcome certain literary problems or "great disadvantages": Americans were a people without "romance," "traditions," and "antique associations," and their history was "short, meager & monotonous." They lacked the feudal ambience of the Old World where a writer could find "the truest & most fruitful gardens of romance" and the inspiration of "lofty feelings and chivalrous sentiments." In the heroes of European literature, he remarked enviously, "the human passions had their fullest sway . . . more romantically than will ever a people engaged in the levelling & unenthusiastic bustle of gain. Where shall the American novelist look for his hero?" Bird wanted America to have her own literature and her own heroes. But, in his view, Americans were in a "state of mental vassalage to foreigners. . . . Our opinions, our sentiments, our tastes, all come to us from abroad. Who, then, is to remind us of the interests and duties of Americans?" Like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne, Bird had delineated one of the vexing predicaments of the American writer. He did not think America provided the materials he needed as a novelist, for he did not want to write about American enterprise—the unheroic and crass making of money.⁷ Yet he was determined to throw off America's vassalage to Europe and help create a truly national literature.

In his search for a way out of this dilemma, Bird noted the significance of the Indian in the making of an American nationality and a national literature. If Americans were to be original and assert their cultural independence from Europe, he insisted, they must depend on America rather than Europe for the sources of their cultural identity. This independence should be expressed even in the names Americans gave to their villages and towns. "The hankering after the vanities of the old world," Bird wrote, "is in no way so ridiculously manifested, as in the christening of our new villages. What despicable folly it is to steal the names of the remarkable cities of ancient & modern Europe, & apply them to the several clusters of taverns, smithies, & variety stores which compose our infant hamlets." Americans should not "steal" names from Europe; rather they should take them from "the peculiar & sonorous titles which the aborigines were wont to apply to some spot in the neighborhood." Indeed, Bird added, many of the Indian names were "infinitely more beautiful than the sweetest" that could be found in any European gazetteer.⁸ The Indian, for Bird, offered white Americans a means to realize their own national identity.

Yet, almost like a plot out of a Hawthorne novel, this creation of a white American nationality had its origins in greed and sin: The very use of Indian names for white villages and towns involved the destruction of Indians and seizure of their lands. Bird himself recognized this reality and felt a sense of guilt. Travelling through the South and Southwest in 1833, he witnessed the injustices whites had committed against Indians. On April 23, he wrote in his diary after visiting Macon, Georgia: "Poor Cherokees your Destiny is known—But Georgia, though she strike ye from the face of the Earth, yet has she permitted your name to rest on a humble flower. But while that flower keeps for your memory the pity & admiration of posterity, what a stench of shame shall be sent up by the foul rank weeds that have overgrown the fields of your oppressor." Bird was referring to the flower named the "Cherokee Rose." Two weeks later, after an encounter with a Creek, Bird wrote to his fiancée Mary Mayer:

Even the deserts here blossom like the rose; and the sterile woodlands, which the hand of oppression is this moment wresting from the poor Creeks, are all full of beauty. . . . Talking of Creeks, I saw one fellow, one day, stalking near some wigwams, who was really as noble in figure and carriage, and as picturesque in costume, as I have imagined a wild man to be. . . . As this creature approached me with the strut and port of a god, his head elevated, his eyes neither seeking nor shunning me, but shining now to the right and now to the left, as if he felt himself the guardian spirit of his tribe . . . and had nothing to do with looking after white men—it struck me there was something in his carriage very like such

a swagger of self-esteem. . . . I had saluted the gentleman, and received no other return than a most magnificent and impartial grunt. . . . I was so tickled at his vainglory that I burst into a laugh. This insult, for which I was instantly sorry—for his pride was the only possession of which my countrymen had not robbed him—stung him. He halted, wheeled half around, falling into an attitude really majestic and Apollo-like, and gave me a look of such fierce and fiery intensity that I began to wish I had my pistols about me.

Several days later, in a letter to a friend, Bird again lamented: "Then thought I, in the solitude of the pine barrens of Georgia, I shall feel very poetical; and among the Muscogee Groves, I shall see wandering red men, and verify old visions of romance. . . . I saw proud warriors; but they always came to sell green strawberries, and beg tobacco."⁹ The very materials Bird needed as a writer and as a maker of a national culture were derived from what he regarded as robbery and murder.

Actually the Indian had existed in Bird's consciousness long before he developed an interest in creating a national literature and before he had met Indians in the South. As a boy, he had fantasized about them in a short story written in his school composition book. In "The White-Washed Cottage of the Susquehanna, an Indian Story," a young white boy named Charley Merton and his family are living in peace and harmony in a cottage on the bank of the Susquehanna River. One day they are forced to flee to the blockhouse in town in order to avoid an Indian attack; but they are ambushed, and all the whites, except Charley and his mother, are killed. Their captor is a "frightful savage" chief, who to their surprise, speaks French. Charley's mother speaks to Wingenund in French and learns that his father was a Frenchman and his mother an Indian. "Oh sir," she asks, "why did you murder my husband then?" And the chief replies: "Oh you forget that I am no Frenchman, I am an Indian. Though my Father was a Frenchman, my mother was an Indian, and I am bound to revenge the injuries done upon her countrymen and mine." Charley and his mother are taken to the Indian village, where Wingenund treats them kindly. But they find out from him that a rival chief will soon be returning with his warriors, and that their lives will be in danger. Taking a canoe, Charley and his mother secretly paddle away. Their escape causes great commotion in the village; but Wingenund, discovering his canoe is missing, says nothing, allowing them to escape. They return to their cottage and find Charley's father alive; the blows he had received during the ambush had not been fatal. Thus the family is joyously reunited. Years later, Charley is sitting on his porch, and an Indian approaches him. "Votre nom, n'est ça pas Charlie M.?" the Indian asks. Charley and his parents excitedly welcome Winge-

nund, begging him to "live with them and be a white man." The chief declines their offer, gives Charley a handsome bow and quiver, and departs, loaded with presents they had given him.¹⁰

In this amazing story, written during Bird's childhood, the Indians are viewed as sources of great terror: They are disrupters of peace and harmony, "frightful savages," and killers of whites. Yet, they are also described sympathetically: Wingenund is a kind and considerate person, and the anger he feels springs from the injuries whites had inflicted upon Indians. The final episode of the fantasy indicates the possible choices the young Bird thought the Indian possessed: He could live with whites and become "a white man," or he could remain in the wilderness. Thus Charley and his parents appear to have survived the traumatic experience of Indian violence emotionally unscarred: Hate for the Indian and an impulsive rage for revenge do not seem to possess or deform them.

Many years after he had written the story about Charley, Bird returned to the theme of Indian violence and its psychological effect on whites. In "Awossagame," an unpublished story probably drafted after his visit to the South in the 1830s, Bird located Indian-white conflict in New England during colonial times and explicitly acknowledged the wrongs whites had committed against Indians. "Our forefathers of New England were strange people," Bird wrote at the beginning of his narrative. "They came, as homeless and landless exiles, among a rude but not inhospitable ~~people~~ race, whom after a few years they did not scruple to dispossess of their ~~lands~~ homes & possessions." Here, in his description of the initial encounter between whites and Indians in New England, was the language Bird had used to chastise whites in Georgia for their crimes against Indians.

In "Awossagame," Bird focused on John Gilbert, a harsh magistrate and fanatical Indian-hater. A onetime papist, he had been converted to "the true faith" and was now "foremost in the persecution of papists, quakers, and anabaptists." Like Charley's family, Gilbert had been the victim of Indian violence: His wife and two daughters had been slain during an attack on their village. The "misfortune" had frozen the "gentler feelings of his heart. . . . He had no family—he was alone in the world." Interpreting the slaying as God's vengeance against him for his sinful idolatry, Gilbert turned away from Catholicism and developed a fierce hatred for Indians. The fury of his hate is directed against an Indian girl, Awossagame, who is on trial for witchcraft. Magistrate Gilbert pours his venom on her, calling her "a lewd & devilish pagan," a member of an "accursed race," and a "loose savage." Her defender, Elliot Sherwyn, insists she is innocent, and Gilbert replies sharply: "Is she not an Indian?" He then breaks into an uncontrollable "expression of rancorous and malignant hate." During the

trial, the girl is ordered to bare her arm in order to reveal an imprint of the "devil's mark." Suddenly Gilbert recognizes the popish symbol he himself had placed upon one of his daughters many years ago and rushes to her, crying aloud: "My child! My child! my Elizabeth! my lost Elizabeth!" Happily reunited with his daughter, Gilbert casts off the gloom and "misanthropy" which had sustained him in his hatred for the Indian.¹¹

Bird probably wrote "Awossagame" during the period he was working on *Nick of the Woods*, for both stories have somewhat similar plots involving Indian-haters. But Bird treated Indians and their haters very differently in each story. In "Awossagame," he not only portrayed Indians sympathetically, placing their violence within the context of white possession of Indian "~~lands~~ homes" and contrasting the malevolent Gilbert with the poor innocent Awossagame, but also pointed out the absurdity of racial stereotyping and the tragic consequences of racial hate. In *Nick of the Woods*, on the other hand, Bird denounced Indians almost as if he were Gilbert of "Awossagame." One of the purposes of the novel, he explained, was to destroy the popular image of noble Indians created by James Fenimore Cooper, and to depict "real Indians."¹²

"The North American savage," Bird declared in his preface, "has never appeared to us the gallant and heroic personage he seems to others. . . . [W]e look into the woods for the mighty warrior . . . and behold him retiring, laden with the scalps of miserable squaws and their babes. Heroical?" Bird insisted he was describing Indians as they actually were in their "natural barbaric state"—"ignorant, violent, debased, brutal," and as they appeared in war or the scalp hunt, when "all the worst deformities of the savage temperament" received their "strongest and fiercest development." In the novel itself, Bird spoke through a renegade, Braxley, to emphasize Indian brutality, especially in the form of Indian violence to white women. The fair Edith, one of the principal characters, is captured by Indians and taken to their village. There Braxley tells her that her cries for help are in vain: "From whom do you expect it? From wild, murderous, besotted Indians, who, if roused from their drunken slumbers, would be more like to assail you with their hatchets than to weep for your sorrows? Know, fair Edith, . . . that there is not one of them who would not rather see those golden tresses hung blackening in the smoke from the rafters of his wigwam, than floating over the brows they adorn. . . ."¹³ Here, unmistakably, was the same hate Gilbert had expressed.

Yet, in *Nick of the Woods*, Bird probed the contradictions of Indian-hating more deeply than he had in "Awossagame" and critically exposed the deformities and agony hate and violence produced. Unlike Gilbert, the Indian-hater of the novel is an unusually complex person. He is a gentle

and peaceful man, known as Nathan Quaker, who wanders alone in the woods with his dog; yet he is also Nathan Slaughter, a man of great hate and violence, who roves the forests with his bear, killing Indians and carving huge crosses on the chests of his victims. Among the Indians, he is known as the Jibbenainosay, or the spirit that walks, or the devil. Significantly, Bird's Indian-hater is unable to separate successfully these parts of his personality. Thus, he kills Indians but feels enormous guilt for each bloody deed he commits. As he shoots them he must assure himself again and again that he is a "man of peace." Overwhelmed by the deep remorse his own violence has generated, Nathan Quaker/Slaughter insists he is only protecting fair Edith and her companions against "bloodthirsty savages." And he cries out to his friend Roland: "And thee does not think then . . . thee is not of the opinion . . . thee does not altogether hold it to be as a blood-guiltiness, and a wickedness . . . that I did take to me the weapon of war, and shoot upon thee wicked oppressors, to the saving of thee life? . . . Truly, friend, thee sees it couldn't be helped; and, truly, I don't think thee conscience can condemn me."¹⁴

Nathan's torment and guilt distinguish him from Melville's Indian-hater. Yet, he is in one sense very much like Colonel Moredock, for Nathan, too, is a man with a tragic past. To Roland, he tells how his wife and children were slain by Indians. As Roland listens to the horrible details of the attack, he notices that Nathan is behaving strangely, resembling "a raging maniac," his mouth foaming and his body convulsing. Suddenly Nathan's cap falls off, revealing a hideous scar. Hiding beneath his cap the grotesque reminder of a scalping, Nathan nurtures a hate and a passion for revenge which shocks Roland. The depth of Nathan's "insanity" is exposed when Nathan Quaker/Slaughter encourages Roland to take the scalps of the dead Indians lying around them. "Truly, friend," he assures him, "if thee is of that mind, truly, I won't oppose thee." The suggestion appalls Roland; regarding himself as civilized, he draws back in revulsion. "Their scalps? I scalp them!" Roland exclaims. "I am no butcher. I leave them to the bears and wolves, which the villains in their natures so strongly resembled. I will kill Indians wherever I can; but no scalping, Nathan, no scalping for me!" After they leave the scene of carnage, Roland notices blood dripping from Nathan's knife sheath: Scarred, Nathan himself has become a scalper.¹⁵

Aware of his deformity, Nathan seems to have no choice but to isolate himself from civilization and satisfy his thirst for blood. Thus, he is doomed to a life of loneliness, unable to have human relationships, a wanderer in the wilderness. He is "houseless Nathan." Yet, he was very much needed in the society of the Market Revolution, for he was a pathfinder, clearing the way for a civilization of enterprise, busy axes, plowed fields,

farmhouses, and towns and cities. He was the advance guard of settlement, where the fair Ediths of America would be safe from "murderous" and "drunken" Indians. Moreover, Nathan was also needed by the Rolands of America, for as long as he existed and embodied insanity and perverse violence, men like Roland could claim they were not "butchers," not madmen.¹⁶

Still, the novel contains a curious contradiction and a profound irony: The effort to degrade the Indian shades into a condemnation of Indian-hating, the depiction of the barbarity of "real Indians" turns out to be the vivid description of the psychotic cruelty of the Indian-hater, and the literary search for an American hero leads to the creation of an antihero. Unlike "The White-Washed Cottage" and "Awossagame," *Nick of the Woods* disguises the sympathy Bird had for Indians and the guilt he felt for what whites had done to them—the stealing of "lands homes" from "the poor Creeks" and the "striking" of Cherokees from the "face of the Earth." Only four years before the publication of the novel, Bird had called his countrymen "oppressors" and "robbers" in their conduct toward the Indian. Bird's agony—his twisting and turning—reflected the ambivalent emotions of a sensitive and informed man trying to create a national literature and American identity, and to make some moral sense out of the material developments of his time—the expansion of the market and the destruction of the Indian.

Nick of the Woods was Bird's way of trying to work out this distressing dilemma. As the shrillness of the novel's attack on the image of the noble Indian would suggest, Bird himself did not believe in his portrait of the "real Indian." But he needed to believe in it. Thus he simplified white-Indian conflict into a fantasized struggle between good and evil—between innocent whites like Nathan and his family, settling in the West in search of a peaceful agrarian life, and wild Indians seeking to butcher and scalp white women and children. This kind of mythmaking enabled Bird as well as readers who shared his complicated feelings to relieve their guilt and at the same time justify violence against Indians. Yet, in the novel, the dichotomy between good and evil quickly disintegrates into awesome ambiguity. Nathan Quaker's encounter with Indians deforms him: He is filled with hate, killing and scalping Indians while pathetically reaffirming his innocence. Regardless of what had happened to him in the past, Nathan, in his brutality, is forced to stand condemned, particularly in his own eyes. His bloodthirstiness and the mutilated Indian corpses betray him as a psychotic killer. Thus, Nathan Quaker/Slaughter in effect turns against his own creator, Bird himself, exposing the anti-Indian violence and hate Bird witnessed in his own time and tried to justify in his novel. In this strange

way, Bird resembled the Americans aboard Melville's *Fidèle* but was even more complex: He was his own confidence man.

Jackson: Metaphysician of Indian-Hating

In his "Eulogy" on the death of Andrew Jackson, Washington McCartney asked: "What *was* Andrew Jackson, and what did he *do*, that he should receive such honors while living, and, when dead, should gather a nation round his tomb?" One answer must have been painfully obvious to Cherokee leader John Ross. Aware the President had been what McCartney described as the "imbodiment" [*sic*] of the nation's "true spirit" and "ruling passion," the "head of the great movement of the age," Ross had offered a bitter insight into the meaning of this symbol for an age. "I knew," he had declared, "that the perpetrator of a wrong never forgives his victims."¹⁷

Indeed, during the age of Indian removal, American society needed confidence. Enterprising whites had to find a way to expand the market, "lop off" Indian lands, and destroy Indians without inflicting guilt and moral agony upon themselves. Or else, as they could see in Bird's Nathan Quaker/Slaughter, they were in danger of disintegrating into foaming madness. They already knew what President Jackson had declared in his first annual message to Congress: Their "conduct toward these people" was "deeply interesting" to the "national character." Aware that the identity of white Americans as a moral people was at stake, they hoped the President would be able to resolve their dilemma. Jackson succeeded: He broke Creek resistance at the battle of Horse Shoe Bend in 1814 and helped to make the Southwest safe for white settlement. He also developed and expressed a metaphysics which provided the disguises whites needed in order to be both Quaker and Slaughter, and to do what Nathan could not—to both love and destroy Indians. For this "achievement" as well as for the Bank War, the Maysville Road Veto, and the preservation of the Union during the nullification crisis, Jackson gathered a "nation round his tomb."¹⁸

Born in 1767, Andrew Jackson was only nine years old when Americans like Rush and Jefferson declared their independence from the king. Yet he came to represent the republican conduct and consciousness for which the Revolution had been fought. Throughout his life, he did not allow himself to forget the "bravery and blood" of his "fore fathers" and the "independent rights" they had secured for him and other Americans; he insisted Americans be worthy of the name of "freemen." As President, Jackson invoked what historian Marvin Meyers has described as a "persuasion," in

order to restore republican faith of the fathers among sons pursuing worldly goods in the society of the Market Revolution.¹⁹

In life and in legend, Jackson was, in many ways, the archetype of the self-made republican man. "He seems to have been an orphan from the plow to the Presidency," a eulogist exclaimed many years after Jackson's death. "He must, therefore, be regarded as the architect of his own fortunes." Actually, Jackson *had* been an orphan: His father died two months before he was born in the Carolina frontier, and his mother died when he was fourteen years old. But before she left him forever, she gave him some republican advice: "Never tell a lie, nor take what is not your own, nor sue anybody for slander or assault and battery. Always settle them cases yourself!" Self-reliant and self-governing, Jackson virtually had no childhood, or at least no adolescence. To his admirers and to Jackson himself, this assumption of responsibility at an early age prepared him to "rise rapidly with a rapidly rising people." Looking back at his own childhood, Jackson attributed his success to the challenges and difficulties he had to overcome early in his life. "I have been Tossed upon the waves of fortune from youthhood," he wrote, "I have experienced prosperity and adversity. It was this that gave me knowledge of human nature, it was this that forced into action, all the energies of my mind, and ultimately caused me to progress through life as I have done. . . ." Even as he referred to the "blood" of the "fore fathers," Jackson knew he could claim responsibility for securing his rights: He had been captured by the British in 1781 and was slashed with a sword by a British officer for refusing to blacken the man's boots.²⁰ Thus, as it turned out, the "blood" shed had included his own.

The fortune Jackson made was also his own. He squandered his inheritance in gambling houses and brothels; as a young lawyer, he was a "roaring, rollicking, game-cocking, horse-racing, card-playing, mischievous fellow. . . ." His life at this time was hardly one of republican virtue; yet, in a way, this profligacy reinforced Jackson's republican origins. His inheritance, his last remaining family tie destroyed, as Michael Rogin has noted, Jackson would begin "a new life totally alone." Completely responsible for himself and determined to be self-made, he would have no king, no parents even, and certainly no inheritance. In 1787, Jackson moved to Nashville to make his fortune on the frontier. There he practiced law, speculated in land, and opened stores to sell goods from Philadelphia. He also married into one of the leading families of the Cumberland and became a wealthy Tennessee planter with more than one hundred slaves. The key to his success was his involvement in land speculation—land acquired from Indians. In 1796, for example, Jackson paid a speculator \$100 for a half-interest in 5,000 acres at the Chickasaw bluffs on the Mississippi, and

immediately sold half of his share for \$312. He held on to the remaining share until 1818, when he negotiated the Chickasaw treaty and opened the area to white settlement; then he sold it for \$5,000.²¹

No shining republican himself, Jackson nevertheless offered republican advice to his nephew and son. He sent Andrew J. Donelson instructions on the need to guard against temptations. Many snares, the uncle warned, would be laid for the "inexperienced youth" to lead him into "dissipation, vice, and folly." While the young man should not deprive himself of "proper relaxation" or "innocent amusement," he should seek out only "virtuous" company and exercise care in his relationships with women. "Among the virtuous females, you ought to cultivate an acquaintance, and shun the intercourse of the others as you would the society of the viper . . . it is intercourse with the latter discription [*sic*] that engenders corruption, and contaminates the morals, and fits the young mind for any act of unguarded baseness. . . ." On another occasion, Jackson warned his son against accumulating debt: "Be always certain, if you wish to be independent, to keep your wants within your means, always when you have money, paying for them when bought."²² In his own conduct as a ribald young lawyer and a land speculator, Jackson could not claim authority to teach republican lessons even to his nephew and son, much less to society in general. The source of this authority had to be located elsewhere—in the fierce self-discipline and control Jackson had imposed on himself as a soldier and Indian-fighter.

For Jackson, republican virtue was achieved in war. The War of 1812 and the Creek War of 1813-14 gave him the opportunity to overcome what he called the "indolence" which threatened to destroy him, and to seek republican purification and regeneration through violence. A "free born son" of America, Jackson went to war against the British to defend the "only republick now existing in the world," the "fabric cemented by the blood of our fathers." A "brave son of Tennessee," Jackson led troops against Creeks in Mississippi to conquer "the cream of the Creek country" for the expansion of the "republick" and to avenge the deaths of more than two hundred people killed by hostile Creeks at Fort Mims. A soldier, separated from his frivolous and bourgeois past, he could now view himself as a worthy republican son. From the battlefield, he wrote to his wife: "I can only say your good understanding, and reflection will reconcile you to our separation, the situation of our country require it for who could brook a British tyranny, who would not prefer dying free, struggling for our liberty and religion, than live a British slave." Jackson believed Americans had to have republican discipline and to exercise it in war in order to protect their freedom. They must "never prefer an inglorious sloth, a supine inactivity to

the honorable toil of carrying the republican standard to the heights of Abraham," Commander Jackson told his troops. As a soldier, Jackson could lay claim to the republican virtue of respectable work, which he could not do as a land speculator.²³

As Jackson marched against the Indians, he also waged a private battle against his own body. His "fore fathers" had had to discipline the physical self in order to deny pleasure; Jackson had to discipline his body in order to defy pain. His had been a life of illness and physical agony. He had contracted smallpox as a teenager, and suffered from recurrent malaria, fevers, and rheumatism. Chronically constipated, he was often in extreme discomfort in the field, especially during "a severe attacke of the Bowell complaint." He suffered from attacks of dysentery, which caused painful cramps and diarrhea. His body reflected his sickly condition: Over six feet tall, he weighed only 145 pounds. Jackson felt an almost constant pain in his chest, where a bullet received in a duel with Charles Dickinson in 1806 was still lodged close to his heart. Shortly before he departed for the Creek campaign, he had exchanged gunfire with Thomas Hart Benton, and a bullet had fractured his left shoulder. His body broken and feverish, Jackson marched into the field against the Creeks. Called "Old Hickory" by his troops, he was admired for his power to withstand hardship and pain. His victory over the British at New Orleans was interpreted as a personal triumph over his ailing body. There, as one observer described the battle, Jackson barely had the strength to stand erect without support. "His body was sustained alone by the spirit within," and "the disease contracted in the swamps of Alabama still clung to him." Jackson prevailed over both the British and the body. "Reduced to a mere skeleton, unable to digest his food, and unrefreshed by sleep, his life seemed to be preserved by some miraculous agency."²⁴

His body disciplined, Jackson used violence to bring Indians under control. His struggle to dominate both his body and the Indians was integrated: Military campaigns in the Creek War enabled him to subordinate his physical self and to destroy Indians. Indians, for Jackson, personified the body. He believed they were impulsive and lacked "discipline." He also viewed Indian men as sexual threats to white women; few incidents aroused his wrath as much as the Indian capture of white women. Jackson made the case of Mrs. Crawly his "own." Angrily protesting her capture and confinement to "a mortar, naked, lacerated," he demanded that the "brave sons of Tennessee" wipe away this "blushing shame."²⁵

During the campaign against the Creeks in 1813-14, Jackson denounced his Indian enemies as "savage bloodhounds" and "blood thirsty barbarians," and urged his troops to exterminate them. "I know," he told his men,

"you will teach the cannibals who reveled in the carnage of our unoffending Citizens at Fort Meems that the thunder of our arms is more terrible than the Earth quakes of their Prophets, and that Heaven Dooms to inevitable destruction the wretch who Smiles at the torture he inflicts and who neither spares female innocence, declining age nor helpless infancy." Shortly before the battle of Horse Shoe Bend in March 1814, Jackson was in a state of rage. "I must distroy [*sic*] those deluded victims doomed to distruption by their own restless and savage conduct," he wrote to Major General Thomas Pinckney. The next day, he sent Pinckney another letter, and again he snarled at his enemies. Calling them "savage dogs," he wrote: "It is by the charge I distroy from eight to ten of them, for one they kill of my men, by charging them I have on all occasions preserved the scalps of my killed." At the battle of Horse Shoe Bend, Jackson and his troops surrounded some eight hundred Creeks at a bend in the river and killed almost all of them, including women and children. After the battle, he sent cloth worn by the slain warriors to the ladies of Tennessee. His soldiers cut long strips of skin from the bodies of the dead Indians and used them for bridle reins; they also cut the tip of each dead Indian's nose to count the number of enemy bodies.²⁶

In the Creek War of 1813-14, Jackson had accomplished more than the conquest of Indian lands, or what he described, in a letter written to Thomas Pinckney after his victory at Horse Shoe Bend, as the "valuable country" west of the Cosee and north of the "allabama." He had also done more than punish Indians for exercising "lawless tyranny" over "helpless and unprotected" white women, for murdering white mothers and their "little prattling infants," and for capturing white women. Most importantly, in the war, Jackson had purified the republican self: He was no longer a high-living lawyer and shady land speculator. In the wilderness, he had disciplined and chastened himself, and triumphed over "indolence," "sloth," pain, and Indians. Jackson was ready to be the leader of a democracy in quest of the restoration of republican virtue; he was also ready to lead the nation in the removal of Indians.²⁷

Fourteen years later, Jackson, still remembered as a heroic Indian fighter, was elected to the presidency. During the age of Jackson, some seventy thousand Indians were removed from their homes in the South and driven west of the Mississippi River. Due to violence, disease, starvation, dangerous travel conditions, and harsh winter weather, almost one-third of the southern Indians died. By 1844, the South was, as far as Indians were concerned, a "white man's country." Jackson had extended Jefferson's empire of liberty by removing Indians toward the "Stony mountains."²⁸

As President, Jackson played a complex and decisive role in Indian removal. Shortly after his election, he supported the efforts of three southern states—Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi—to abolish Indian tribal units and laws and to extend state authority over Indians. Georgia subjected them to militia duty, state taxes, and suits for debt, while it denied them the suffrage as well as the right to bring suits and to testify in court. All three states opened Indian territory to white settlement; they also encouraged intruders and allowed whites to take Indian lands, including "improved" or cultivated tracts. As the states imperialistically extended their authority over Indian territory, President Jackson told Congress: "If the states chose to extend their laws over them it would not be in the power of the federal government to prevent it." Actually, as Michael Rogin has pointed out, Jackson's assertions of federal impotence in this case made him "the passive spectator of a policy he had actively advocated." Jackson knew what his responsibility in this matter was as the chief executive of the United States. Treaties and federal laws had given Congress, not the states, authority over the Indians. The Indian Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802 had provided that no land cessions could be made except by treaty with a tribe, and that federal law, not state law, would operate in Indian territory. In 1832 the United States Supreme Court ruled against the extension of state law into Indian territory, but President Jackson refused to enforce the Court's decision.²⁹

While claiming federal powerlessness, Jackson collaborated and conspired with state officials to usurp tribal lands and remove Indians. In a letter to Jackson, dated February 3, 1830, General John Coffee outlined the strategy for this collaboration:

Deprive the chiefs of the power they now possess, take from them their own code of laws, and reduce them to plain citizenship . . . and they will soon determine to move, and then there will be no difficulty in getting the poor Indians to give their consent. All this will be done by the State of Georgia if the United States do not interfere with her law—. . . This will of course silence those in our country who constantly seek for causes to complain—It may indeed turn them loose upon Georgia, but that matters not, it is Georgia who clamors for the Indian lands, and she alone is entitled to the blame if any there be.³⁰

In this strategy to break up tribes, "reduce" Indians to citizenship, and force them to give up their lands and move away, all Jackson had to do, as President, was to make certain the federal government did not interfere with the law of the State of Georgia.

But Jackson did not limit himself to noninterference. He also met with Indians to inform them he had no power to help in their resistance against

the states and to advise them to migrate to the West. Jackson even employed "confidential agents" to manipulate the chiefs and persuade them to accept removal. The secret mission of these "confidential agents," as stated in a letter from Secretary of War John Eaton to General William Carroll, was to use bribery to influence "the Chiefs and influential men." "It is believed," wrote Eaton, "that the more careful you are to secure from even the Chiefs the official character you carry with you, the better—Since no circumstance is too slight to excite their suspicion or awaken their jealousy; Presents in your discretion to the amount of not more than \$2000 might be made with effect, by attaching to you the poorer Indians, as you pass through their Country, given as their friend; and the same to the Children of the Chiefs, and the Chiefs themselves, in clothes, or otherwise."³¹ Jackson did not have to depend heavily on deception and bribery to remove Indians, however. He had available two "legal" methods—indirect removal through the land allotment program and direct removal through treaty.

Used to deprive Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws of their territories, the land allotment program provided for granting land in fee simple title to individual Indians. As a landowner, an Indian could be "reduced" to citizenship, or he could sell and move west of the Mississippi River. In the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, for example, Choctaw families and individuals were instructed to register with an Indian agent within six months after the ratification of the treaty if they wished to remain in the state of Mississippi and receive a grant of land. Seemingly, the program gave Indians a choice as well as a fair chance to succeed in white society. Under this program, however, thousands of individual Indians were "given," sometimes forced to accept, land grants only to have land speculators take their fee simple titles. Everywhere federal certifying agents cooperated with speculators to defraud Indians of their lands. The Columbus Land Company, for instance, took a group of Creeks from one agent to another to sign contracts for grants. Speculators bribed certifying agents to approve fraudulent contracts; often the agents were the speculators themselves. After they had secured lands for individual Indians, speculators set up stores which extended credit to them in exchange for land titles as collateral, and then took over the deeds as they failed to pay off their debts. Under the program, Mary Young has calculated, speculators acquired eighty to ninety percent of the lands granted to southeastern Indians, or some 25 million acres of land.³²

The land allotment program enabled white speculators, farmers, and planters to take Indian lands "legally" and to absolve themselves from responsibility for the Indians' poverty, removal, and destruction. Indians

had been "given" land and responsibility for their own welfare; whites could not be blamed if they got into debt, lost their lands, and had to remove beyond the Mississippi. As Secretary of War Lewis Cass explained, "[O]ur citizens were disposed to buy and the Indians to sell. . . . The subsequent disposition which shall be made of these payments seems to be utterly beyond the reach of the Government. . . . The improvident habits of the Indians can not be controlled by regulations. . . . If they waste it, as waste it they too often will, it is deeply to be regretted yet still it is only exercising a right conferred upon them by the treaty."³³ A Lockean contractual framework had been imposed upon the Indian: He was no longer defined as a member of a community or tribe but as an individual. Entitled to own and sell private property, he was thrust into the market system. Thus, a victim of manipulation and fraud, the Indian was blamed for his own ruin.

In a letter to General John Coffee, April 7, 1832, President Jackson bluntly stated the real purpose of the land allotment program: "The object of the government now is, to have all their reservations surveyed and laid off as early as we can." Once Indians had been granted individual land allotments, they would "sell and move to the West." And then Jackson added: "When the reserves are surveyed it will require but a short time to compleat the ballance and have it into markt. . . ."³⁴ What Jackson wanted in the market was the Indian's land, not the Indian himself as a Lockean farmer.

Where Jackson was not able to buy out and remove Indians individually, he turned to the treaty method to remove the entire tribe directly. This was the strategy used against the Cherokees. In 1834, Jackson failed to secure a treaty for the cession of Cherokee lands and removal of the tribe to the West. The next year he sent the Reverend J. F. Schermerhorn to negotiate a treaty with the pro-removal faction of the Cherokees. The treaty provided that the Cherokees would cede their entire eastern territory and relocate beyond the Mississippi in exchange for \$4.5 million from the federal government. Signed in Washington on March 14, the treaty had to be ratified by the tribe in full council to be effective. The council rejected the treaty, however, and Schermerhorn made arrangements for another meeting in December, to be held in New Echota, Georgia, to negotiate a new treaty. To Secretary Cass, he wrote: "We shall make a treaty with those who attend, and rely upon it." Meanwhile, the Georgia militia jailed the anti-removal leader, John Ross, and suppressed the Cherokee newspaper. With the opposition silenced, Schermerhorn proceeded to make a treaty with those in attendance, even though they constituted only a tiny fraction of the entire Cherokee tribe and though none of the principal

officers of the tribe were present. The Treaty of New Echota was signed and sent to Washington for ratification by Congress.³⁵

President Jackson "relied upon it," and successfully urged Congress to ratify the treaty. But the federal government's dishonesty could not be covered up; appointed to enroll the Cherokees for removal, Major W. M. Davis found out what had actually happened at New Echota and wrote a letter to Secretary Cass to expose Schermerhorn's shameful chicanery:

Sir, that paper . . . called a treaty, is no treaty at all, because not sanctioned by the great body of the Cherokee and made without their participation or assent. I solemnly declare to you that upon its reference to the Cherokee people it would be instantly rejected by nine-tenths of them. . . . The most cunning and artful means were resorted to to conceal the paucity of numbers present at the treaty. . . . Mr. Schermerhorn's apparent design was to conceal the real number present and to impose on the public and the government on this point. The delegation taken to Washington by Mr. Schermerhorn had no more authority to make a treaty than any other dozen Cherokee accidentally picked up for the purpose.³⁶

The Treaty of New Echota was a known fraud; still the President responded to it as if it were the voice of the Cherokee people.

Ratification triggered the movement of thousands of white intruders into Cherokee territory. They seized Cherokee farms and cultivated lands, forcing out and often murdering the inhabitants. Still the Cherokees refused to recognize the treaty and leave their territory; finally, in 1838, the federal government ordered the army to round up 15,000 of them. Placed in detention camps and then marched west beyond the Mississippi in the dead of winter, more than 4,000 Cherokees died on the "Trail of Tears."

As the President responsible for Indian removal, Jackson was a philosopher as well as a policy-maker. While he negotiated fraudulent treaties and schemed with state leaders to acquire Indian lands, he offered solemn reflections on the destinies of whites and Indians. A leader of his people, he recognized the need to explain the nation's conduct toward Indians, to give it moral meaning. In his writings, messages to Congress, and personal letters, Jackson presented a philosophical justification for the extermination of native Americans.

Jackson's metaphysics began with a confession: White efforts to civilize the Indian had failed. Whites had purchased lands from Indians and thrust them farther into the wilderness, forcing them to remain in a "wandering state." Some Indians in the South had become civilized and learned the art of farming, Jackson noted; but they had set up an "independent government" within the state of Georgia. Such a "foreign government" could not

be tolerated. Thus civilized Indians had to submit to the state. But, unlike Jefferson, Jackson did not believe the Indian could remain within the state, surrounded by whites in civilized society, and survive. "The fate of the Mohigan, the Narragansett, and the Delaware is fast overtaking the Choctaw, the Cherokee, and the Creek. That this fate surely awaits them if they remain within the limits of the State does not admit of a doubt." Like the tribes before them, they would disappear. "Humanity and national honor demand that every effort be made to avert so great a calamity." Driven by "feelings of justice," Jackson asked whether something could be done "to preserve this much-injured race." And he offered an answer: He proposed that a district west of the Mississippi be set aside—"to be guaranteed to the Indian tribes as long as they shall occupy it." There they would be free to live in peace and to have their own government "as long as the grass grows, or water runs."³⁷

Urging Indians to seek new homes beyond the Mississippi, Jackson encouraged them to follow the example of whites, become a people in motion, restless and expansive. "Doubtless it will be painful [for Indians] to leave the graves of their fathers," Jackson told Congress. "But what do they more than our ancestors did or than our children are now doing? To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions." Movement, geographical and social, represented progress and a Jacksonian way of life: It enabled white Americans to develop "power and faculties of man in their highest perfection."³⁸

Time and again, President Jackson insisted he wanted to be "just" and "humane" toward the Indians. He wanted to protect them from the "mercenary influence of white men," and to exercise a "parental" control over them and perpetuate their race. He explained that he wanted them to be happy and that their happiness depended on removal. Jackson regarded himself as a "father," concerned about the welfare of his Indian "children." He instructed Major David Haley to transmit to the chiefs of the Choctaws his advice as their "father." "That the chiefs and warriors may fully understand this talk," wrote Jackson, "you will please go amongst, & read it to, and fully explain to them. Tell them it is from my own mouth you have rec'd it and that I never speak with a forked tongue." His advice to the Indians was to move beyond the Mississippi; and, if they refused to accept this advice, Jackson warned, they must then be responsible for whatever happened to them. "I feel conscious of having done my duty to my red children," he said, "and if any failure of my good intentions arises, it will be attributable to their want of duty to themselves, not to me."³⁹

Ultimately, as Jackson revealed in his removal of the Seminoles, white paternalism drew its power from the barrel of a gun. In his letter to the Seminoles in 1835, the President offered paternal advice as he threatened paternal power. Addressing them as "My Children," he said he was sorry to learn that they had been listening to "bad counsel." "You know me," he assured, "and you know that I would not deceive, nor advise you to do anything that was unjust or injurious." As a "friend," Jackson claimed he offered them "the words of truth." White people were settling around them, and the game had disappeared from their country. "Your people are poor and hungry," he observed. "Even if you had a right to stay, how could you live where you now are?" Then he warned them about the market system as if it were an impersonal force and he were not a part of it. "You have sold all your country. . . . The tract you have ceded will soon be surveyed and sold, and immediately afterwards will be occupied by a white population." Thus, Seminoles should migrate to the West where game was yet abundant and where they would be far away from the market and whites. If they remained, they would starve and be forced to steal from whites. "You will be resisted, punished, perhaps killed," the white father predicted. Again, he urged them to leave, and then added: "But lest some of your rash young men should forcibly oppose your arrangements for removal, I have ordered a large military force to be sent among you."⁴⁰

Seminoles, under the leadership of Osceola, refused to accept Jackson's fatherly advice and took up armed resistance. Enraged, Jackson sent enough troops to Florida "as might eat Powell [Osceola] and his few." But the Seminoles were not so easily crushed. After Jackson left office in 1837, he continued to focus his fury on the insubordinate tribe. In a memorandum on the Florida campaign, he recommended a strategy to bring Seminole defiance to a quick end. American commanders should conduct search and destroy missions, and order their troops to find Seminole villages and capture or destroy the women. Unless they knew "where the Indian women were," Jackson wrote, United States soldiers would never be effective: Their effort would be "like a combined operation to encompass a wolf in the hammocks without knowing first where her den and whelps were."⁴¹

Here was the propensity for violence which Jefferson had fearfully described as the "most boisterous passions," and which Jackson had disguised, giving it moral legitimacy. Many years before Indian removal, Commander Jackson had declared to his troops after the bloody victory at Horse Shoe Bend:

The fiends of the Tallapoosa will no longer murder our women and children, or disturb the quiet of our borders. Their midnight flambeaux will no more illu-

mine their Council house or shine upon the victim of their infernal orgies. They have disappeared from the face of the Earth. In their places a new generation will arise who will know their duties better. The weapons of warfare will be exchanged for the utensils of husbandry; and the wilderness which now withers in sterility and seems to mourn the desolation which overspreads it, will blossom as the rose, and become the nursery of the arts. . . . How lamentable it is that the path to peace should lead through blood, and over the carcasses of the slain!! But it is in the dispensation of that providence, which inflicts partial evil to produce general good.

There, on the dark and bloody ground of the West, General Jackson had developed a justification for violence against Indians and a metaphysics for genocide. White violence was a necessary partial evil for the realization of a general good—the extension of white civilization and the transformation of the wilderness into an agrarian society and a nursery of the arts. As President, Jackson took this rationale and incorporated it into the national consciousness. In his second annual message to Congress, he declared:

Humanity has often wept over the fate of the aborigines of this country, and Philanthropy has been long busily employed in devising means to avert it, but its progress has never for a moment been arrested, and one by one have many powerful tribes disappeared from the earth. To follow to the tomb the last of his race and tread on the graves of extinct nations excite melancholy reflections. But true philanthropy reconciles the mind to these vicissitudes as it does to the extinction of one generation to make room for another.

In all this, the President reassured the nation, as the general had earlier reassured his troops, that nothing was to be "regretted." "Philanthropy could not wish to see this continent restored to the condition in which it was found by our forefathers." And the metaphysician then asked: "What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms . . . filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion?" As the President meditated on the disappearance of Indians and the "melancholy reflections" it excited, he claimed for white Americans their moral innocence. What had happened to the Indians was inevitable, even moral.⁴²

The metaphysics of Indian-hating, for Jackson, had begun in the Creek War of 1813-14 and was completed in the Bank War of 1832-36. In his war against Indians, Jackson had used them to define savagery: Thus, he described them as "cannibals," "savage dogs," "bloodhounds," and "blood thirsty" slayers of innocent white women and children. His attack on Indians, however, did not enable him to formulate a clear and precise defini-

tion of civilization, especially a republican one. His references to the "free born sons" of the "republic" and the republican "fabric" of the Revolutionary forefathers were vague and inadequate. Victorious over "savages," Jackson still needed to identify the possessors of republican virtue—the "real people." This he did in his war against the Bank of the United States.

In Jackson's mind, the Bank War was similar to his military campaign against the Creeks: It was a struggle to preserve the virtues of the Old Republic. The privately controlled Second Bank of the United States, chartered in 1816 and the depository for federal funds, was "a system at war" with "the genius" of the institutions the republican fathers had established. Scheduled for a renewal of its charter during Jackson's presidency, the Bank encountered his republican wrath. "Our Fathers," he declared, had "perilled their lives" to arrest the "natural instinct to reach after new acquisitions." The "Revolutionary struggle" should not be weakened in "lavish public disbursements"; corporations with "exclusive privileges" should not be allowed to undermine the "original" checks and balances of the Constitution.⁴³

The Bank represented, to Jackson, an even greater and more insidious threat to republicans than the Creeks. The red enemies were "stupid mortals," relying on "subterfuges" such as their "grim visages" and "hideous yells" rather than on their bravery. By contrast, the Bank constituted a consolidation of power: Through its "silent" and "secret" operation and through shrewd manipulation, a few corrupt men were able to acquire control over the "labor and earnings of the great body of the people." In his famous bank veto message, which resulted in the destruction of the Bank, Jackson declared:

It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth can not be produced by human institution. In the full enjoyment of the gifts of Heaven and the fruits of superior industry, economy, and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these just advantages artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves—have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government.

The Bank and its system of paper money engendered a "spirit of speculation injurious to the habits and character of the people," an "eager desire

to amass wealth without labor," a "craving desire for luxurious enjoyment," and a "sickly appetite for effeminate indulgence." The republican fathers had located the source of corruption in the king; Jackson located it in the Bank. The new "hydra of corruption" drained from the people their power to resist cupidity, idleness, temptation, and extravagance.⁴⁴

Regardless of whether he was struggling against the "moneyed power" or the Indians, Jackson excluded both groups from the "real people"—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers. "The bone and sinew of the country," they depended on their own "honest industry" and economy for success. Self-governing and independent, they cultivated the soil, earned the fruits of their own labor, and possessed the "habits of economy and simplicity" so congenial to the "character of republicans." But the corrupt men of wealth and the Indians were antagonistic to honest labor. While the former exploited the privileges granted to them by the government in order to enrich themselves, the latter lacked the "intelligence, industry, the moral habits," "the desire of improvement," and the capacity for self-government. "Observation proves that the great body of the southern tribes of Indians," Jackson claimed, "are erratic in their habits, and wanting in those endowments which are suited to a people who would direct themselves. . . ." "Children of the forests," they did not cultivate the land. How could they, asked Jackson, make claims on tracts on which they had neither dwelt nor made "improvements," merely because they had "seen them from the mountain or passed them in the chase?" In Jackson's judgment, neither men of "artificial distinctions" nor Indians had a place in a republican society.⁴⁵

The parallel between Jackson's military campaign against Indians and his war against the Bank was distressingly evident to Nicholas Biddle. "The worthy President," observed Bank Director Biddle, "thinks because he has scalped Indians . . . he is to have his way with the Bank." Biddle's was a most perspicacious remark. Indeed, in Jackson's fantasy, Indians were "those monsters," while the Bank was "the monster." Indians threatened to kill Jackson and other whites in the West and lay waste "the abodes of industry." The Bank, too, "waged war upon the people" of the "republic" and appeared to threaten Jackson personally. "The bank, Mr. Van Buren, is trying to kill me, *but* I will kill it," the President exclaimed in fury. "I've got my foot upon it and I'll crush it." A slayer of "monsters," Jackson destroyed the Creeks at Horse Shoe Bend and the Bank of the United States and swept both of them from "the face of the Earth."⁴⁶

Confidence, as Melville suggested in his novel, was a political style which depended on role-playing, and which was widely used in Jacksonian soci-

ety. Unlike Melville's confidence man, Jackson employed confidence as a technique to take himself and his society away from rather than toward exposure, critical awareness, and redemption. In Jackson's service, disguises enabled him to give events his own definitions, and to judge his and the nation's actions in a variety of ways and in accordance with their economic interests and psychological needs. His was a "persuasion" which not only allowed him to destroy the Bank as he nurtured a nostalgia for an old agrarian republic but also made it possible for him to advance the market as he articulated compassion and regret for the Indians.

In the removal and killing of Indians, the expansion of the market, and the formulation of a metaphysics of Indian-hating, Jackson was in effect the nation's confidence man. Undeniably, as President Jackson himself acknowledged, how whites conducted themselves in relations with Indians was "deeply interesting" to their "national character." They must not be guilty of capitalist corruption, moral absurdity, or mass murders. As President, Jackson told them they were not, and skillfully exercised confidence in his own conduct toward Indians. He excluded them from the "real people" and claimed they were hunters and wanderers as he encouraged intruders to seize cultivated and improved Indian lands. He called himself "father" and Indians "children" as he employed "confidential agents" to deceive and bribe Indians in order to remove them from their lands; he insisted that the government be kept pure and separated from the corruption of land speculators as he permitted the government to be used in their service. He assured the Indians that his advice to them was based on "feelings of justice" as he moved their lands into the "market." Indeed, through the use of a multitude of disguises, Jackson protected the moral character of the American people as he served the class interests of the speculators, farmers, and planters seeking to appropriate Indian lands.

But what Jackson "was" and what he "did" involved more than the appropriation of millions of acres of Indian lands. As general and as President, Jackson had built a "pyramid of skulls": Indians lost their lives as well as their lands. A Jibbenainosay in reality, he accomplished what Bird fantasized—Indian deaths. He helped to bring about that "calamity" which he said he was seeking to avoid, and succeeded precisely where Nathan Quaker/Slaughter had failed. He was able to dissociate his acts of violence against Indians from his claims of compassion, and to integrate both into a metaphysics of civilization which allowed whites to destroy the Indian and assure themselves that the Indian's extinction was not to be "regretted." This was an integration Nathan Quaker/Slaughter could not achieve: Unable to engage in self-deception, despite all of his disguises, Nathan knew he was a killer—knew murder was murder and evil was evil.

He possessed a singular sanity Jackson did not have. Both Quaker and Slaughter, Jackson was seemingly able to be what Melville's confidence man thought was impossible for Colonel John Moredock—a man of love and also of hate, a good father and also an Indian-killer. Soon after the battle of Horse Shoe Bend, Jackson wrote to his wife: "The *carnage* was *dreadful* . . . I hope shortly to put an end to the war and return to your arms, kiss my little Andrew for me, tell him I have a warrior's bow and quiver for him." "No cold husband or colder father," Jackson was at the same time like the Jibbenainosay, a "Leather-stocking Nemesis." "And Natty, what sort of a white man is he?" asked D. H. Lawrence. "Why, he is a man with a gun. He is a killer, a slayer. Patient and gentle as he is, he is a slayer. Self-effacing . . . still he is a killer."⁴⁷

of the Choctaw Indians (New York, 1972), p. 124; North, *Growth of the United States*, pp. 119, 124, 256, 257, 232, 233.

17. U.S., Congress, House, *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census, 1860* (Washington D.C., 1862), pp. 126-33, in North, *Growth of the United States*, p. 129; Taylor, *Transportation Revolution*, p. 133; North, *Growth of the United States*, pp. 52, 75, 67, 68, 69, 75, 233; Mario Barrera, "Colonial Labor and Theories of Inequality: The Case of International Harvester," *Review of Radical Political Economics*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Summer 1976), pp. 1-18; Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York, 1972).
18. James Madison, quoted in Rogin, p. 319.

V. The Metaphysics of Civilization: "The Red Race on Our Borders"

1. James Madison, quoted in Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York, 1975), p. 319; James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pathfinder* (New York, n.d., originally published in 1840), p. 107; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (New York, 1945, originally published in 1835), vol. 1, pp. 352-3, 364.
2. Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (New York, 1964, originally published in 1857), p. 136; David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge, 1969), pp. 25-31.
3. Melville, *Confidence-Man*, pp. 147-66. See also Roy Harvey Pearce, "The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating," *Ethnohistory*, vol. 4 (Winter 1957), pp. 27-40, and "Melville's Indian-Hater: A Note on a Meaning of the Confidence-Man," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, vol. 67 (1952), pp. 942-8.
4. Lewis Cass, "Policy and Practice of the United States and Great Britain in Their Treatment of Indians," *North American Review*, LV (April 1827), pp. 365-442, especially 391-2; Cass, "Removal of the Indians," *ibid.*, XXX (January 1830), pp. 64-109.
5. See Robert Montgomery Bird, *Nick of the Woods, or the Jibbenainosay, A Tale of Kentucky* (New York, 1853, originally published in 1837). For analyses of Bird and his novel, see R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 105-9; Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn., 1973), pp. 509-15. For biographies of Bird, see Curtis Dahl, *Robert Montgomery Bird* (New York, 1963) and Mary Mayer Bird, *Life of Robert Montgomery Bird* (Philadelphia, 1945).
6. Mary Bird, *Life of Bird*, p. 32; Dahl, *Bird*, p. 17; Clement E. Foust, *The Life and Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird* (New York, 1919), p. 52; Bird to Mary and Caroline Mayer, June 25, 1834, Bird Papers, University of Pennsylvania Library.
7. Bird, fragmented note on "The Disadvantages under which an American novelist must labour," and draft of an essay on national literature, Bird Papers.
8. Bird, fragmented note on Indian names, Bird Papers.
9. Bird, Notebooks, April 3, 1833; Bird to Mary Mayer, May 8, 1833; and Bird to Frost, May 18, 1833, Bird Papers.

10. Bird, "The White-Washed Cottage of the Susquehanna, an Indian Story," Bird Papers.
11. Bird, "Awossagame or the Seal of the Evil One," Bird Papers.
12. Bird, *Nick of the Woods*, preface, p. 7.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10, 318.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 232. Curiously, Bird himself displayed a duality in his own personality. During his early years in school, he encountered a strict and brutal teacher and suffered almost daily beatings at school. The punishment left him with deep emotional scars. According to Mary Bird many years later, he felt a combination of fear and resentment, hate and thirst for vengeance. The cruelties inflicted on him changed "the innocent child into a revengful demon," driving him into such a great rage that he took on bended knee "a solemn oath to kill his persecutor as soon as he was old and strong enough to do so. . . ." His violent anger was not, in her judgment, merely "the impotent exhibition of baby wrath." "The current testimony of those who knew him best proves him to have been unusually gentle and tractible, enduring ordinary ills with great good nature; tho' roused, even then, as at subsequent periods of life, by repeated injustice or outrage, to an intensity of feeling few can comprehend or appreciate." See Mary Mayer Bird, *Life of Robert Montgomery Bird*, p. 9.
15. Bird, *Nick of the Woods*, pp. 145, 250-5.
16. Bird, *Nick of the Woods*, pp. 250-1.
17. Washington McCartney, "Eulogy," quoted in John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (New York, 1962), p. 1; John Ross, quoted in Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York, 1975), p. 231. For this section on Jackson and Indian removal, I am indebted to Michael Paul Rogin's thoughtful and penetrating study, *Fathers and Children*.
18. Jackson, First Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1829, in James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* (Washington, D.C., 1897), vol. 2, p. 457.
19. Jackson to George W. Campbell, October 15, 1812, in John Spencer Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 6 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1926), vol. 1, pp. 236-7; Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (New York, 1960).
20. Eulogist and Mrs. Jackson, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, pp. 40, 44; S. Putnam Waldo, *Memoirs of Andrew Jackson* (Hartford, Conn., 1820), quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, p. 40; Jackson to Richard Call, November 15, 1821, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, p. 40; Jackson to George Campbell, October 15, 1812, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 236-7.
21. Old resident, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, p. 52.
22. Jackson, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, pp. 159, 286; Jackson to A. J. Donelson, February 24, 1817, and to Willie Blount, July 10, 1812, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, pp. 275-6, and vol. 1, pp. 231-2.
23. Jackson, Division Orders, March 12, 1812, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, pp. 140-1; Jackson to Reverend Gideon Blackburn, December 3, 1813, and to Mrs.

- Jackson, October 21, 1814, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 365-6, and vol. 2, p. 79; Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*.
24. Observer, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, p. 162. See also *ibid.*, pp. 155, 157, 145, 149.
 25. Jackson to Willie Blount, July 10, 1812, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 231-2.
 26. Jackson, General Orders, September 19, 1813, and General Order, December 15, 1813, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 319-20, 429-30; Jackson to Thomas Pinckney, February 16 and 17, 1814, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 463-5. See also H. S. Halbert and T. H. Ball, *The Creek War of 1813 and 1814* (Chicago, 1895), pp. 276-7.
 27. Jackson to Thomas Pinckney, May 18, 1814; to George Campbell, October 15, 1812; and to Willie Blount, July 10, 1812, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, pp. 2-3; vol. 1, pp. 236-7, 231-2.
 28. For information on Indian removal, see Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, especially pp. 165-250; Mary E. Young, *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks* (Norman, Okla., 1961); Arthur H. DeRosier, Jr., *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians* (New York, 1972); and Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman, Okla., 1972).
 29. Jackson, Special Message to the Senate, February 22, 1831, in Richardson, *Papers of the Presidents*, vol. 2, p. 541; Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, p. 213.
 30. General John Coffee to Jackson, February 3, 1830, quoted in Mary E. Young, "Indian Removal and Land Allotment: The Civilized Tribes and Jacksonian Justice," *American Historical Review*, vol. 64 (October 1958), p. 36.
 31. Jackson to Major David Haley, October 15, 1829, quoted in Annie Heloise Abel, *The History of Events Resulting in Indian Consolidation West of the Mississippi* (Washington, D.C., 1906). See also Jackson, Speech to Chickasaws, August 23, 1830, Executive Document no. 512, 23rd Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, D.C., 1835), vol. 2, pp. 240-1; John Eaton to William Carroll, May 30, 1829, reprinted in Abel, *Indian Consolidation*, p. 371.
 32. See Young, "Indian Removal and Land Allotment," pp. 38-45; DeRosier, *Removal of the Choctaw Indians*, p. 125; Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, pp. 228-30.
 33. Lewis Cass to R. J. Meigs, October 31, 1834, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, p. 230.
 34. Jackson to General John Coffee, April 7, 1832, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 430.
 35. Reverend J. F. Schermerhorn to Lewis Cass, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, p. 227. See also Foreman, *Indian Removal*, pp. 264-78.
 36. Major W. M. Davis to Lewis Cass, quoted in Foreman, *Indian Removal*, p. 270.
 37. Jackson, First Annual Message to Congress, in Richardson, *Papers of the Presidents*, vol. 2, pp. 456-8; Jackson, Speech to Chickasaws, p. 241.
 38. Jackson, Second Annual Message to Congress, December 6, 1830, in Richardson, *Papers of the Presidents*, vol. 2, pp. 520-2; Jackson, Speech to Chickasaws, pp. 241-2.
 39. Jackson to Captain James Gadsden, October 12, 1829, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 81; Jackson to Major David Haley, October 15, 1829, quoted in Abel,

- Indian Consolidation*, p. 373; Jackson, Speech to Chickasaws, p. 241; Jackson, Special Message to Senate, in Richardson, *Papers of the Presidents*, vol. 2, p. 541.
40. Jackson, Letter to the Seminoles, 1835, reprinted in Paul Jacobs, *To Serve the Devil* (New York, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 63-4.
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 45. Jackson, Veto Message; Seventh Annual Message; and Farewell Address; in *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 590; vol. 3, p. 166; vol. 3, pp. 305-6; Jackson, Fifth Annual Message to Congress, December 3, 1833, and First Annual Message, in Richardson, *Papers of the Presidents*, vol. 3, pp. 32-3, and vol. 2, p. 458; Jackson, draft of First Annual Message, December 8, 1829, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 103. See also Meyers, *Jacksonian Persuasion*, pp. 16-32.
 46. Nicholas Biddle, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*, p. 281; Jackson, quoted in Rogin, *Fathers and Children*; pp. 198, 289, 291; Jackson, Farewell Address, in Richardson, *Papers of the Presidents*, vol. 3, pp. 303-4; Jackson, Proclamation, in Bassett, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 494.
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VI. The Metaphysics of Civilization: "The Black Race Within Our Bosom"

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