

Distorted Images:

Attitudes towards the Micmac in Nova Scotia, 1788-1900

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Distorted Images:**

**Attitudes Towards the Micmac in Nova Scotia, 1788-1900**

**J. Sharon Ingalls**

**September, 1992**

This paper, through an examination of Nova Scotian literature, analyses changing attitudes towards the Micmac in Nova Scotia from 1788 to 1900. The roots of stereotypes held by non-natives are explored as well as the influence of stereotypes on interaction between the two groups and on public policy.

Nova Scotian literature of the period reveals two contradictory images of the native people, one based on the concept of the Noble Savage, the other rooted in tales of bestial wild men who lived outside the bounds of civil society. These images, the Noble Savage and the Demonic Savage, both with the shared quality of "savageness", shaped the attitudes of Nova Scotians towards the Micmac. Regarded as "savages", the Micmac were the "other" against which "civilized" Nova Scotians defined themselves.

During the first period discussed, 1788 to 1850, the intellectual framework which justified a discriminatory social hierarchy was based on theories of historical, social and moral development. During this time the image of the

Noble Savage influenced imaginative writers and the work of liberal humanitarians. The Demonic Savage also appeared as a literary convention, but more importantly it influenced negative attitudes towards the Micmac. The image of the Degraded Savage also emerged at this time in response to the perceived degeneration of the native people.

From 1851 to 1900, the second period examined, rapid social, economic and political change left Nova Scotians, as part of a wider society, feeling more uncertain about their place in the world. As their hierarchical society crumbled a new justification for discrimination was provided by emerging sciences, including archaeology, philology, comparative anatomy, anthropology and sociology. Scientific speculation contributed to the development of another image, the Vanishing Indian. The wide spread belief that the Indians would soon disappear strengthened assimilative efforts.

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## Introduction

This thesis is an investigation of Nova Scotians' belief system as it related to their attitudes toward the Micmac.<sup>1</sup> Also to be discussed is the extent to which attitudes influenced policies and interaction between the two peoples. The period to be covered is from 1788, when Loyalist immigrants first expressed their vision of the ideal society they hoped to create in their new homeland,<sup>2</sup> to the end of the nineteenth century when entrenched racial beliefs began to come under attack. The writings of Nova Scotians and a few New Brunswickers will be examined, along with material written by outsiders but published in local journals.<sup>3</sup> To illustrate the intellectual framework of the time, some influential books read by Nova Scotians will also be considered.<sup>4</sup> I have made no attempt to be comprehensive,

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<sup>1</sup> I have used the term, Nova Scotian, to refer to Nova Scotians of European ancestry. This limited meaning is convenient for my purpose, but it does not imply that the Micmac or other ethnic groups were not Nova Scotians.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of Loyalist literature see Gwendolyn Davies, "Consolation to Distress: Loyalist Literary Activity in the Maritimes", *Acadiensis* 16(2), 1987, pp. 51-68.

<sup>3</sup> Included are Nova Scotia Magazine (Halifax, 1789-92), The Bee (Pictou, 1835-38), Colonial Patriot (Pictou, 1827-34) and The Pearl (Halifax, 1837-40). These journals include selected material taken from British and American publications as well as some original writing.

<sup>4</sup> These were deduced from the general fame of the writer, references made by Nova Scotians, and from the following catalogues: "Catalogue of books in the library at King's

but have selected material which, I believe, reflects representative attitudes and beliefs.<sup>5</sup> My net has been cast widely to include scientific writing, legislative reports, poetry, novels for children and adults, literary sketches, and historical accounts.

A close examination of this material will reveal, not only Nova Scotians' changing attitudes towards the Micmac, but also the rationale behind the many misguided attempts to help native people. Why, for instance, did European settlers attempt to turn the native people into farmers and isolate them on reserves? Racism and dire necessity, due to the absence of game, are often given as explanations,<sup>6</sup> but the cause is much more complex, including as it does, centuries old concepts peculiar to Western European culture.

The insights gained through this limited study may be applicable to other regions of Canada. To be sure, intellectual studies of this kind will reveal little about the indigenous people and their way of life. However, by

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College in the University of Windsor, 1803", MSS, University of King's College Archives; Catalogue of the library of King's College, Halifax, N.S., 1893.

<sup>5</sup> It is self evident that the use of literary material limits the analysis of attitudes to the segments of society which were literate. This does not imply that widely held beliefs and attitudes were not also present among those who did not express their views in writing.

<sup>6</sup> For example see James S. Frideres, Native People in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts, (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall, 1983).



illustrating the large gap between stereotypes and reality and by examining the rationale behind the stereotypes, we should come to a greater understanding of the relationship between the two peoples. This study will also help us to understand changing and sometimes contradictory attitudes expressed by our forebears. By placing literature within the context of its time, we shall see that the attitudes expressed reflect the belief structure of the period; they are not the result of a particular writer being "ahead of his time" nor are they due to his or her level of maturity.<sup>1</sup>

My thesis is divided into two parts; each section broadly defines a particular time period and its distinctive world view. Part I begins at the end of the eighteenth century and covers the first half of the following century. During this period, theories of racial superiority were based on moral and religious values and on theories of historical development. New concepts of racial superiority, based on scientific "evidence" appeared in mid-century and provide a starting point for Part II. Each of the two sections includes an introductory chapter outlining the intellectual foundations of the period's belief system as it pertained to native people, followed by chapters discussing

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Alvin H. Morrison attributes Longfellow's positive depiction of native peoples in his later poems to attitudinal maturity. "The Wabanaki in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: Some Examples of How They Fared" in Papers of the Twelfth Algonquian Conference, ed. William Cowan (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1981) p. 7.

Nova Scotian literature.

Although an examination of Nova Scotian literature will reveal a changing climate of opinion, two contradictory images of the Indian form a persistent, common thread through time and shifting perceptions. These two images, that of the Noble Savage and the Demonic Savage,<sup>1</sup> are deeply rooted in Western European tradition, with their sources in ancient myth and folklore. One way of comprehending these contradictory images is to see in them reflections of the positive and the negative aspects of man's freedom. Both the Noble Savage and the Demonic Savage were free to do what they willed as they were subject to no authority. The former enjoyed a life of ease, free of care and responsibility. He lived in the mythical Golden Age or in a paradise where all his wants were supplied by a bountiful nature. This fantasy of a life where labour was unnecessary and all lived in harmony was reiterated in countless myths and legends, one of the best known being the tale of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As we shall see many Europeans, and some of their well-educated North American descendants, identified native North Americans with this

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes other terms are applied to these concepts, e.g. Monkman uses "primitive" for the idealized Indian and "savage" for the violent enemy of civilization. Leslie Monkman, A Native Heritage: Images of the Indian in English-Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981). The problem with these definitions is that the idealized Indian shares many characteristics of savagism with the "savage".

ideal natural man, the Noble Savage.

The other side of the coin was the Demonic Savage, also free but living in terror of the unknown. Freedom in his case led to fear and chaos, for his was a world without control, order or authority. Euro-Americans feared the seething passions which they felt total liberty would unleash. They also feared, and perhaps secretly envied, those who they perceived had complete license to do what they willed. In Europe, this fear came to be embodied in tales of wild men who lived in the depths of dark and mysterious forests. These creatures were believed to have qualities of cunning and cruelty like the animals with whom they shared a home.<sup>9</sup> As newcomers to North America, Europeans mistakenly believed that native peoples lived in complete freedom. As well, they observed the Indians at ease in the immense forests feared by the new arrivals. It was easy to endow these strange beings with qualities of the wild man, in particular his apparently violent and irrational behaviour. A stereotype developed which painted the native people as cruel, revengeful and blood-thirsty, as evil creatures who lacked all the virtues which civilization

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<sup>9</sup> See Richard Bernheimer, Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, And Demonology, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952) for a discussion of this belief. Bernheimer feels that the wild man tradition, in both its positive and negative aspects, has been part of Western culture since its beginnings as it satisfies a psychological need.

bestowed. Thus, the wild men of European folklore and legend evolved into the cunning savage of the American wilderness.

Both of these images were part of the cultural baggage which Nova Scotians brought to their new homeland. Notions of the Noble Savage and the Demonic Savage provided a conceptual framework which helped Europeans deal with native peoples whose lives they found incomprehensible. But, at the same time, their pre-conceptions ensured that they would not make sincere attempts to understand the Indians. Stereotypes substituted for genuine understanding.

Finally, a word about terminology. I have used the traditional terms, "man", "mankind", "Indian", as they were the terms used in the period under discussion. However, I have not limited myself to these terms. At times, words are placed in parenthesis if the contemporary meaning of the terms needs to be separated from those of the past.

The word "savage" warrants a separate discussion, especially since the way it was used in the past is frequently misunderstood. Both "savage" and the French sauvage derive from the Latin, silvaticus, meaning of the woods, wild and untamed.<sup>10</sup> Canadian historians have often

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<sup>10</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd. ed., 14, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 522-3.

assumed that sauvage has fewer negative connotations than the English term.<sup>11</sup> While it is true that the idealized Indian, the Noble Savage, played a greater role in the writings of the eighteenth century French philosophes than in English literature,<sup>12</sup> "sauvage" meant the same in both languages. The confusion probably arises from the word's many different connotations. For example, the Noble Savage and the Demonic Savage express the two extremes of the possible meaning of "sauvage." Such usages reflect, respectively, the writer's admiration of native virtues or contempt for their vices. These interpretations aside, another widespread meaning was separate from the strong feelings associated with the images of Noble or Demonic Savages. As we shall see, "sauvage" was used to describe a class of people as well as a stage of cultural and social development. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, those who were designated "sauvage" were a distinctive component of an ordered, hierarchical society. Later in the nineteenth century as the structure of society became more fluid, "savages" remained at the bottom of the social ladder by being placed in the lowest stage of progressive development. It should be remembered that the

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<sup>11</sup> A recent example is J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> David Galloway, "The Voyagers" in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English, Vol. II, ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 17.

use of "savage" as a class or developmental stage did not always imply a bigoted point of view. It conjured up images of rude, uncultivated people who had not yet acquired the arts of civilization, but it did not necessarily insinuate that they were cruel, ferocious murderers. This negative image was inherent in the Demonic Savage, a stereotype which gradually superceded competing images as the nineteenth century wore on.

Part I "Civilization" and the "Savage": 1788 - 1850

Chapter I.

"Without private property...men would remain savages for ever."<sup>1</sup>

Nova Scotia settlers shared a common world view with their British, American, and European peers. Even though the period from 1788 to 1850 was marked by revolutions, wars, and great economic and social change, the mood of the times tended towards an optimistic belief that both man and society were continually advancing. Western man boasted of the new scientific and technical knowledge that he was rapidly accumulating, knowledge which was leading to an increased mastery of nature, material prosperity, and global domination.

Consequently, Euro-Americans saw themselves as the beneficiaries of a lengthy historical process which had produced a superior, vital and energetic civilization. Of this civilization, they were self-consciously proud. Scholars searched the past, seeking to identify the unique traits which had led to European success and dominance, while at the same time, they assumed that the lack of these characteristics explained the backwardness of non-Western

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Henry Home Kames, Sketches of the History of Man, (1778; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Anglistica & Americana, Reprint, 1968) p. 123.

peoples. During this period it was a common belief that these superior traits could be imparted to lesser peoples, thereby elevating them close to European standards. Not everyone believed that the blessings of civilization could improve the lot of mankind, for a portion of the population believed, with Aristotle, that some men were natural slaves. This, however, was the minority view, the majority optimistically believed that all humankind, no matter how savage or barbaric, had some potential for improvement.

The characteristics which came to be identified with Western society were identified as universal traits, for Europeans saw their image reflected in the rest of the world. As a result, they believed that their social and moral values were all-encompassing and inherent in all of mankind. These qualities were explained as natural laws which, being derived from nature, were inviolate and innate. Inevitably, ethnocentrically defined natural laws, based on the values and beliefs of European capitalist societies, when applied to non-European societies led to misunderstanding.

It is important to understand how Westerners of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries defined "civilization" and how they understood the natural laws on



which it rested.<sup>1</sup> A discussion of some of these concepts will help us to understand Nova Scotians' attitudes toward the "uncivilized" people in their midst, the Micmac. These concepts and beliefs include particular assumptions about the significance of human nature, the state of nature, property, reason, progress, order, virtue, and race.

#### 1. Human nature and the State of Nature.

Eighteenth and early nineteenth century conceptions of man and society were based on hypothetical and abstract models, models which explained man's development and helped him to comprehend and consequently improve his social, political and economic life.

From the time they were first formulated, two conflicting models of human nature, articulated by Hobbes and Rousseau, were extremely influential. Both views had deep roots in the mythic past, for in their work we can recognize the previously identified wild man and the ideal natural man. Hobbes' concept of man and the state of nature were in the same tradition as the wild man of the woods tales while Rousseau was inspired by myths of the Golden

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<sup>1</sup> In the late eighteenth century the word was so new that Samuel Johnson was reluctant to include it in his dictionary. Boswell, more in tune with the times, argued for its inclusion as it expressed the opposite of barbarity. Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd. ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 257.

Age. From these legendary elements, Hobbes and Rousseau speculated on the nature of man and the origin of civil society.

As C.B. Macpherson notes, Hobbes' theories, first published in the middle of the seventeenth century, helped shape the intellectual climate during the following two hundred and fifty years.<sup>1</sup> According to Hobbes, humankind in its original state was always in conflict as all men competed with each other for power. Civilization in such a state was impossible:

In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, no use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall fears, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.<sup>2</sup>

To illustrate that this state is not strictly hypothetical, Hobbes states that this is the condition in which many North American natives live:

For the savage people in many places of America, the government of small Families, the concord whereof dependeth on naturall lust, have no government at all; and live at this day in that brutish manner . . . .<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. B. Macpherson, intro. to Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, (1651; Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1968), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Hobbes, p.186.

<sup>3</sup> Hobbes, p. 187.

Hobbes believed that law, order and security were achieved when men entered into a Social Contract, whereby some individual rights and powers were transferred to a sovereign power in exchange for security and protection. With restraints imposed upon men and with the protection of higher authorities, men were then free to indulge their natural competitive instincts in the marketplace.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, Hobbes' theories were not as universally valid as his followers believed; for instance, native societies lacked the values implicit in Hobbes' model. American Indians were not perceived to be acquisitive, competitive, thrifty or, according to European standards, hard working. They seemed to have no codified system of law nor did they seem inclined to willingly submit to higher authorities. They appeared to glorify war and were frequently in a state of conflict with neighbouring tribes. Looked at from this narrow point of view, the only place for native Americans in Hobbes' theoretical construction was in the pre-Social Contract, lawless state of nature.

Hobbes' view provided the intellectual foundation for a stereotype of native peoples which, in an attenuated form,

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<sup>6</sup> This was one of the factors behind the widespread acceptance of Hobbes' hypothetical model: it was perfectly suited to a capitalist society based on freely competing individuals in an open market. C.B. Macpherson, intro. to Hobbes, p. 52. It is also important to note that Hobbes' interpretation of man's base nature accorded with the Christian doctrine of Original Sin.

continues to this day. The myth of the wild man was converted, using the methods of science, into fact and natural law. Hobbes' influence is apparent in an article published in the Nova Scotia Magazine in 1791. The explorer Meares' description of the little known Nootka conforms to Hobbes' interpretation of native life in North America. Meares describes the Nootka as a vagrant people who wander about, sleeping wherever they can and have the inclination. They make no fires for fear of their enemies and seem to be in a constant state of hostility. Moreover, he feels sure that they are cannibals.<sup>7</sup> Meares had to change these views somewhat when he learned more about the Nootka,<sup>8</sup> but his misrepresentations were entirely due to the prevailing Hobbesian point of view. Many Europeans' encounters with native people were similarly distorted by their preconceptions.

While Hobbes' concepts were widely accepted, Rousseau proposed contrary views which formed the basis for an alternative intellectual tradition. Unlike Hobbes, Rousseau postulated that the hypothetical social contract which

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<sup>7</sup> John Meares, "Narrative of the Suffering of the Crew of the Nootka, in Prince William's Sound, during the Winter in 1786-7, Nova Scotia Magazine, March 1791, pp. 153-4. Meares, a fur trader, encountered the Nootka in 1788 on the west coast of Vancouver Island. John Dewhirst, "John Meares", The Canadian Encyclopedia, V. 2, p. 1318.

<sup>8</sup> John Meares, "Account of an Indian Entertainment", Nova Scotia Magazine, March 1791, p. 170.

formed the foundation of society did not benefit mankind; rather the civilization that developed corrupted men, making them both wicked and miserable. Private property was identified as the source of all social ills;<sup>9</sup> from it sprang wars, murders and every other kind of misfortune and horror.<sup>10</sup> Rousseau, contrary to misconceptions which arose when his works were first published, did not advocate a return to the original state of nature, for his first man knew neither vice nor virtue, but lived a solitary life based solely on instinct and sensation. He was, however, naturally good, being endowed with pity, an instinctive and natural virtue which in civilized society was often blunted by reason and reflection.<sup>11</sup>

Rousseau, like Hobbes, looked to the native peoples of North America to illustrate his theories.<sup>12</sup> He found them to be in the ideal condition for mankind, midway between brute sensation and the ills of modern civilization. This

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<sup>9</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, ed. Lester G. Crocker (1762; New York: Washington Square Press, 1967) p. xviii.

<sup>10</sup> Rousseau, p. 211.

<sup>11</sup> Rousseau, p. xii.

<sup>12</sup> Both Hobbes and Rousseau could have found ample evidence to support their opposing theories, as the reports of the explorers, from the fifteenth century on, were shaped by two preconceptions: the wild cannibal or the natural man living in a land of plenty. See Hugh Honour, The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time (New York: Pantheon, 1975).

state was not the original state of nature:

...it is for want of sufficiently distinguishing ideas, and observing at how great a distance these people were from the first state of nature, that so many authors have hastily concluded that man is naturally cruel, and requires a civil government to make him more gentle; whereas nothing is more gentle than he in his primitive state, when placed by nature at an equal distance from the stupidity of brutes, and the pernicious enlightenment of civilized man....<sup>13</sup>

This primitive condition, believed Rousseau, was the best for mankind for it represented the youth of the world; all so-called improvements made since that time had only led to man's physical, mental and moral deterioration.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that Rousseau's savages were as uncivilized as Hobbes'. The essential difference in the two models lies in their interpretations of the nature of man and in the effect which civilization has had on mankind. Hobbes' natural man is in a perpetual state of conflict until a social contract establishes harmony and order, while Rousseau's savage is content until private property brings dissension into his world. For Hobbes, civilization brings order out of chaos, for Rousseau, it destroys the freedom, equality and peace of the state of nature.

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<sup>13</sup> Rousseau, p. 219.

<sup>14</sup> Robert A. Nisbet, Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) p. 145.

Europeans in North America were apt to choose a Hobbesian interpretation of the state of nature and human nature. The wilderness appeared to them to be dangerous, as were its denizens, both man and beast. In fact, native peoples were believed to share qualities with the animals with whom they shared a home: both were cunning, had a keen sense of smell, and had an innate ability to find their way in the trackless wilds. The newcomers felt compelled to impose order on the treacherous forests and on the people and animals who inhabited them. The wilderness had to be subdued and the Indians eliminated or civilized.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, Rousseau's natural man became further idealized by nineteenth century romantics who tended to live in urban environments far removed from the frontier. As industry transformed both the landscape and the lives of workers, the appeal of simple, innocent people who lived in harmony with nature grew. Instead of finding terror in the North American forests, romantics perceived them to be sanctuaries which offered solitude, freedom and the opportunity to renew the spirit.<sup>16</sup> In this natural world, where the Noble Savage reigned, the forces of civilization

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<sup>15</sup> Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 3rd ed., (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982) pp. 23-29.

<sup>16</sup> Nash, p. 47.

could only be destructive.

## 2. Private Property and Agrarian Idealism

A fundamental theoretical assumption of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was that the civilized state was founded on the institution of private property. Property was believed to be inherent in nature; it was one of nature's laws which existed before men lived in societies, before laws and institutions were created. This concept of private property as a natural law, "unalterable as the structure of the universe",<sup>17</sup> held sway from the time that John Locke articulated it in the seventeenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century. According to Locke, man had the natural right to property created by his labour. Moreover, labour gave value to property, for property, such as land, was almost worthless if it was not improved. Once land became privately owned and was improved, men felt a need to protect their investments. Accordingly, they joined together in communities and created institutions which could provide stability and order.<sup>18</sup> From this foundation of individual and communal effort, civilization developed. Without property and the need to protect it there would be

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<sup>17</sup> R.B. Schlatter, Private Property: The History of an Idea (New York: Russell & Russell) p. 152.

<sup>18</sup> R. B. Schlatter, pp. 154-5.



no social structure, only chaos and anarchy.

Locke's theory of natural rights and the labour theory of value was admirably suited to the needs of countries with rapidly expanding frontiers. However, in Nova Scotia, Locke's theories were counterpoised with other rights. In the colony, utilitarian and historical justifications for property rights held that land was vested in the crown. Legally the crown may have had distribution rights, but some settlers, while probably knowing nothing about John Locke, were firm adherents of his theory. Squatters frequently settled on a piece of property, improved it, and obtained a licence of occupation. Frequently these properties were on land used, and in some case promised by the government, to the Micmac. However the land was acquired, the labour theory of value was generally applied. If land was not improved during a given period of time it reverted to the Crown.

In reference to land, the labour that gave value to property was almost always related to agriculture. Even though industrialization was beginning to change the landscape and the economy, eighteenth century agrarian idealism continued to shape ideas of appropriate labour and land use. It was commonly believed that "the sedentary and cultivating state is that to which mankind is most naturally

inclined."<sup>19</sup> Only agriculture could make men civilized since it was the farmer who tamed the earth, who transformed the potential offered by nature into an actuality which sustained him, his family, and the wider community.<sup>20</sup> His products allowed a specialization of labour, thus freeing creative innovators to develop a higher state of culture. A Nova Scotian promoting local agriculture claimed: "every State ... will flourish and abound in the conveniences of life, in exact proportion to the industry of its inhabitants and their skill in agriculture." As proof, he claimed that Great Britain's wealth and power owed as much to agriculture as to manufacturing and commerce.<sup>21</sup>

Agriculture, however, did more than benefit the state; it also benefited the individual. As Roy Harvey Pearce explains in Savagism and Civilization, the assumption that men had a natural right to land by occupation and labour was associated with the belief that men gained status and

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<sup>19</sup> Anon., "The Family Oeconomy and the Employment of the Gypsies", Nova Scotia Magazine, Sept. 1789, p. 259.

<sup>20</sup> Anthony Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) p. 91.

<sup>21</sup> Anon., "Plan for a Society for Promoting Agriculture in the Province of Nova Scotia", Nova Scotia Magazine, November 1789, p. 399.

dignity by exercising that right.<sup>22</sup> Their interest in their property was assumed to induce thrifty and industrious behaviour, behaviour which led to prosperity for themselves as well as for the state. Property was also assumed to give farmers a measure of freedom and independence, but at the same time, their desire to protect their property made them staunch supporters of the existing order. Their enlightened self-interest in stability and order qualified property owners to participate in government. Accordingly, natives or non-natives without property were also without power.

Agrarian idealism and the natural rights of property were united in international law by the Swiss jurist, Vattel. His Law of Nations became a standard authority in North America, providing legal and moral justification for appropriating land from the native peoples.<sup>23</sup> According to Vattel:

The whole earth is destined to furnish sustenance for its inhabitants; but it can not do this unless it be cultivated. Every nation is therefore bound by natural law to cultivate the land which has fallen to its share .... Those who still pursue this idle [i.e., hunting] mode of life occupy more land than they would have need of under a system of honest labour, and they may not complain if other more

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<sup>22</sup> Roy Harvey Pearce, Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind, 2nd ed., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965) p. 68.

<sup>23</sup> A copy of this work is listed in "Catalogue of Books in the Library at King's College in the University of Windsor, 1803". See also Pearce, pp. 70-71 and Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977) p. 104.

industrious Nations, too confined at home, should come and occupy part of their lands. Thus, while the conquest of the civilized Empires of Peru and Mexico was a notorious usurpation, the establishment of various colonies upon the continent of North America might, if done within just limits, have been entirely lawful. The peoples of those vast tracts of land rather roamed over them than inhabited them.<sup>24</sup>

Thus legal authority and both popular and educated opinion were united in the belief that land which was not converted to agricultural purposes was of no value. It followed that only those who would "improve" the land had a right to it.

Consequently, along with other native North Americans, the Micmac were thought to have no right to their land because they did not enhance its utility. Hunting and fishing had no place in the labour theory of value. Little thought was given to the Indian need for subsistence and the labour it entailed. To Nova Scotians, many originally from Great Britain, hunting and fishing were merely leisure activities of the wealthy. Native men, because they did not farm, were thought to be lazy and shiftless. Native women, it was commonly believed, "like females of all savage countries, undergo all the laborious work."<sup>25</sup> However, men could be induced to labour if they were instilled with a

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<sup>24</sup> E. de Vattel in Pearce, op. cit. pp. 70-71.

<sup>25</sup> Anon., "New Account of the Patagonians", Nova Scotia Magazine, July 1790, p. 13.

love for exclusive property.<sup>26</sup> When settled, wandering people would actually become more rational.<sup>27</sup> By labouring on their privately owned land, the Micmac, it was believed, would acquire the virtues of civilized men: self-respect, thrift, regularity, and industry.

As the value of Indian labour was disregarded, so too was the native concept of communal land holding.<sup>28</sup> While it was generally believed that private property led to individual and community advancement, communal ownership of land was thought to actually hinder progress. This was because Europeans believed that holding land in common dulled individual initiative, thereby "fostering imprudence, parasitism and dependence".<sup>29</sup> Regarded as a retrograde system, communal ownership was thought to be inconsistent with human nature;<sup>40</sup> only private property could lead to

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<sup>26</sup> Pearce, p. 68

<sup>27</sup> Anon., "The Family Economy and Employment of the Gypsies", Nova Scotia Magazine, Sept. 1789, p.248

<sup>28</sup> See Thomas R. Berger, A Long and Terrible Shadow: White Values and Native Rights in America, 1492-1992 (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991) p. 100 for a discussion of Indian concepts of land tenure.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur James Todd, Theories of Social Progress: A Critical Study of the Attempts to Formulate the Conditions of Human Advance. (New York: Macmillan, 1924), p. 326.

<sup>40</sup> H.T. Dickinson, Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth Century Britain, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1977), p. 127.

lead to progress, prosperity and enlightenment. As the renowned writer, Lord Kames, stated: "Without private property, there would be no industry; and without industry, men would remain savages for ever."<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Reason and the Ideology of Order

If private property and the social contract were the foundation of civilization, reason was its law. Since the Enlightenment had put an end to man's doubts and superstitious fears, the entire universe was conceived to be based on reason, harmony, and order. Through reason, Western man was assured of comprehending and ultimately dominating his world. God, too, was rational. The ordered and well-regulated world he had created was gradually revealing its secrets under the scientific, reasoned enquiries of man.

Underlying the assumption that Western man was a rational creature living in an ordered, harmonious world lingered a fear of hidden and potentially explosive passions. Constant vigilance was needed to ensure that these passions were subdued by reason. This is reflected in an item in a Halifax paper, The Pearl, on the "Necessity of Controlling the Passions". The author states that it should

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<sup>3</sup> Kames, p. 123.

"be our early lesson to subject the passions, appetites and desires, to the control and guidance of reason." When passions "are allowed to rage with unbridled fury, they commit fearful ravages on the character...." Ruin is the inevitable result."

This ideology of reason and order provided an intellectual framework for Western man which satisfied personal, social and spiritual needs. As individuals, men and women defined themselves by their rational, virtuous behaviour. On a social and spiritual level, order and faith in reason provided structure and certainty. Everyone had his station in the world and was expected to fulfil his duty as God had ordained. Of course, this world view favoured those in authority, those with property, those who had most to lose if their hierarchical society became unbalanced.

Everything that was negatively perceived, such as disorder, chaos, anarchy, and unbridled passion, was projected on to uncivilized peoples. Designated as such, native North Americans were thought to live in a state of anarchy subject only to their feelings and desires. On to them were projected the dark side of Western man, the passions that were submerged beneath a virtuous exterior.

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" Anon., "Necessity of Controlling the Passions", The Pearl, Sept. 21, 1838, 2(38) p. 301.

They served as examples of what would happen to civilized man if order and reason did not prevail: reversion to the condition of Hobbes' savage.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4. Progress

Some Europeans did concede that once, centuries ago, their ancestors had been in the same condition as the North American Indians. But through the centuries they had advanced far beyond any other known society, past or present. Their elevated position was attributed to progress, interpreted to mean the gradual, cumulative improvement of technological, social, and moral aspects of society.

The idea of progress had special significance in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Not only did it suggest that the dominant position of Europeans in the world was inevitable, it also justified the conquest of so-called inferior peoples. The rationale that advanced

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<sup>45</sup> In this era when people defined themselves by their civilized behaviour, the native peoples were not the only ones to be designated as savages or barbarians. Often described as "wild" and "uncivilized" were particular nationalities, such as the Irish, and members of the lower class, such as sailors. Shared characteristics were perceived to be drunkenness and the general inability to restrain their emotions. Highlanders at Arisaig, Nova Scotia were incensed that Richard John Uniacke, in a public address, referred to them as barbarians. Colonial Patriot, March 28 1828, 1(17) p. 129.



peoples must help their less fortunate brethren to "progress" served to vindicate colonizers' efforts to control subject populations.

During this period Europeans interpreted their own history as a continual progression from savagery to civilization. Other societies of the past or the present were compared to the stages that Western civilization had already passed through. This historical approach, devised in the late eighteenth century by Scottish scholars, was called Conjectural History.<sup>46</sup> In the nineteenth century it evolved into the Comparative Method, a system used by early social scientists as well as historians.<sup>47</sup> Both of these methods involved arranging societies in order of their advancement, with hunting and gathering societies at the bottom, succeeded by pastoral and agricultural societies, and culminating in commercial societies.<sup>48</sup> Societies had to advance through each stage, slowly, continuously, and gradually. Since all societies followed a similar pattern of development, comparisons could be made between recorded cultures of the past and present day "rude" societies, if

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<sup>46</sup> Pearce, pp. 82-89.

<sup>47</sup> J.W. Burrow, Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 11-14.

<sup>48</sup> Duncan Forbes, intro. to Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society, (1767; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), p. xxi.

they were at the same stage."<sup>49</sup> Another assumption was made: by studying hunting and gathering societies of the present, one could learn about one's ancestors when they were at a similar stage.<sup>50</sup> Societies at the lowest stage of development were defined as savage. The next stage, pastoral or agricultural societies, were considered to be barbarous.<sup>51</sup> The commercial stage was that of modern industrial societies.

It should be noted that political and social theorists like Adam Ferguson, did not intend the terms "savage" and "barbarian" to be pejorative, rather these terms were classificatory, designating particular stages of development. They had a supplementary classificatory function, being comparable to the other terms used to describe elements in a ranked society, such as yeomen, mechanic, gentleman, etc.

Acceptance of the concept of developmental history meant that the Hobbesian model of human nature must also be adopted. Only by assuming that man originally lived in chaos, fear and uncertainty, could history be interpreted as

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<sup>49</sup> Burrow, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Pearce, p. 49.

<sup>51</sup> The economic stages were devised by Adam Smith, the moral stages of savagery and barbarism by Adam Ferguson. Forbes, intro. to Adam Ferguson, p. xxiii.

continual improvement. Rousseau's interpretation had to be rejected as it suggested a deterioration of man's state, not its advancement.

This developmental approach served several purposes. First, it provided an historical framework that traced the progress of Western civilization from savagism to refinement. On this scaffolding, scholars defined steps in the process through the examination of historical records and the study of contemporary savage societies<sup>32</sup>. Second, it provided an explanation for the superior cultural achievements of particular peoples. In this regard, the role of the environment or climate was believed to be of primary importance.<sup>33</sup> Warm climates were thought to cause a population to be naturally indolent and incapable of industry. As a writer in the Nova Scotian Magazine put it, people living in such climates have "a volatile sensibility, or irritability" which renders them weak.<sup>34</sup> The physical environment of North America was also believed to have retarded the progress of its indigenous peoples. The

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<sup>32</sup> Theoreticians' information was acquired second hand from travellers' and explorers' accounts and from the records of colonial administrators.

<sup>33</sup> Climate includes the factors which today we refer to as the environment such as climatic conditions and geographic location.

<sup>34</sup> Anon., "Character of the Moors", Nova Scotian Magazine, Jan. 1790, p. 36.

wilderness in which natives lived made life difficult, for almost all of their time was devoted to obtaining subsistence. No time was available for arts and leisure, thus ensuring that native peoples remained in a savage state. Needless to say, the ideal environment was agricultural, the ideal climate, temperate. Such climates engendered industry and rational thought.

A third function which the comparative method served was to create methods for comprehending and dealing with other cultures. It offered a solution to the vexing question of how to "elevate" uncivilized peoples. An article in the Nova Scotia Magazine points out the difficulties involved in helping "rude" nations:

The higher rates of improvement cannot, indeed impart much of their knowledge to the lower. Our luxuries and improvements suit them not. In order to arrive at these, they must pass through certain steps of a progress and must learn to want, and be gradually roused to exertions and industry."

According to this belief, missing a stage in development would be dangerous to a simple people. Savage societies had to grow and develop just as children matured through stages. Therefore it was essential that they pass through the agricultural stage before becoming part of modern commercial and industrial society. If a stage was missed less advanced societies would suffer irreparable harm. Euro-Americans had

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" Ibid., p. 36.

many examples before them of the destructive influence they had had on other cultures. The concept of progress explained how their superior values and customs were so anomalously harmful: people at a lower stage of development were simply not ready for them.

The concept of progress on which the comparative method was based served a fourth function. It gave direction to the future, for progress was not only inevitable, it was endless: man would continue to advance. Some Westerners applied the concepts of perfectibility and progress exclusively to their own society and believed that those peoples who were sunk in the depths of depravity or ignorance could never advance. It was unfortunate, but such societies had be cast off in order for superior nations to continue on the path to further improvements and refinements. On the other hand, many believed that the concept of progress meant that all men, no matter how savage they were at present, were capable of advancement, as long as the changes took place at a slow and careful rate without missing any step of the hierarchical ladder.

## 5. Virtue

According to the traditional tripartite division of human nature, mind, body and spirit reflected rational,

emotional and moral faculties. While all men had these faculties, it was believed that the nature of those who were uncivilized was dominated by their emotions. Only those who were civilized were able to use the higher faculties of reason and virtue in order to subdue their baser elements.

Reason, as we have seen, was to be attained through the acquisition of property and an agricultural way of life; virtue, on the other hand was to be acquired through religion. Christianity, as Bishop Charles Inglis claimed in 1789, is the "only sure basis of virtue...[i]t inculcates inward purity, benevolence [and] produces order and peace in communities."<sup>14</sup> In Nova Scotia, Christianity, for most settlers and for the establishment, implied almost exclusively the Protestant religion.

A narrow interpretation of Christianity left the Micmac again outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour and belief. As Roman Catholics, the Micmac were either considered to be adherents of an idolatrous, superstitious religion or, at best, to belong to a Church that was not highly valued. As a Nova Scotian Presbyterian minister wrote about the Micmac in 1846, "Nothing is necessary to elevate them to a state of social and intellectual dignity, but the holy light of

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Inglis, "Letter from Charles Bishop of Nova Scotia", Nova Scotia Magazine, July 1789, p. 158.

Christianity." Apparently their religion was of little significance, for the writer is aware that "They are all Roman Catholics, and ... highly devotional in their way."

## 6. Race

Questions of race, that is the physical differences between people, were troublesome during this period. This had been a contentious issue ever since the sixteenth century when it had become necessary to incorporate strange, newly discovered people into a world view based on Christian theology. Suspicions arose that these people, so unlike Europeans, were not men at all, but were descendants of pre-Adamic races. However, the Christian religion insisted that all humanity, regardless of differing physical characteristics, were children of Adam. Consequently, conventional opinion maintained the unity and common brotherhood of man; even so the controversy failed to disappear.

As new scientific and archaeological information appeared, it was incorporated into a multitude of theories which served to explain the origins of different species of man. The debate was essentially divided between the

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<sup>17</sup> John Sprott, "The Indians", Nova Scotian, April 6, 1846.

monogenists, those who advocated a single origin for all of mankind, and the polygenists, who believed that races were created separately and formed distinct biological units. Polygenists often linked their diverse races together into a hierarchical system, the Great Chain of Being. According to this concept, mankind was ranked with Western Europeans at the top of the chain and with the most primitive people at the bottom. This chain gave the theory scientific credibility, but in this pre-Darwinian period, use of the great chain of being did not imply that one species evolved into another; each species was a fixed, immutable type, created by God."

Monogenists argued that all varieties of men were sons of Adam, but each type had developed distinct physical characteristics as a result of living in different climatic and geographical locations. This environmental argument assumed the potential of man to change, to adapt to new environments, an ability which later race theorists rejected. It also reflects the optimistic belief that man is capable of change and will improve if removed from a degrading environment. Until the mid-nineteenth century, informed opinion, both scientific and theological, adhered to this theory. To argue otherwise was to be associated

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" John S. Haller, Jr. Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 73.



with atheism and blasphemy."

All of these ideas, concepts of human nature and the State of Nature, property, reason, progress, virtue, and race made up the framework of European "civilization." Civilization defined ideas, knowledge, institutions, and behaviour; it was the touchstone by which Europeans and their North American descendants judged themselves and others. Those who did not live up to these arbitrary standards were found wanting.

Even manners were defined by ideas of civilized behaviour. The behaviour of civilized men and women was always refined, whereas the behaviour of savages was influenced by their activities. As Lord Kames states:

the daily practice of slaughtering innocent animals for food, hardens men in cruelty: more savage than bears or wolves, they are cruel even to their own kind.<sup>60</sup>

Cruelty, he continues leads to "roughness and harshness of manners."<sup>61</sup>

The Micmac in Nova Scotia had only to become more rational, refine their manners, settle on their own private

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<sup>59</sup> Thomas F. Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America, (New York: Schocken, 1965), pp. 40-41.

<sup>60</sup> Kames, p. 341.

<sup>61</sup> Kames, p. 365.

property, take up farming, and adopt the Protestant religion in order to take the first step on the path to civilized behaviour. Nova Scotians felt that the doorway to progress and improvement was open, even to the Micmac, and were puzzled that few native people were enticed by what the newcomers believed to be an obviously superior way of life.

## Chapter II

### "Rude Children of the Forest"

An examination of the literature that Nova Scotians were writing and reading should illuminate their attitude towards native people in general and the Micmac in particular. This chapter deals with imaginative literature in the form of poetry, sketches and fiction. Over the period to be examined there is a gradual increase in the material written by those born and raised in Nova Scotia. During the eighteenth century, reading material was usually taken from British or American sources, but by the 1830s and 1840s, Nova Scotian poets, journalists, historians, theologians and scientists were expressing themselves in local newspapers and journals.<sup>1</sup> Lengthy works of fiction are rare, but there is one of particular interest: a novel by a New Brunswick author, Huyghue. Huyghue's story, Argimou: A Legend of the Micmac, was published in Halifax, after first appearing as a serial in The Amaranth, a New Brunswick periodical.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See D.C. Harvey, "Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotia", Dalhousie Review, 13, 1933-34, pp. 1-22.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Douglas Smith Huyghue, Argimou: A Legend of the Micmac, Halifax, 1847. Reprinted with an introduction by Gwendolyn Davies, Sackville, N.B.: R.B. Bell Library, Mount Allison University, 1977. Originally published in The Amaranth under the pseudonym "Eugene".

The important questions to be addressed in this chapter are: how did these writers, foreign and native born, depict native peoples, in particular, the Micmac? Does the literary evidence suggest any real concern for the difficulties that the Micmac faced or were descriptions of the Indians circumscribed by literary conventions of the time?

Before addressing these questions, the relevant literary conventions, that is the stereotypes of the Noble Savage and the Demonic Savage, need elaboration. These conventions, with their antecedents in tales of the wild men of the woods and in myths of the Golden Age, had been given intellectual foundations by Hobbes and Rousseau. Both conventions assumed that people denoted as savages were wild, uncivilized, and existed in the lowest stage of development. Moreover, savagery was usually associated with unrestrained behaviour. In this context, comparisons were made with children who had not yet learned to restrain their passions. Thus native peoples became children in two senses — in direct comparison to uninhibited children and in their immature stage of historical development. The romantic perception differed slightly. Romantics also perceived native peoples to be child-like, but their interpretation correlated Indians to the innocence and purity of

childhood;<sup>3</sup> immaturity in this case implied that their behaviour was naturally virtuous and just. Indians had no need for artificial constraints or for penal codes and laws that were essential in European society. Neither were they restrained by the social conventions which influenced the behaviour of Europeans. Free of restraints, both social and political, their natural innocence and virtue ensured behaviour that was beyond reproach. They represented the youth of the world before decay and corruption set in.

Aside from a few characteristics which the Noble Savage and the Demonic Savage shared, they differed considerably. These differences can be outlined through an analysis of two articles published in Nova Scotia Magazine in 1791. In April "A General View of the Native Americans in their Military Character" appeared.<sup>4</sup> It is tempting to assume that this gruesome depiction of cruelty, torture and cannibalism was criticized and that the sketch, "Characteristiks(sic) of the American Indians",<sup>5</sup> that

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<sup>3</sup> This too was a relatively recent concept which paralleled the Romantics' interest in the Noble Savage. The alternative view was that children were born with original sin.

<sup>4</sup> Anon., "A General View of the Native Americans in their Military Character", Nova Scotia Magazine, April 1791, pp. 212-216. Hereinafter referred to as "A General View ...".

<sup>5</sup> Anon., "Characteristiks of the American Indian", Nova Scotia Magazine, Nov. 1791, pp. 668-9. Hereinafter referred to as "Characteristiks...".

appeared seven months later describing the peace loving Noble Savage was selected to show another point of view. Neither the Noble Savage of "Characteristiks..." or the Demonic Savage of "A General View..." bears much resemblance to reality, but both are an accurate reflection of the contradictory attitudes which prevailed at the time. By examining them in detail we can perceive the defining characteristics of each image and also deduce some of the functions that they served.

The dominating characteristic of native people, according to the anonymous author of "A General View ..." is cruelty, a cruelty due, he claims, to the Indians' sole occupation being war or preparing for it. His description of the torture of a prisoner was bound to horrify and titillate his readers. The savages begin, he says, by pulling out the prisoner's fingernails. Then they pull off his fingers, one of which is placed in a pipe and smoked. They continue to:

cut circles ... and gashes in the fleshy part of his limbs, which they sear immediately with red hot irons ... they pull off this flesh thus mangled and roasted bit by bit, devouring it with greediness, and smearing their faces with the blood, in an enthusiasm of horror and fury.

After more torment, described with great relish, the prisoner is finally put to death. Then the body is "put into the kettle, and this barbarous employment is succeed by

a feast as barbarous."<sup>6</sup>

It is not just an all-consuming interest in war that accounts for these bestial actions. The root of this behaviour was commonly believed to lie in the savages' close relationship to the animal world. Instinct predominated in those who had not learned restraint, who had not taken the first step on the path to civilization. Evidence of this close kinship is suggested by the author. He states that native Americans can detect the presence of their enemies from the smell of smoke and, from footprints, can identify the number of people, the length of time since they passed and, sometimes, the tribe.<sup>7</sup> Another characteristic of native people which was deemed to be instinctive rather than learned was their uncanny ability to negotiate their way in a seemingly trackless wilderness.<sup>8</sup>

The author acknowledges savage virtues such as vigilance, patience, strength, bravery, and the ability to endure pain but these were commonly identified as a natural development from a way of life which concentrated on war. As Pearce states in Savagism and Civilization, savage

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<sup>6</sup> Anon., Nova Scotia Magazine, April 1791, pp. 214-216.

<sup>7</sup> Anon., Nova Scotia Magazine, April 1791, p. 213.

<sup>8</sup> This ability, of course, was learned. The Micmac tale, "A Child Nourished by a Bear" deals with the dangers of getting lost in the forest. Silas Tertius Rand, Legends of the Micmac, (New York: Longmans, 1894), pp. 259-262.

virtues, like savage vices, were considered to be uniquely savage.'

This cruel, bloodthirsty savage embodied all of the qualities which civilized man abhorred. As such, he served a useful function, becoming a "symbol for all that over which civilization must triumph."<sup>10</sup> This function is clearly apparent in "A General View ...." The author claims that his description of native cruelty is morally edifying because it points out the "advantages of Christian religion (compassion), and the value of commerce, art of civilized life and the lights of literature."<sup>11</sup> His readers are being shown what they had triumphed over. The contrast between the two ways of life, according to the author, reveals the vast gulf between the races, an impassable gulf created by centuries of development and progress on the part of Europeans.

Descriptions of Demonic Savages also served as a warning, especially to those living on the edge of the frontier where freedom could lead to license. The author of "A General View ..." is aware of these temptations. He emphasizes Indian cruelty in order to illustrate "what an inconceivable degree of barbarity the passions of men let

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<sup>9</sup> Pearce, p. 104.

<sup>10</sup> Pearce, p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> Anon., Nova Scotia Magazine, April 1791, p. 215.



loose will carry them."<sup>12</sup> Aware of their own submerged passions, Europeans projected these fears onto the "savage." Because the Demonic Savage represented negative qualities, his image helped the reader clarify ideal values such as rationality, control, and compassion.

There was another dimension to the villainous savage. He not only embodied the antithesis of civilization in reference to the desired characteristics of the inhabitants of a new world, he also served as a human extension of the wilderness.<sup>13</sup> For those attempting to prevail over a hostile wilderness, the Indian was an animal-like being "hid in the bosom of hideous, and almost boundless forests",<sup>14</sup> He and his wilderness home had to be brought under control, by force if necessary.

As a literary convention, the concept of the Demonic Savage served a further purpose: it provided thrills for those who read captivity narratives, the pulp fiction of the period. In these adventure stories the Indians were always the villains who killed and captured helpless settlers. Due to the grace of God, captives inevitably escaped and returned to civilized society to tell their tales of horror

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>13</sup> Monkman, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> Anon., Nova Scotia Magazine, April 1791, p. 213.

and redemption.<sup>15</sup>

Admirers of the idealized Noble Savage also saw the subduing of the wilderness and its native inhabitants, as well as the advancement of civilization, as inevitable. However, they did not see this conquest in terms of a victory over anarchy and evil, instead the coming of civilization inspired feelings of regret and nostalgia. Rousseau's followers contrasted the simplicity, virtue and natural goodness of the native peoples to the materialism and hypocrisy of civilized life.<sup>16</sup> Typical of this point of view is the author of "Characteristiks of the American Indians."<sup>17</sup> He clearly admires the native people, but his portrait of them is no more realistic than that expressed in "A General View ...". He begins by refuting those who cling to the Hobbesian interpretation of the natives' character: "It is a great mistake to think those people are barbarians, always thirsting after human blood." To the claim that they are solely devoted to war, he responds that they are "the greatest peace lovers." He does, however, acknowledge that

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<sup>15</sup> Gwendolyn Davies includes a brief discussion of Maritime captivity tales in "Belles in the Backwoods: A Study of Fiction in Nineteenth-Century Maritime Periodicals", Colloquium on Atlantic Provinces Literature, (Saint John: Atlantic Canada Institute, 1977), pp.46-47.

<sup>16</sup> Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism, 2nd ed., (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Anon., Nova Scotia Magazine, Nov. 1791, pp. 668-69.

when their country or liberty are at stake they will fight with "heroic ardour and contempt of death."<sup>18</sup>

The author links native peoples to the past, but to a different past than that espoused by those who took the Hobbesian point of view. Like other admirers of the Noble Savage, he compares the Indians to the heroic peoples of ancient times, in this instance to the brave and noble Romans.<sup>19</sup> He relates the ceremonies and acclamations on the return of a war party to the honours of a Roman triumph. He also finds in native customs the germs of those institutions which characterize civilized man. He suggests that the War Dance with its songs, stories and rhythmic movement "might have given the first rise to tragedy."<sup>20</sup> Songs, stories and pictographs are described as being a means of transmitting information from one generation to another, indicating the beginning of a sense of history. Native oratorical skills are noted: "their speech forms a poetical language, or rather a sort of divine enthusiasm."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 668.

<sup>19</sup> Almost two hundred years previously Marc Lescarbot likened the Micmac to the Spartans. The History of New France, ed. W.L. Grant, (3 vols; Champlain Society, Toronto, 1907-14), passim.

<sup>20</sup> Anon., Novs Scotia Magazine, Nov. 1791, p. 669.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 668.

Another admirable virtue was their generous hospitality:

Strangers, who take sanctuary among them, of whatever nation or colour, they protect with the most scrupulous sanctity of honour. Sooner than deliver up any refugee, or violate what they think the laws of hospitality, they will pay his debts for him, or give the value of him in skins to his master. Nor do they rest ...until they have given him lands for a maintenance, and naturalized him among their nations."<sup>12</sup>

Even prisoners are treated with humanity and hospitality:

"once they have secured their prisoners, they never use them ill, and in times of the greatest want, they will rather suffer themselves, their wives and children, to starve, than to see their prisoners destitute of their allowance."<sup>13</sup>

Such generosity, the author suggests, reflects the virtue and simplicity of primitive ages.

Nevertheless, the author concedes that, along with all their "shining virtues," native peoples do have some vices. Evoking concepts of cultural relativity, he reminds his readers that European nations now considered to be civilized were guilty of similar actions in the past.

Another aspect of the Noble Savage which is implied but is not made explicit in "Characteristike ..." is the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 669.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 669.

harmonious relationship of the native to his environment. Just as with the Demonic Savage, the Noble Savage served as a human extension of the wilderness. But rather than being a place of evil, to the romantics, the wilderness was a holy place, resplendent with God's power. At this time aesthetic theories of the picturesque and the sublime, as well as Deist thought, endowed nature with spiritual significance.<sup>24</sup> God's power was believed to most immanent in isolated places where the hand of man was least apparent. Just as civilization sullied the natural beauty of the environment, so to did it damage those like the native people who lived close to nature.

The author of "Characteristiks ..." presents native virtues in a way that exposes weaknesses and failings of his own society. Native generosity and caring for community members, their lack of materialism, even their idealized love of peace, are invoked as characteristics "worthy of the imitation of politer nations."<sup>25</sup> For this author, along with other advocates of primitivism, civilization had destroyed traditional virtues, replacing vigour, courage and honour with hypocrisy, greed and deceit. Knowledge had not brought happiness; that was to be found in unspoiled, primitive societies whether they were located in a

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<sup>24</sup> Nash, p. 43.

<sup>25</sup> Anon., Nova Scotia Magazine, Nov. 1791, p. 668.

romanticized past or in contemporary societies as yet unspoiled by the evils of civilization. Consequently, romantics projected on to Noble Savages all of the "shining virtues" they found wanting in their own society. Not surprisingly, real native people failed to live up to the perfection with which they were burdened.

The romanticized native and his wilderness home became symbols of innocence, virtue and harmony. The Noble Savage, in works of art and literature, was endowed with all the virtues that civilized men had lost. As a literary convention, the Noble Savage was most popular in Europe and in long settled areas of North America. On the frontier, the settlers who had close contact with native peoples did not share the literati's enthusiasm.<sup>26</sup>

Before examining other literary evidence from the period, it must be pointed out that writers were often inconsistent in their point of view. Some switched from depicting the Noble Savage to the Demonic Savage in the same work. These mutually contradictory positions usually illustrate the point the author is trying to make, but the ambiguity it reflects serves to make us conscious of two potential difficulties. First, it suggests that the attitude towards natives in the period under discussion was

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<sup>26</sup> Nash, p. 63.

frequently ambivalent, with points of views shifting according to circumstances. Second, it is possible that what is being expressed are simply literary conventions, not actual beliefs. This is especially true of the concept of the Noble Savage, which has a lengthy ancestry as a literary convention. Just because writers extol the virtues of native people in works of literature we cannot assume that they acted upon these beliefs in everyday life. However, Hoxie Neale Fairchild in The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism suggests that the idea of the Noble Savage is "related to sensibility, humanitarianism, and political radicalism".<sup>27</sup> Writers with these characteristics might be expected to be sympathetic to the plight of native peoples, but it is also possible that expressed admiration might be only for the idealized Indian of the past, not the contemporary, unheroic Indian corrupted by the white man.

Attributes of the Noble Savage and the Demonic Savage are easily identified in poetry and fiction read or published in Nova Scotia. Although authors employed different themes and images, they all shared a similar preoccupation: whether their Indian character was Noble or malevolent, he or she was fated to die. For romantic or sentimental writers the passing of the Noble Savage was a tragedy expressed in elegiac poems or stories about the

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<sup>27</sup> Fairchild, p. 498.

death of an individual Indian. Frequently authors linked nostalgia for a lost way of life with romance by depicting a loyal, devoted Indian maiden grieving for her dead lover. Eulogies for a doomed people often served as a memento mori, reminding readers that all things must pass. Authors who regarded the impending disappearance of the Indians as a triumph of civilization over savagery depicted the Demonic Savage as an antagonist to progress. They were always vanquished by Euro-Americans who gained heroic stature through their valiant struggle with a cunning, treacherous enemy.<sup>28</sup> Triumph or tragedy, the fate of the Indians was always the same.

Early laments for the dying Indian in Nova Scotian publications deal with tribes other than the Micmac, due both to a lack of interest and to the dearth of local writers. But Nova Scotians could read about the Noble, as well as the Demonic Savage, in local publications. The January, 1791 edition of the Nova Scotia Magazine included "The Dying Indian, or the Last Words of Shalum" by Philip Freneau, an American poet. This poem describes a Huron Indian who goes bravely forward, meeting death alone.<sup>29</sup> The first issue of The Bee included a eulogy to a "distinguished

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<sup>28</sup> Monkman, *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> Philip Freneau, "The Dying Indian, or the Last Words of Shalum", Nova Scotia Magazine, Jan. 1791, p. 55.



Winnebago sachem", "The Indian Chief Redbird", who died in prison. The poet describes the warrior languishing in a jail cell, reflecting on his past free and wild life. But he has been conquered by the white man:

... his spirit was crushed by the dungeon's gloom,  
And the chain of the ruthless stranger.<sup>30</sup>

"The Indian Girl's Lament", another American poem appearing in The Bee in 1835, describes a loyal Indian maid's grief for her warrior lover. Here, the white man is not blamed, but the suggestion of mourning for a lost way of life remains.<sup>31</sup>

"Azakia: A Canadian Story," in the Nova Scotia Magazine of 1791, provides us with another instance of a virtuous Indian maiden.<sup>32</sup> In this story, probably adapted from Mrs. Morton's narrative poem, "Ouabi; or, The Virtues of Nature", Azakia is the loyal wife of Ouabi, a Huron chief. She is saved by Baron St. Castine when a French soldier molests

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<sup>30</sup> William Pitt Palmer, "The Indian Chief Redbird", The Bee, May 27, 1835, 1(1) p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> William Cullen Bryant, "The Indian Girl's Lament", The Bee, June 17, 1835, 1(4), 34.

<sup>32</sup> Anon., "Azakia: A Canadian Story", Nova Scotia Magazine, June 1791, pp. 353-57. Monkman (p. 51) says that the author of this story is anonymous, but it closely resembles a poem by Mrs. Morton described in Pearce (pp. 185-86).

her."<sup>3</sup> Finding her attractive, the Baron makes advances, but she repulses him as she is married. According to the author, Indian women are always faithful to their husbands in spite of the pernicious influence of whites: "[t]he neighbourhood of the Europeans and their examples were never able to diminish [this sense of fidelity]". Later St. Castine finds refuge with Azakia's tribe. While fighting alongside his adopted tribesmen, he is wounded and Azakia nurses him back to health. They fall in love but Azakia's virtue cannot be shaken even when her husband is believed to have been lost in battle. She is prepared to follow the native custom of committing suicide in order to join Ouabi in the afterlife, after he appears to her in a dream. Castine saves her from this fate by rescuing Ouabi from one even more cruel: the Iroquois had tied him to a stake, preparing to torture and burn him. On his return, Ouabi, realizing that Azakia and St. Castine love each other, nobly offers her a divorce so that she is free to marry the Baron. This version of the story offers a happy ending: virtue is rewarded, and Ouabi, too, finds a new mate. In Mrs. Morton's

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Vincent, Baron de Saint-Castine, is an historical figure who seems to have taken on mythic proportions in romantic literature of the time. He was a French officer who was adopted by a Penobscot tribe, married the great chief's daughter and eventually took on his father-in-law's role. In spite of being an enemy of the English, his colourful life and noble birth made him an appealing figure of romance. Salagnac, Georges Cerbelaud, "Abbadie de Saint-Castine, Jean-Vincent D', Baron de Saint Castine, Dictionary of Canadian Biography II, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 4-6.

poem, according to Pearce, Ouabi dies of a broken heart."<sup>34</sup>  
This was the usual fate of noble-hearted Indians.

Writers with a poetic sensibility who were also humanitarians often reveal tension in their depiction of native peoples. This ambivalence is apparent in some of Joseph Howe's poems. In them we see alternate depictions of the romanticised Indian and the Indian as the cruel enemy of progress. Howe was very familiar with the Micmac through his work as Indian Commissioner, but his knowledge of and sympathy with their predicament did not often surface in his works of imagination. Just as he followed traditional eighteenth century literary forms,<sup>35</sup> so too did he adhere to literary conventions of the Noble and Demonic Savage. In part first of "Acadia" and "Song of the Micmac" he presents an idyllic picture of the past when "Free sons of the forest" lived in harmony with nature:

The Camp extends along the pebbly shore,  
A sylvan city, rude as those of yore,  
By Patriarch hands within the desert built,  
When fresh from Eden's joys and Eden's guilt.  
Like those, 'tis man's abode where round him twine  
Those ties that make a wilderness divine.  
No architectural piles salute the sky,  
No marble column strikes the gazer's eye,  
The solemn grandeur of the spacious hall,  
The stuccoed ceiling and the pictured wall,  
Art's skilful hand may sedulously rear,

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<sup>34</sup> Pearce, pp. 186-87.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Howe, Poems and Essays, ed. M.G. Parks, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) p. xv.

The simple homes of Nature's sons are here.<sup>16</sup>

In this context of paradise, the arts of Western man would be a desecration. Accordingly, Howe describes the white man's invasion of this hallowed ground with sympathy:

But, when the white man landed on the shore,  
His dreams of Gods and Spirits soon was o'er,  
He saw them rear their dwellings on the sod  
Where his free fathers had for ages trod;  
He saw them thoughtlessly remove the stones  
His hands had gather'd o'er his parents' bones;  
He saw them fell the trees which they had spared,  
And war, eternal war, his soul declared.<sup>17</sup>

At this point Howe changes sides. In part second of "Acadia", and in his patriotic poems, "Our Fathers" and "Song for the 8th June", the Micmac become the dreaded enemy of the colony's brave forefathers. The Noble Savage is metamorphosed into the Demonic Savage, for Howe's purpose was now to celebrate the present state of the colony and pay homage to ancestors who

...vanquished the forests to make us a home,  
Though the knife of the savage defended each grove.<sup>18</sup>

In part second of "Acadia" Howe describes an attack on a settler's family with as much gore and violence as could be found in captivity tales. The Micmac are "treacherous", "shrieking fiends" motivated by feelings of hate and

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<sup>16</sup> Howe, "Acadia", p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Howe, "Song for the 8th June", p. 61.

revenge:

The wretched Mother from her babe is torn,  
Which on a red right hand aloft is borne,  
Then dashed to earth before its Parent's eyes,  
And, as its form, deform'd and quivering lies,  
Life from its fragile tenement is trod ...<sup>39</sup>

The Micmac celebrate after they massacre the entire family:

Around the cot the Indians form a ring,  
And songs of joy and triumph wildly sing  
With horrid gesture and demoniac strain,  
Then plunge into the forest depths again.<sup>40</sup>

In these patriotic poems, a need to pay tribute to his ancestors overrode the sympathy Howe had for the Micmac. For Howe, in spite of his romantic strain which led him to admire wild landscapes and their proud denizens, shared his contemporaries' view that savage life was rude and uncivilized. He compares the Micmac way of life to Britain's dark age when "rude Barbarians roved."<sup>41</sup> This roaming way of life had to be cast aside for all the benefits, the improvements, which the British had brought to the colony -- science, religion, literature and art.<sup>42</sup> The ideal, for Howe, was nature improved by art, nature controlled and domesticated.

Other writers solved the dilemma of depicting native

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<sup>39</sup> Howe, "Acadia", pp. 24-25.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

peoples as either Demonic or Noble by attributing the relevant characteristics to different tribes." In "The Lost Son: An Affecting Story," published in the Nova Scotia Magazine of 1791, the Algonquins are an "idolatrous nation [with]... savage customs and manners" while the Huron, because they have a Jesuit missionary among them, treat the lost child with kindness.<sup>43</sup>

This technique of attributing conflicting characteristics to different tribes is evident in a novel of the 1840s, Argimou: A Legend of the Micmac.<sup>44</sup> The author, Douglas Huyghue, may have tried to get beyond stereotypes in his sympathetic portrayal of the Micmac, but he was too much a man of his time to succeed.<sup>45</sup> Adhering to literary conventions of his day, he set his story in a romanticized past at a time when the savage was still heroic and noble.

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<sup>43</sup> Probably the most famous writer to do so was James Fenimore Cooper. His "good" Indians were the heroic Delawares, his "bad" Indians, the Mingoes. Warren S. Walker, James Fenimore Cooper: An Introduction and Interpretation, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1962), pp. 46-57.

<sup>44</sup> Anon., "The Lost Son: An Affecting Story", Nova Scotia Magazine, March, pp. 147-150 and April, pp. 216-222, 1791.

<sup>45</sup> See p. 37, fnnt. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Janice Kulyk Keefer states that the novel is "a venture staggeringly ahead of its time", but looked at in the context of Huyghue's contemporaries, this is not so. Under Eastern Eyes: A Critical Reading of Maritime Fiction, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 111.

The conflict between the French and the English over Acadia in mid-eighteenth century forms the background for Huyghue's romantic tale. It is a story of separated lovers, an heroic pursuit and fond reconciliation. Together, Edward, a British officer and Argimou, a Micmac sachem pursue their respective loves, Clarence and Waswatchcul, who are in the hands of the Milicete.<sup>47</sup> Just as the story is conventional, so too are the characters. The Micmacs, their chief, Argimou, and his father, Panasway, are Nobles Savages, while the Milicete and their chief, Madowakawando, are cunning villains. Edward is a stalwart, but sensitive military officer and Clarence is his fragile English flower who swoons and weeps when faced with any difficulty. Dennis, Edward's servant is a stock comic character, an intemperate, red-haired, dim-witted Irishman.

Like other admirers of the primitive, Huyghue contrasted the superiority of the natural life to the artificial and conventional restraints of civilized behaviour. A central theme of the novel is Edward's growing appreciation of native values as he becomes better acquainted with Argimou and Panasway. Eventually, he realizes that

Here, among men unrestrained by penal codes,

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<sup>47</sup> The Milicete, a contemporary spelling of "Malecite," were native people in New Brunswick whose territory was adjacent to the Micmac.

or chains, or strong dungeons, were to be found the most unflinching virtue; the elements of a beautiful philosophy; ... Here were no fawning sycophants, no slanderers of their neighbours, no smiling faces with false hearts, no robbers in the garb of honesty, no niggards that would grasp the accursed gold and see their brethren starve."

While Huyghue holds up the idealized Micmac to reveal weaknesses in his own society, he does concede that their habit of scalping enemies is a vice. Like the author of "Characterisks of the American Indians", Huyghue draws on ideas of cultural relativity to excuse the cruel behaviour of an otherwise honourable people. Edward reflects that both the British and the French encouraged scalping as they both offered bounties on scalps. The Indian motive of wanting a trophy is favourably compared to the European desire to diminish "as much as possible, the number of their opponents."<sup>49</sup>

As individual characters, Argimou, Panasway and Waswatchcul have all the traits of the stereotyped Noble Savage: bravery, stoicism and dignity. The forms of antiquity are evoked in the description of Argimou:

Argimou appeared...revealing a form moulded in the purest contour of natural beauty, whose natural majesty was not unworthy a comparison with the ideals of antique sculpture.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Huyghue, p. 93.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 12.



The bravery and virtue of ancient tribes are called forth and compared to the native people. Both lived by "rules drawn from those subtle truths taught them through deep observation of the natural and moral world."<sup>11</sup> Panasway also has a gift which was deemed to be particular to the red man and to the ancients, that of oratory.

Waswetchcul is a particularly interesting Noble Savage. A child of nature, her "unstudied graces and unaffected delicacy would have shamed the artificial allurements of many a fashionable belle." Endowed with natural beauty, she is, nevertheless, partly European. Like Azakia, she is connected to Baron de Saint-Castine. As a direct descendant of the Baron, her European blood gives her a beauty which is more white than Indian:

Her complexion was exceeding clear and almost as light as a European's; and the pale cheek, in moments of animation or impulsive feeling, would glow with a rich suffusion like the petals of the wild rose.<sup>12</sup>

At the time, the ability to blush was thought to be a defining, and pleasing, characteristic of the white race. Significantly, Waswetchcul's behaviour conforms to the Noble Savage mode, but her appearance is more European than native.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

This is not the only instance in which the European influence is judged to be beneficial. As Huyghue describes his "bad" Indians, the Millicate:

...their habiliments were more in keeping with their rude, savage aspect; for occupying a territory further removed from the European settlements, they had not caught insensibly the polite tone which was evident in the Micmacs, from their intercourse with the French...<sup>33</sup>

This is inconsistent with Huyghue's claim that imported European luxuries, disease, and alcohol were responsible for the present degraded character of the Indians. Like Joseph Howe, Huyghue was torn between his romantic view of the Indians, his compassion for them, and the idea that progress and civilization were inevitable and, in a subtle way, superior. This ambivalence is also evident in Huyghue's statement of a widely held belief of the time: Acadia's "progress toward cultivation and agricultural improvement, had been continually retarded by the successive struggles of the French and English...."<sup>34</sup> In this context progress and improvement is seen to be beneficial.

In his story, Huyghue's villainous Indians are not antagonists of European settlers, but they are the enemies of Indians who have some of the physical characteristics and qualities of whites. In their role as villains, the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

Milicete differ significantly from the Micmac. The most obvious difference is that the Micmac can control their passions, while the Milicete cannot. This is evident in Huyghue's description of a war dance in which both tribes take part. It is "a scene where human passion revelled in very drunkenness of unrestraint." Madokawando, the Milicete chief, wearing deer horns on his head and a bear skin over his shoulders, works the warriors into a frenzy with his shrieks and wild, distorted dance. The "fire of madness" within him drives the warriors into such an "ungovernable rage" that they wound each other with their knives. Only the stoic, dignified Argimou can stop the frenzied dance.<sup>55</sup> The restrained and calm behaviour of the Micmac is again contrasted to the "phrenzied" Milicete in the context of mourning for the dead. In a ghastly scene the Milicete

... threw their limbs about, and leaped into the air, with extravagant grief, or rushed, now here, now there, in search of something upon which to wreak their excited fury, for they seemed frantic with excess of passion ... ."

When faced with death, admittedly in less dramatic circumstances, the Micmac react with dignity. The loss of their patriarch

... forced the big tears from many an iron-hearted warrior, who turned aside that men might not see how weak grief would make an Indian brave; but the women less regardful of appearances, let their tears

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-27.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

flow ...."

The Millicete share other qualities of the Demonic Savage. Evil qualities are sharply focused in the portrayal of Madokawando who is variously described as "avaricious", "bestial" and "cunning." The Millicete ambush in which they capture Clarence is portrayed in the conventional tones of a captivity tale:

... the painted serpent-like head of a crawling savage was protruded into the trail .... a malignant gleam shot from his eyes, while his parted lips showed the white teeth in a triumphant grin..."

Even the Millicete language differs in tone from the language of the Noble Savage. The only Millicete who speaks with a musical inflection is Waswatchcul, the heroine with European ancestry. The villainous Millicetes speak with uncouth guttural sounds. Particularly noteworthy is the contrast between Madokawando's pidgin English and Pansaway's and Argimou's eloquence. Madokawando speaks in patois:

"You see that thing what go out? Him nobody. Me kick him away, all same like old mocassin when him worn out - don't be afeart...."

Pansaway, on the other hand, speaks with rhetorical flourishes:

"The Micmac shall be as the wind; - you can feel him - you can hear his war-cry, but always with a

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" Ibid., p. 73.

" Ibid., p. 40.

" Ibid., p. 64.

powerful arm and a sound, he comes and goes - no man knoweth whence or whither...."<sup>60</sup>

Huyghue, like his contemporaries, thought of the native peoples as an extension of the landscape. Thus the Noble Savage is surrounded by the "gorgeous mantle of primeval nature." He is an "natural adjunct to the wild majesty of the scene."<sup>61</sup> But when the landscape changes from "the soft, light foliage of the hardwood" to "scraggy, bristling" softwood, it becomes "stern and forbidding as the savage people who were known to make their home within its forest lairs."<sup>62</sup> The dark, fearsome forests continued to harbour the Villainous Savage, while the Noble Savage dwelt in airy, luminous realms.

Huyghue was also a man of his time in lamenting the impending loss of the native people. The novel begins and ends with grim warnings of their ultimate demise and, prophetically, it concludes with Argimou dying of a broken heart as he stands over the graves of his ancestors. With strong, emotional language Huyghue places the blame squarely on his compatriots:

We are the sole and only cause of their overwhelming misery, their gradual extinction; directly, by lawless appropriation of their hunting grounds,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 118-119.

to utter violation of every principle of justice, human or divine...: indirectly, through the propagation of disease in its most harrowing forms, and the blighting introduction of that direst of all plagues the accursed "fire-water"....<sup>63</sup>

These authorial interjections in which Huyghue appeals to his readers' conscience and feelings of guilt are among the few aspects of the novel which extend beyond the conventional, but they, too, are in keeping with the humanitarian impulses of the time.

According to Gwendolyn Davies, Huyghue was well acquainted with the Indian way of life,<sup>64</sup> and could, presumably, have written a more realistic tale of the Indian. This is evident in the occasional authentic note in Argimou, such as the scene portraying Penasway's apology to a slain moose:

"It grieves me, my cousin, to see you so low. Where is the fine mist gone? Where is the breath of thy nostrils? The morning will not hear thee call. Thy sister will listen for thy voice, in the autumn time; she will be very sorry when you come to her no more ..."<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, his knowledge of Indian material culture and his appreciation of native skills is apparent throughout the novel. Unfortunately, Huyghue could not escape from the literary conventions of his day and, as a result, has left

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Gwendolyn Davies, intro. to Argimou, p. v.

<sup>65</sup> Huyghue, p. 105.

us with a conventional romance featuring stereotypical Noble and Demonic Savages.

In an epic poem by Andrew Shiels, a prominent Dartmouth resident, literary convention overrode reality to the extent that he fabricated imaginary friendly and villainous Micmac tribes. In "The Witch of the Westcot: A Tale of Nova Scotia", the "Waghon" tribe viciously attacks and murders Dartmouth's first settlers. On the other hand, a member of the friendly "Wuspem" tribe saves the heroine's mother during an earlier attack. In a footnote Shiels acknowledges that he has divided the Micmac into tribes for "...certain poetical purposes":

Accordingly, I divide them into three tribes - first, the Wuspem, or tribe of the Lake, to be located in the neighborhood of Rosignol ... - second, the Waghon, or tribe of the Long-Knives, to inhabit the regions of the Shubenacadie, and the middle division - and third, the 'longuash tribe, to occupy Canseau, and the eastward.<sup>66</sup>

For Shiels the native people of Nova Scotia served primarily as a source of poetical inspiration. As such, the reality of their life was discounted in favour of literary convention.

It is apparent that literary convention determined how native peoples were depicted in "refined" literature. Even

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<sup>66</sup> Andrew Shiels, Witch of the Westcot. A Tale of Nova Scotia, (Halifax: Joseph Howe, 1831), p. 62, 92-99.

those sympathetic to the Micmac, like Howe and Huyghue, created stereotyped Noble and Demonic Savages. Contemporary Indians were usually ignored as not being worthy of a work of the imagination. Howe states this position clearly in "The Micmac". He begins by describing the native people of the present day: outcasts, destroyed by "fire-water", wandering listlessly in a country where

...scarce a single trace remains  
Of what he was in other days.

Howe believes that it is unfortunate that "Nature's child" has been dispossessed, but it is inevitable. He concludes:

Then let fair Fancy change the scene,  
While gazing on the Micmac's brow,  
And showing what he once has been,  
Make us forget what he is now.<sup>67</sup>

Even for Howe, at least in literature, the contemporary degraded Indian did not exist. "Fair fancy" placed them in the heroic past or depicted them as a dying race, fated to disappear.

There are three plausible reasons why Nova Scotian writers were blinded by stereotypes. First, as previously discussed, images of Noble and Demonic Savage were used to define the ideal society and the ideal characteristics of a member of that society. On to the Demonic Savage were focused the dark side of human nature, while the Noble Savage reflected an image of admirable virtues. In essence,

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<sup>67</sup> Howe, "The Micmac", pp. 89-90.



the images of a people who were being supplanted helped to define a new society which was striving for cohesiveness and a sense of identity. Second, the concept that native peoples were savages on the lowest level of human development justified their replacement by a superior race. When Micmac village sites were given to white settlers, it assuaged the conscience to believe that the natives were only wandering nomads who were not using the land as Providence had ordained. Settlers felt, with pious self-satisfaction, that they had rescued Nova Scotia from the savage state. Displacement was, after all, for the good of all humankind. Third, the nature of scholarship during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries needs to be taken into account. At the time, theories were based on a priori reasoning, not on observation and analysis. There was little interest in gathering information about native life until the mid-nineteenth century. Until then the little data that was available was distorted to fit into predetermined models.

But what do these works of literature, bound as they are by convention, reveal about Nova Scotians' attitudes towards the Micmac? Whether the tone is elegiac as expressed by "sensitive" writers or triumphant as expressed by patriots, the overwhelming impression is that the Indian will soon disappear. His savageness doomed him to

extinction. With this belief firmly in place there was little need to concern oneself over the present degraded condition of the Micmac. Even those who regarded the Micmac with pity or were angry at their compatriots' indifference felt that, in the long run, progress and "improvements" must override the state of nature. If any of the children of the forest were to survive they had to adhere to a European way of life and adopt their social and cultural values.

## Chapter III

"No Room for Wild Men"<sup>1</sup>

Because works of the imagination are circumscribed by literary stereotypes they only hint at European attitudes and fail to tell us how these attitudes may have influenced behaviour. It may be possible to get beyond stereotypes if works other than those that reflect the literary imagination are examined. Documents such as historical accounts, newspapers, periodicals, promotional pamphlets, and legislative records contain references to the Micmac which reveal how Nova Scotians regarded the native people. Along with this material, I have included two poems by resident writers for illustrative purposes. With all this evidence we can ascertain the role that attitudes played in the development of government policy, the programs of philanthropists, and the relationship between the settlers and the people they had displaced.

It is also necessary to consider how beliefs and perceptions regarding the aboriginal people changed through time. From the arrival of the Loyalists in 1783 until the

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<sup>1</sup> Judge Wiswall, Letter regarding the Indian Settlement at Bear River, Oct. 22, 1828, PANS. The entire quotation is "[the Indians]... must have their natural propensities altered, or be very shortly utterly extinguished, for we have no room for wild men."

late 1820s the documents reveal a shift in attitudes from scornful disregard to, at least for a minority, concern augmented by guilt.

Initial British response to the Micmac in Nova Scotia was hostile as the Micmac were allies of the French in the continuing colonial wars. When the French were no longer able to support their allies, the Micmac and the British colonial government had to come to terms. The British tried to pacify the Micmac by establishing truckhouses for trade and by signing treaties of peace and friendship. All of these efforts were rendered unnecessary by the arrival of the Loyalists; their settlements meant the virtual end of the ability of the Micmac to maintain a semblance of their traditional lifestyle. The flood of refugees quickly assumed possession of Micmac village sites which were located on desirable land at river mouths and harbours along the coast.<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming numbers of new arrivals combined with the loss of coastal food gathering sites forced the Micmac into the interior where resources were limited. Isolated in the interior wilderness, they were less visible, thereby making it easier for the settlers to

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<sup>2</sup> Harold F. McGee, "The Micmac Indians: The Earliest Migrants" in Banked Fires: The Ethnics of Nova Scotia, ed. Douglas F. Campbell, (Port Credit, Ont.: Scribblers' Press), p. 27 and Leslie F.S. Upton, Micmacs and Colonists: Indian-White Relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979), p. 82.

ignore them.<sup>3</sup>

It is not references to the Micmac, but the lack of them, that suggest the Loyalists' attitudes towards the native people. Hostility engendered by memories of Indian wars in New England, combined with fear of the still not completely pacified Micmac, led to a wish simply to have the native people disappear. Documents which touch on the kind of society which settlers hoped to establish in Nova Scotia make it abundantly clear that the Micmac were to have no role to play. Roger Viets' Annapolis Royal: A Poem expresses the hopes of the Loyalist refugees. As Thomas B. Vincent points out in his introduction to the poem, it:

...anchors hope in a faith based on a sophisticated perception of order and refused to permit the primitive conditions of the present to undermine the sense of civilization on which human life must be founded.<sup>4</sup>

Viets' civilization is characterized by a thriving agricultural community with honest villagers rearing with "careful Hands ... [a] newborn Race."<sup>5</sup> His new homeland was

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<sup>3</sup> Upton provides an earlier manifestation of this policy of driving the Micmac into the interior. In 1762 after an Indian scare at Lunenburg, the local assembly's London agent stated that "the proper place for the savages was the interior, where they could hunt for skins, which is their lazy occupation"; they should be allowed to come to the coast only if they did not disturb the white settlers and fishermen. Upton, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas B. Vincent, intro. to Roger Viets, Annapolis Royal: A Poem, (1788; Kingston: Loyal Colonies Press, 1979), pp. vi-vii.

<sup>5</sup> Viets, p. 4.

to be a society based on stability, enterprise, and harmony; it was a conservative world in which every person had their place and did not seek to move above his appointed station. Strikingly absent from Viets' vision are the Micmac; they do not even appear as antagonists.

Fifteen years later, when the Micmac were no longer a threat, they could be safely mentioned in Nova Scotian literature. A prologue to a play performed in Halifax in 1803 depicts the "metamorphosis" of the province from a haunt of savages to a place of elegance and culture. The "savage inmates," "filthy squaws" and "shaggy chiefs" have disappeared to be replaced by men and women of fashion with their powdered wigs and perfume:

Otter of roses now perfumes the fair,  
Late the sweet odours of the rancid bear.

With great self-satisfaction, the author continues to chronicle the bestial life of the savage and its refined replacement:

Where greasy skeweres an eel-skin girdle graced,  
A sparkling topaz gems the tempting waist.

...  
Heroes no more, tattooed with azure powder,  
Prefer fat porcupine to beef and chowder  
Eel soup to turtle, water to champagne.

The poem refers to fifty people murdered by Indians, but as adversaries they were no longer to be feared; where the "war-whoop" once sounded, no noise is "heard but Lucy Campbell's reel." Completely subjugated, "The blood stained

Sachems ... bury the hatchet which they fear to use." Throughout this poem, the contempt and disdain the colonists felt for those they had conquered is apparent.<sup>6</sup>

At this time, the Micmac were faced with continually dwindling resources, rampant disease and harassment. With no alternatives available, they had become increasingly dependant on occasional provisions provided by the legislative assembly. From enemies to be feared, the native people were transformed into objects of pity.

As objects of pity, the image of the Micmac changed. Gradually concepts of the Noble and Demonic Savage merged into a commonly held perception of the Indians as a degraded people. This perception was shared by both the conservative element of colonial society, who simply wanted the Micmac to disappear, and by liberal humanitarians who wanted to ameliorate their condition. So at first glance, it may appear strange that philanthropists came to hold almost the same stereotypical image as did those who had always believed that native peoples were cunning murderers with no human feelings.

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander Croke, Prologue to The Three Rivals, Performed at the Theatre Royal at Halifax, Feb. 17, 1803. In Croke's The Progress of Idolatry, (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1841), pp. 105-108. I am grateful to Patrick B. O'Neill for this reference.

The explanation lies in the previously discussed nineteenth century interpretations of history and progress that defined a savage society as one in the first stage of man's advancement. It was generally agreed that hunters and gatherers did have some simple virtues, but if they became contaminated, their purity was lost and they sank even lower on the developmental scale.

Abraham Gesner's 1848 report as Commissioner of Indian Affairs illustrates how even those who may have admired the Noble Savage came to see natives as a degraded race of people. Gesner compares the Micmac's previously simple, but happy state, when in some ways they resembled the Greeks and Romans, to their present way of life. Now, "Under a series of misfortunes the morals of the Micmac have declined and the whole race has degenerated. The manly pride and honesty of their forefathers have been succeeded by intrigue and artifice."<sup>7</sup> An 1838 newspaper report about the Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society also paints a pathetic picture of the fall of a once noble people:

Once they had an abundance wherewith to supply their wants ... they were peaceable, sociable, obliging, charitable, and hospitable, among themselves .... How dark is the picture which they now present! Of all miserable objects they appear to be the most miserable. With but few redeeming traits, they are sunk to the lowest state of

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<sup>7</sup> LANSJ, 1848, App. 24, pp. 118-19.



degradation ....<sup>8</sup>

The cause of this degeneration was assumed to be a result of the contaminating influence of the lowest elements of European society. A provincial government committee report on the condition of the Indians presents this view:

In the present degraded state of the Indians of this Province, we easily perceive that by their intercourse with the British population of the Country, they have imbibed many of their vices, without any corresponding virtues.... The nobleness of man occasionally seen in his savage state, has sunk into the degradation resulting from the vicious propensities of a civilized race; and we look in vain amongst the Aborigines of this Province for that independence of thought and action, which have at times distinguished many of the Indians of the American Continent.<sup>9</sup>

Degenerate peoples were believed to be even worse off than savages; they became "weaker and more abject," so "sunk and reduced that there seemed no possibility of saving them."<sup>10</sup> This created difficulties for potential benefactors since "elevating" a degraded people was considered to be almost impossible.

Consequently, whether Nova Scotia's native people were perceived as degenerate Noble Savages or as defeated Demonic

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<sup>8</sup> Anon., "The Indians", The Pearl, Nov. 2, 1838, 2 (44), p. 350.

<sup>9</sup> LANSJ, 1844, App. 69, p. 164.

<sup>10</sup> Anon., "Character of the Moors", Nova Scotia Magazine, Jan. 1790, p. 36.

Savages, the resulting image of degradation was almost universally shared. The Micmac continued to embody all the vices that an aspiring colonial society abhorred: sloth, drunkenness, vagrancy, and dependence. Like Rousseau's savage they were considered to be child-like, however, most of their characteristics were a legacy from Hobbes. Nova Scotian literature is replete with these negative descriptions of the Micmac, even by those who befriended them.

Of the vices most often identified with the aboriginal population, the one that most irritated white colonists was their perceived laziness. They were believed to be "naturally indolent,"<sup>11</sup> to the extent that any evidence of native exertion and hard work was misinterpreted. This is evident in Moses Perley's account of native night fishing.<sup>12</sup> He notes, with disapproval, the excitement and energy with which the Indians pursue what he calls "sport." Night fishing does not correspond with the orderly, regular industry Perley associates with labour. Consequently, he condemns the Indians for "languidly creeping off to sleep away another day in total idleness," completely misunderstanding that what he had observed was work. The Micmac had spent the entire night procuring food for their

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<sup>11</sup> LANSJ, 188, Report of Joint Committee, p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> See p. 79 for Perley.

families.<sup>13</sup>

As we have seen, this natural indolence was believed to be due to a lack of private property<sup>14</sup> and the irregular habits engendered by a dependence on the hunt. But it was not just the men who needed to be taught industrious habits. A legislative committee report suggests that native women might "be excited to industry" if local women instructed them in spinning and knitting.<sup>15</sup> Again, native skills are ignored; only European handicraft skills are evidence of industry. Even children were accused of idleness and gross ignorance because they chose to play in the woods and on river banks during the heat of the summer.<sup>16</sup>

The colonial population also misinterpreted the role of women in Micmac society, assuming that the women were ill treated. Haliburton tells how the Micmac, like other rude nations, treat women as inferiors:

... the female sex are the servants of the men, and carry not only the children, but in travelling, all the domestic utensils, provisions and other burdens. At home they are employed in making baskets, carrying

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<sup>13</sup> Moses H. Parley, "Reports on the Indian Settlements of New Brunswick", quoted in Allison Mitcham, Three Remarkable Maritimers, (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press, 1985), p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> Ferguson, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> Monk, Report of Joint Committee, Jan. 23, 1801, RG 1, Vol. 430, doc. 49, PANS.

<sup>16</sup> LANSJ, 1848, App. 24, p. 119.

water, cooking, and other drudgery. Tasks are imposed upon them without pity, and services are received without complaisance or gratitude.<sup>17</sup>

This view of native women as degraded beasts of burden allowed European men to congratulate themselves on their own "enlightened" attitudes towards women.

One native vice which was generally acknowledged to be a direct result of European influence and a contributor to the natives' degraded condition was intemperance.

Humanitarians, such as Walter Bromley, felt a sense of responsibility for this problem as whites had introduced alcohol to natives and continued to encourage its use for monetary reasons.<sup>18</sup> Gesner believed its use to be "one of the principal causes of their infirmities and poverty."<sup>19</sup> While a few felt some guilt over the Europeans' role in native alcohol abuse, Bromley was alone in pointing out that, proportionately, the problem of intemperance was the same in both the white and the native populations.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Chandler Haliburton, A General Description of Nova Scotia, (Halifax, N.S., 1825), pp. 50-51.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Bromley, "An Appeal to the Virtue and Good Sense of the Inhabitants of Great Britain and Canada in behalf of the Indians of North America", (Halifax, N.S.: Ward, 1820), p. 17 and Walter Bromley, "Two Addresses on the Deplorable State of the Indians", (London, 1815), footnote pp. 8-9.

<sup>19</sup> LANSJ, 1848, Apr. 24. p. 118.

<sup>20</sup> Bromley, 1820, p. 27.

However, for the assumed native vice of vagrancy, the settlers would take no blame. They failed to perceive that colonial population pressures were responsible for the Micmacs' increasingly nomadic lifestyle. The concept that the Micmac might, in the present or in the past, reside in anything other than temporary camps did not accord with their ideas of the reckless life led by wandering "savages." According to European interpretations of hunting and gathering societies, members of such groups wandered from place to place desperately searching for sustenance. The only difference, Nova Scotians believed, was that now the Micmac "wander from place to place, and door to door, seeking alms."<sup>21</sup>

Vagrancy was considered to be a serious problem, as it was the major drawback in any attempt to civilize the Micmac.<sup>22</sup> Any such endeavour would fail if the Indians were not permanently settled. This was necessary not only to make native people available for reformation; it was assumed that a settled existence made uncivilized peoples more rational.

Contributing to the distorted image of a degraded people was the belief in the Micmac's "Habits of precarious

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<sup>21</sup> LANSJ, 1848, App. 24, p. 119.

<sup>22</sup> Haliburton, p. 51.

Dependence."<sup>23</sup> This was supposed to be a result of their child-like nature. As children, native people were thought to need guidance from a more mature and refined race. Parley suggested that "They should at all times be treated as wards of the Sovereign who possess property - as orphans who have peculiar claims upon the constant care and attention of the Government."<sup>24</sup> As such they were dependent on guardians, whether they were government officials or self-appointed reformers.

While the prevailing stereotype of the Micmac was based on an image of degeneracy, some comments in the literature suggest that characteristics of the Demonic Savage persisted. Haliburton states that "The Nova Scotia Indians had the character of being more savage and cruel than the other nations."<sup>25</sup> As we have seen these references to war-like Micmacs in the past served to heighten the glory of the "solitary and peaceable settlers"<sup>26</sup> who had to overcome tremendous odds when they arrived in their new homeland. But vestiges of the cruel savage stereotype remained in the present as Mrs. Pheland notes in a letter to Walter Bromley.

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<sup>23</sup> LANSJ, 1800, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> LANSJ, 1843, App. 49, p. 130.

<sup>25</sup> Haliburton, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

She points out that many are disposed to view the Indians as a "race of Cannibals" and comments on the ladies who "express horror and aversion if an Indian happens to cross their path."<sup>27</sup>

Few qualities of the Noble Savage remained in the predominant image of the degraded Indian, characterized by his idleness, drunkenness and vagrancy. Haliburton does acknowledge some native virtues as do the humanitarians who took up the Indians' cause. Haliburton says that the native people are strong, courageous, and, under the influence of Roman Catholic priests, honest. Although Indian children become independent at an earlier age than in "polished society," he states that they are tenderly cared for when they are "feeble and helpless." Moreover, native craftsmanship and woodsman skills are worthy of admiration.<sup>28</sup> Some romantic ideas lingered, such as Mrs. Phelan's belief that the native people were descended from the lost tribes of Israel,<sup>29</sup> but in general, the Noble Savage lived only in the literary imagination, and here he was always placed in the past.

While the majority of Nova Scotians, both liberal

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<sup>27</sup> Bromley, 1820, p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> Haliburton, pp. 49-51.

<sup>29</sup> Bromley, 1820, p. 33.

reformers and conservatives, came to share the same stereotypical image of the Micmac, there was little common ground on the ways in which the Indian "problem" should be tackled. In theory, all agreed that the Indians should be civilized and concurred on the steps that had to be taken to accomplish this formidable task. The difference of opinion revolved around the question of whether civilizing the Micmac was realistic, or, on another level, whether it was worthwhile. The problem was complicated by the assumption that degraded people, like the Micmac, were difficult to "elevate."

Conservatives, comprising the establishment, the colonial government, and the majority of the settlers, usually took the position that the task was hopeless. They assumed that the native people would eventually become extinct; therefore, there was no need to be concerned about them, except for the occasional charitable handout to ease their present misery. Even these handouts were sometimes disputed:

There are those ... who maintain that it is the destiny of the coloured races to be corrupted and destroyed by white people. According to such persons, the efforts of philanthropy are putting off for a time the day of evil things.<sup>10</sup>

Until this fateful day arrived, the Indians were to be

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<sup>10</sup> Anon., "The Indians", The Pearl, Nov. 2, 1838, 2(44), p. 350.



allowed to carry on their traditional lifestyle, as well as they were able, as long as they did not interfere with the activities of the white settlers.

Humanitarian, middle-class reformers took a more positive approach. Bromley had introduced British humanitarian and self-help concerns to a largely indifferent colonial society in the 1810s,<sup>31</sup> but it was not until the late 1820s that some resident Nova Scotians took up similar causes. The optimistic attitudes of the reformers were constantly opposed to the indifference of most of the colonial population. Full of hope, they believed that it was possible to change both the character of the Mi'kmaq and their way of life.

The argument over whether it was possible to civilize aboriginal peoples rested on another controversial question: were some peoples naturally inferior? Even though it was agreed that the native people were close to the bottom of the ladder of human and social development, conservatives tended to believe that this position was due to nature inferiority, while liberals put the blame on the environment and accidental circumstances. Neither religion, history, or

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<sup>31</sup> See Judith Fingard, "English Humanitarianism and the Colonial Mind: Walter Bromley in Nova Scotia, 1813-25", Canadian Historical Review, 54(2), pp. 123-51 for a discussion of Bromley.

science endorsed the concept of natural inferiority, nevertheless, it seems to have been a commonly held perception. Intellectual support was to be found in the work of the influential writer, Lord Kames, who claimed that there were different races of men, some of which were superior to others. Moreover, he stated that there was no hope for a degenerate nation "but to let the natives die out, and to repeople the country with better men."<sup>22</sup> Many Nova Scotians seem to have identified the Micmac as one of Kames' degraded, inferior races who should be allowed to become extinct.

The prevalence of the idea that the Micmac were incapable of becoming civilized and that their extinction was inevitable, even beneficial, is evident in the Nova Scotian literature. A particularly telling book is Anthony Lockwood's A Brief Description of Nova Scotia.<sup>23</sup> It can be assumed that Lockwood's views reflect the opinion of many colonists as it is these attitudes against which reformers constantly argue, but it is also an extreme view which, at least in Nova Scotia, rarely appears in the written record.

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<sup>22</sup> Lord Kames, p. 45 and p. 415. Lord Kames acknowledges that the polygenist view that there are different races of men is controversial. He expects opposition "from those who are biased against the new and uncommon." Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Lockwood, A Brief Description of Nova Scotia, (London: Printed for the author by G. Hayden, 1818). For Lockwood see Peter Thomas, Strangers from a Secret Land, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), passim.

Lockwood bluntly states that it is hopeless to attempt to civilize the aborigines as they are stupid, lazy, drunken beggars. Even if given the opportunity, according to Lockwood, they cannot be improved. He believes that their numbers have declined because many have left the province; furthermore, it would be better if all of them left:

... the Province would be altogether relieved of a useless, idle, filthy race, whose disposition to ramble, and distaste of all social comforts and civilized life, will ever leave them in their present degraded state.<sup>34</sup>

Charity is a wasted effort as far as Lockwood is concerned:

... attempts made to improve their condition, have not only been abortive, but even productive of evil, by lessening their little energy, and teaching them to expect by begging, what they ought to obtain by common industry.<sup>35</sup>

"Even the infants, taken from their tribe, cannot be civilized," according to this author.<sup>36</sup>

Bromley acknowledged that Lockwood's views represented the "favourite opinion,"<sup>37</sup> but they were ones that he and other reformers, such as Howe, Gesner and Perley, strove to

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<sup>34</sup> Lockwood, p. 8. Titus Smith also thought that many natives had left because he saw so few on his tours of the province. Andrew H. Clark, "Titus Smith, Jr. and the Geography of Nova Scotia in 1801 and 1802", Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 44(4), 1954, p. 313.

<sup>35</sup> Lockwood, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Bromley, 1820, p. 16. This publication is, in part, a response to Lockwood.

refute.<sup>38</sup> Reformers also fought an uphill battle trying to get the government to act on their proposals. Some government reports suggest that committee members shared Lockwood's critical, pessimistic attitude. A report from 1800 states that a few younger natives might be helped but:

...their natural inveterate Habits of Indolence, and precarious Dependence, forbid the hope of their being either universally or suddenly reclaimed to a State of Industry and Civilization.<sup>39</sup>

Forty-four years later another committee report struck the same defeatist attitude:

If it were possible by such training and instruction to bring up one or more to the age of manhood, capable of pointing out to his race the miseries likely to be entailed upon them in their present wretched state of degradation ... we might almost fondly anticipate that the remnant still surviving ... would, perhaps, possibly be rescued ..., although past experience almost shuts out and forbids such an opinion to be well entertained.<sup>40</sup>

The attitudes reflected in these reports suggest that the colonial government found it easy to dismiss plans to help

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<sup>38</sup> All were, at different times, Indian Commissioners. Although M.H. Perley was Commissioner of Indian Affairs for New Brunswick, I have included him in my discussion for two reasons. First, he dealt with the Micmac in that province and second, as Perley notes, information on Indian affairs was shared between the two provinces. I have referred to Perley's 1842 report sent to the Nova Scotia Legislature for their information. See LANSJ, App. 49, pp. 126-31. For a discussion of the work of Nova Scotia's Indian Commissioners see Helen Ralston, "Religion, public policy, and the education of Micmac Indians of Nova Scotia, 1605-1872", Revue Canadienne de Sociologie & Anthropologie/Canadian Review of Sociology & Anthropology, 18(4), 1981, pp. 470-97.

<sup>39</sup> LANSJ, 1800, p. 75.

<sup>40</sup> LANSJ, 1844, App. 69, p. 164.

the Micmac as hopeless efforts that would only waste public funds.

Undaunted by the negative attitude of the establishment, liberal humanitarians continued to indulge their passion for improvement. Rejecting the idea that some races were naturally inferior to others, reformers argued that differences between races could be overcome by altering the environment of the "lower" race. By this means aboriginal people could be gradually elevated, passing through the different developmental stages until they were ready to take their place in white society as successful farmers and mechanics.

This sanguine expectation was grounded in Christian doctrine, in the belief "that all the human race sprang from the same source."<sup>1</sup> At times, it was necessary to defend this monogenist belief, as John Sparrow Thompson's address to the Halifax Mechanic's Institute suggests. Thompson argues that the universal desire of man to record his history indicates that the human family is descended from one original stock. Moreover:

The passions and sympathies, the virtues and the vices of uncivilized man, have been found nearly alike, in tribes greatly divided by space; and in the first steps towards refinement, nations have proceeded with little variation, except that

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<sup>1</sup> Bromley, 1820, p. 3.

produced by accidental circumstances."<sup>2</sup>

According to Christian values, the Micmac, as human beings, should be equal to whites and capable of following in their footsteps, nevertheless, reformers had constantly to convince others of the natives' capabilities, intelligence and potential. Gesner argued that "The Indians display much skill and ingenuity, and they are quite equal to the whites in natural understanding and ability."<sup>3</sup> Ferley claimed that "they possess all the higher attributes; their minds are strong; their imaginative powers are highly fertile ...."<sup>4</sup> With these attributes, humanitarians had no doubt but that the Micmac could be civilized. Gesner modestly claimed that his "imperfect" efforts had reinforced his belief "that the Aborigines of Nova-Scotia may yet be brought into a state of civilization, and taught to enjoy all the blessings of modern society."<sup>5</sup>

In spite of the disagreement over whether it was worthwhile to spend time and money elevating the Micmac, the steps that would theoretically accomplish this were agreed upon. Consequently, the same themes emerge throughout all

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<sup>2</sup> John S. Thompson, "History", lecture for Mechanic's Institute, May 9, 1832. Thompson papers, PANS.

<sup>3</sup> LANSJ, 1848, App. 24, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> LANSJ, 1843, App. 49, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> LANSJ, 1848, App. 24, p. 114.

of the proposals to improve the lot of the Micmac: the Christian (read Protestant) religion, the acquisition of private property, agriculture, and education. For a few, the franchise was also an important part of the civilizing process.

Inculcating the "true principles of Christianity"<sup>46</sup> was a difficult project for Protestants because the Micmacs had already been converted to Roman Catholicism. Even so, according to Bromley, the "gloom of superstition and idolatry" had to be dispelled.<sup>47</sup> Gesner, too, felt that the influence of the Catholics had not been beneficial: they had not made the natives "acquainted with the arts and industry of civilized life," nor had they improved their moral condition or added to their comforts of life.<sup>48</sup> Although the Micmacs' religion did not meet with the approbation of the Nova Scotia establishment, the native people clung to their adopted religion; it was now part of their self-definition, another part of their identity which marked them as non-English. As a result, Protestant missionary efforts were not successful. Fortunately, most advocates of the native people agreed that conversion was not the essential first step to civilization.

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<sup>46</sup> Bromley, 1815, p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> LANSJ, 1848, App. 24, p. 118.

Land and a settled existence were more important. Land, if it was to have the proper edifying effect, had to be privately owned. To this end, Joseph Howe arranged to have some reserves divided into private lots of thirty acres to be allocated to heads of families. As with white settlers, if the land was not improved, the owner would lose his title and the land would be given "to others of more industrious habits."<sup>49</sup> This and other attempts to subdivide reserves ended in failure, due in part to native adherence to their traditional, communal land holding pattern.

By farming their own piece of private property, reformers believed that the Micmac would imbibe many virtues. Labour, as an article in The Pearl declares, "is heaven's great ordinance for human improvement."<sup>50</sup> Confirming this view, Gesner notes that Indians who "cultivate land are regular in their habits and honorable in their dealing" while those who wander about are "depraved."<sup>51</sup> An added benefit, especially pleasing to the establishment, was that self-sufficient native people would no longer require public aid.

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<sup>49</sup> LANSJ, Joseph Howe, Report on Indian Affairs, 1843, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Orville, Rev., "The True Nobility of Labour", The Pearl, Jan. 13, 1838, 2(2), p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> LANSJ, 1848, App. 24, p. 119.



The belief in the uplifting effects of a settled agricultural life was so entrenched that Bromley's philanthropic society refused to give supplies to those who would not settle. A gun was refused one young man because it would not contribute to the civilizing process, but would only allow him to pursue his "wild habits."<sup>52</sup> For Bromley, no compromise was possible, although other supporters of the Micmac, such as Perley and Gesner, advised that the Indians be gradually weaned from their savage life. They would allow some fishing and hunting until an agricultural way of life was established.<sup>53</sup>

Another benefit of settling the Micmac on farms was that they would be isolated from pernicious urban influences. It was generally accepted that native peoples' immaturity and irregular habits made them especially susceptible to contamination from the lower elements of European society. However, in rural areas, as Gesner expressed it, "Among the farmers in the country they are in little danger of being corrupted."<sup>54</sup> Indeed the farmers would serve as admirable models of virtue and industry. Protecting the Micmac from evil influences that degraded

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<sup>52</sup> Bromley, 1820, p. 29.

<sup>53</sup> LANSJ, 1842, App. 49, p. 129 and 1848, App. 24, p. 123.

<sup>54</sup> LANSJ, 1848, App. 24, pp. 123-24.

instead of elevated them helped ensure their upward progress. Although philanthropists argued for isolation with the welfare of the native people in mind, for many settlers, isolated reserves simply served to place the Micmac out of sight and out of mind.

Many reformers placed great faith in the ability of education to elevate the Micmac. Hope was centred on the children as it was believed to be easier to alter their malleable minds than those of their parents. As an 1844 Committee Report states:

...the only sure, effectual, and permanent mode to improve the conditions of the Indians, and render them fit to participate in and enjoy the comforts of social life, can only be obtained by the education of their youth....<sup>55</sup>

Perley confidently predicted that the establishment of schools for the native people would lead to complete assimilation:

...they would lead to the perfect civilization of the rising generation of Indians, who, being regularly trained and instructed from the earliest possible period, and associated with Schools with the Children of the Whites, would grow up with all the habits, thoughts and feelings, of the other Inhabitants of the Province. They would, as a matter of course, learn to speak the English Language perfectly, and thus all distinction between the different races would be at an end.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> LANSJ, 1844, App. 6, p. 164.

<sup>56</sup> LANSJ, 1843, App. 49, p. 129.

Although all humanitarians felt that education would help to civilize the Micmac, only of couple of their supporters suggested that the franchise could serve the same purpose. At the time, owning land gave proprietors certain privileges and duties, as well as status within the community. After reserves were settled on the Micmac, it had to be conceded that they were property owners, even if the land was held in trust. Crawley, Indian Commissioner of Cape Breton, believed that the Micmac, as owners of land, should have the right to vote. Besides helping them to protect their rights, the franchise would "implant in the Indians themselves a feeling of self-respect, and a desire for progress."<sup>57</sup> Howe, although opposed to universal suffrage, also supported the Indians' right to vote. He pleaded in the assembly:

...when I meet an Indian on the passage to the other world, I do not want him to tax me with not only having robbed him of his broad lands, but of having wrested from him the privilege of voting.<sup>58</sup>

Reformers were convinced that if their proposals were put in place the Indians would eventually become civilized. Year after year, the same remedies were suggested; most of these initiatives failed due to lack of financial support, and, it must be emphasized, the Micmac's reluctance to

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<sup>57</sup> LANSJ, 1849, App. 45, p. 200.

<sup>58</sup> Cited in J. Murray Beck, Joseph Howe, Vol. II, (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's Press), ftnt. 77, p. 299.

change their way of life.

It was easy for the government to defer, delay or deny proposals designed to aid the Micmac. Their failure to act reflected the attitudes of the majority of the colonial population towards the indigenous people of the province. It is difficult to ascertain popular attitudes as they are rarely expressed in print, but there is enough evidence to illustrate that attitudes ranged the full gamut from contempt to admiration to pity.

Antipathy towards the Micmac is evident in a settler's complaint that he and his neighbours did "not mean to have an Indian Town at [their] elbow."<sup>59</sup> Other settlers encroached on land granted to Indians knowing that there was little chance that officials would evict them.<sup>60</sup> Nor did settlers readily countenance having Indian children attend their local schools, as Howe discovered when some parents at Nappan responded negatively to the idea that Micmac children attend their school.<sup>61</sup> And in 1830 settlers in Wadmacook petitioned the Governor because the "Inhumane Feelings of

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<sup>59</sup> Cited in Upton, p. 82.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-88.

<sup>61</sup> LANSJ, 1844, App. 50, cited in McGee, 1974, p. 93.

these (Bra Dore) Indians" put them at risk."<sup>2</sup>

However, these seem like minor problems compared to the racial incidents cited by Bromley. It should be kept in mind that Bromley's stories are hearsay and that it suited his purpose to paint as black a picture as possible. Doing so magnified his difficulties, thus creating more sympathy among his spiritual and financial supporters. Nevertheless, scenes such as the following may have occasionally taken place. According to a friend of Bromley's, some Indians at Chadebucto Bay were

...expelled in the most brutal manner...by the white people, who entered their camps, defiled their women, abused and beat the men, and in fact conducted themselves in such a manner as to prevent the possibility of their remaining any longer."

Furthermore, Bromley claims that

...the peasantry of this country declare in the most undisguised manner, that they thought it no greater sin to shoot an Indian than a Bear or a Carraboo(sic)."<sup>4</sup>

While it is difficult to ascertain the truth of such statements, they do reflect an attitude of disdain, as do similar comments about shooting "black ducks." Haliburton says that it is a "common expression among English soldiers,

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Howe Papers, Reel 21, Petition to Sir Peregrine Maitland, Dec. 15, 1830. PANS.

<sup>3</sup> Bromley, 1820, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Bromley, 1815, p. 6.

and sometimes English hunters, who, when they had killed an Indian, made their boast of having killed a black duck."<sup>45</sup>

Attitudes such as these may have been restricted to a small minority of the population, but at the other end of the scale, another minority felt great compassion for the native people. Included in this group are the public figures I have referred to, those who tried to ameliorate the conditions in which the Micmac were living. Evidence that a portion of the colonial population supported them exists in two organizations, the Pictou Indian Civilization Society and the Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society of Halifax. The former was founded solely to assist the Micmac, the latter included the Micmac among those they hoped to help. Although neither of these societies actually accomplished their goals vis-a-vis the Micmac, their very existence indicates some concern and goodwill on the part of the members.

The Pictou Society was founded in 1828 by a number of leading citizens, inspired by their "feelings of sympathy [with]...the destitute condition of the Indians, in this neighborhood, and their hopeless prospects for the future." The task they set for themselves was to help the Indians by

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<sup>45</sup> Haliburton, p. 46.

encouraging industry in agriculture and discouraging vice."<sup>66</sup> In spite of electing officers, laying out rules and paying fees, the society folded. Perhaps the task was too daunting or, as is more likely, especially if assistance was linked to conversion, their solicitude was not well received by the Micmac.

Nor did the Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society, founded in 1834, have any impact on the life of the Micmac. This was the year in which the British humanitarian movement achieved its goal of abolishing slavery and then turned its attention to other oppressed peoples in the colonies.<sup>67</sup> This surge of interest in aboriginal peoples was partially responsible for the founding of the Nova Scotian society. As their constitution stated, one of their aims was to help the "remnant of the aborigines."<sup>68</sup> However, their other goals of helping their indigent white brethren and promoting feelings of patriotism seem to have overridden the members' concern for the welfare of the native people. As a result, their interest in the Micmac was limited to the role they could play in the development of regional self-definition.

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<sup>66</sup> Colonial Patriot, Mar. 14 1828, 1(15), p. 115. This association was connected to the local Bible Society.

<sup>67</sup> For 10 years, beginning in 1835, the British parliament made extensive enquiries into the condition of aboriginal peoples in the colonies. Upton, p. 102.

<sup>68</sup> D.C. Harvey, "Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society", The Dalhousie Review, 1939, 19, p. 289.

Their role, as defined by white Nova Scotians, was to take part in ceremonial occasions dressed in appropriate picturesque costumes.<sup>69</sup> The society dissolved in 1859, apparently having done nothing to improve the lot of the Micmac.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, the hope that the Nova Scotia Philanthropic Society might do something to alleviate the deplorable state of the Micmac inspired at least one journalist to heights of guilt and self-recrimination. A writer for The Pearl, responding to the Philanthropic Society's call for information about the Micmac,<sup>71</sup> took up their cause with emotional fervour. The colonists are, after all, he points out, responsible for the present plight of the native peoples:

Their possessions have been intruded upon without causing. Our most vicious propensities have been transferred to them without check. And our diseases have been introduced amongst them without corresponding efforts at prevention or cure.

To ensure that the readers understand their guilt and the need for action to remedy the situation, the reporter quotes

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<sup>69</sup> One such celebratory occasion was Queen Victoria's marriage. The Nova Scotian, Halifax, May 7, 1840 quoted in Ruth Whitehead, The Old Men Told Us, (Halifax, N.S.: Nimbus, 1991), pp. 216-17.

<sup>70</sup> Harvey's article lauds the society's achievements, none of which involved the Micmac. Harvey, 1939, *passim*.

<sup>71</sup> This request may have been in response to the enquiries of the Colonial Office regarding aboriginal peoples.



from a British work, William Howitt's Colonization and Christianity:

...there is and can be no evil like that monstrous and earth-encompassing evil, which the Europeans have committed against the Aborigines of every country in which they have settled.... It is often said...that the sun never sets on the dominions of our youthful queen; but who dares to tell us the more horrible truth, that it never sets on the scenes of our injustice and oppression!

The writer for The Pearl was "glad to find Nova Scotians alive to a sense of their imperious duty" and felt sure that the noble goals of the Philanthropic Society would gain the "good will and assistance of all classes of the community."<sup>72</sup> However, there is no evidence that the writer's enthusiasm led to any tangible benefits for the object of his sympathy, the Micmac.

In between these two extremes of contempt and compassion mixed with guilt, there is a middle road of apathy, indifference and neglect. Here the majority of Nova Scotians were probably to be found. Many undoubtedly felt some sympathy for the Micmac's plight, but they accepted it as part of Destiny's plan. As the Rev. John Sprott wrote, "Their existence is incompatible with a state of civilization.... The approach of the white man, and the march of improvement, have sealed their doom." Sprott does admire "Nature's gentlemen," but, like others of his time

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<sup>72</sup> Anon., "The Indians", The Pearl, Nov. 2, 1838, 2(44), pp. 350-31.

and place, he felt that an inferior way of life was being replaced by one that was vastly superior."<sup>73</sup>

Nova Scotians were often puzzled that their "gift" of civilization did not take hold among the Micmac. Indeed, it was often rejected. The explanation had to lie in the character of the potential recipients, not in the values and beliefs that were proffered. Therefore, the colonists need not feel guilty or responsible for the pitiable state of the Indians. Haliburton admitted that there had been an immense decrease in the native population, but that they had not been ill treated or enslaved, "consequently cruelty and ill usage so abhorrent to the nature of an Englishman have had no share in their diminution."<sup>74</sup> Some Nova Scotians might occasionally feel a twinge of guilt, but they were consoled by the belief that a degraded people were fated to disappear before a more virtuous, industrious, and refined race.

Here we see how the image of the degraded Indian was at the root of colonial indifference, contributing to a lack of concern and justifying the inaction of government. Having sunk below the level of simple, but pure, hunters and

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<sup>73</sup> Sprott, p. 110.

<sup>74</sup> Haliburton, p. 45. The British deplored the Spanish usage of aboriginal peoples in Central and South America. They contrasted it to what they perceived to be their own fair and just treatment of native peoples.

gathers, the Micmac had become so corrupted that forces of nature would soon, mercifully, allow them to die out. Most agreed that degenerate Indians were impossible to "elevate"; only a minority optimistically believed that it was possible. Fewer still acted upon their beliefs. And in their attempts to help, reformers were hindered by the ideas they shared with their society: that the Micmac were a degenerate, ruined people, and, to be saved, they had to take on their conqueror's way of life.

In retrospect we can see that the Micmac actually benefitted from colonial indifference. If humanitarians had successfully carried out their plans to settle the native people, to turn them into farmers, to completely assimilate them, as a distinct people, the Micmac would have disappeared long ago.

## Part II

## Science and the "Savage"

## Chapter IV

"Science aids...the onward march of man"<sup>1</sup>

During the latter half of the nineteenth century Nova Scotians continued to regard the Micmac as a people apart. However, a rapidly changing world led to a new climate of opinion and a different justification for the isolation and neglect of the indigenous people.

During the 1850s, 60s and 70s, Nova Scotians' world view began to take on a different perspective. New ideas were introduced from Europe and the United States with some engendering feelings of anxiety and others providing reasons for optimism. In a conservative society like Nova Scotia, the most troubling ideas were the scientific concepts that threatened to undermine Christian orthodoxy. Also unsettling were the social and political ideas that attacked the foundation of Nova Scotia's traditional, hierarchical society. But for those willing to incorporate new scientific concepts into their belief system, a new, modern way of dealing with a changing world was at hand. Many

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Fenerty, Essays on Progress (Halifax: J. Bowes, 1866), p. 9.

welcomed the challenge, as Isaac Chipman, a Nova Scotian and leading Baptist minister, reveals:

United with the most powerful energies of Christianity, science has raised the human mind from a fearful depth of degradation; and we foresee that day as near, when by their cooperation, united with Art, the intellectual and moral powers of man shall be mightily enlarged and purified.<sup>2</sup>

This profound faith in science led to the acceptance of ideas which seemed logical at the time, ideas which today's readers find irrational, incomprehensible and racist.

The ideological shift that occurred in Victorian society can best be explained within the context of Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigms and scientific revolutions. According to Kuhn, when answers to problems are no longer satisfactory, new ones are sought out. Those that are most successful are theories that seem better than their competitors; simply put, they provide better answers. These solutions become paradigms and prevail as long as new phenomena can be made to fit into them. Phenomena that do not fit are often not even seen, as scientists attempt to adapt their material to the prevailing paradigm. This continues until the paradigm can no longer incorporate inconsistencies and, amidst arguments, evasions, and debate

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<sup>2</sup> George Rawlyk, "J.M. Cramp and W.C. Keirstead: the Response of Two Late Nineteenth-Century Baptist Sermons to Science" in Paul A. Bogaard, ed. Profiles of Science and Society in the Maritimes Prior to 1914, (Acadiensis Press/Mount Allison University, 1990), p. 120.

a new paradigm emerges to replace the old. According to Kuhn, these changes constitute scientific revolutions.<sup>3</sup> Kuhn's theory is intended to explain scientific change but it can be applied to a broader spectrum of thought. In this case, I am applying it to the weltanschauung of the middle and late Victorian era. Kuhn's theory is especially appropriate in this regard as scientific explanations underlay many social and political ideas of the time. In particular, Kuhn's theory helps us to understand how ideas we now consider racist could have become so entrenched.

There is no question that the old scientific ideas and traditional religious certainties were no longer able to explain the vastness of the Victorian world. There was a need for the wide diversity of humankind to be accepted and incorporated into a satisfying framework of belief. Moreover, an ideology was wanted to reassure Europeans that their domination of other groups was in everyone's best interests. To be accepted, a new world view had to be emotionally, as well as intellectually, satisfying.

The Victorian era was certainly a time when the need to understand indigenous peoples was more urgent than it had been in the past. Within the immense boundaries of

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

Britain's second empire, more and more of its citizens were brought into contact with colonized peoples, either directly, through government or business or indirectly, through the print media. In order to govern these subject peoples, they had to be understood, to the extent that this was believed to be possible. Attention was focused on scientists: perhaps they could explain behaviour which seemed irrational to most Westerners.

The new sciences held the key to this and almost every other dilemma. Paradoxically, science both broadened the gap between Western societies and indigenous peoples and, at the same time, brought them together. On the one hand, advances in scientific technology seemed to widen the distance between "civilized" Europeans and "uncivilized" indigenous peoples. Victorians, enamoured with their "comforts", equated the material goods acquired through technological advances with progress and civilization. On the other hand, the new sciences which focused on the study of man and society were bringing "savages" and Euro-Americans together by discovering common ancestors and a common history. In essence, science fostered a sense of interconnectedness at the same time it confirmed differences between peoples and established these differences in a rigid biological and social hierarchy.

It is difficult to choose one particular date that signifies the time when new ideas changed attitudes towards native people. However, one event that took place in 1851 is indicative of the new currents of opinion, that is the publication of Lewis Morgan's League of the Ho-de-no-nee or Iroquois. Previous accounts of native people had been, for the most part, recorded within the context of the belief system discussed in Part I, with native people perceived as either Noble or Demonic Savages.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, travellers and missionaries recorded what caught their attention, usually strange or bizarre behaviour and odd customs. Colourful myths and legends also interested early chroniclers, suggesting a taste for the colourful and romantic. Morgan, an American lawyer, was the first to look beyond these curious customs and romantic tales in order to examine the social and political structure of an aboriginal society. Using the methods of science, Morgan subjected the information he gathered from the Iroquois to a reasoned and systematic analysis. Not surprisingly, the order Morgan imposed on his data reflected the belief systems of his time. But Morgan did not simply adapt his data to contemporary ideas; his arguments based on emerging concepts of progress and social evolution helped to shape the new

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Bohannon, intro. to Lewis Morgan, Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines, (1881; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. vi.



world view.<sup>5</sup>

The new weltanschauung that emerged in mid-century and prevailed well into the twentieth century had profound implications for the native people. Just as it was necessary to analyze the components of "civilization" in order to understand late eighteenth and early nineteenth century attitudes, so too is it useful to know what changing beliefs meant to Nova Scotians of the last half of the nineteenth century. Only then can we understand Nova Scotians' attitudes towards the Micmac. The concepts to be considered are: evolution, Social Darwinism, the comparative method, and race, preceded by an overview of the importance of science in the period. The only anti-materialistic, non-utilitarian beliefs remaining extant were those pertaining to traditional Christianity and romanticism. They warrant discussion since they still influenced attitudes towards the indigenous peoples of Nova Scotia.

It should not be assumed that scientific concepts replaced the value put on civilization. Instead, the emphasis on what it meant to be "civilized" shifted. Civilized behaviour, defined by Euro-Americans, remained the touchstone by which all people were judged.

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<sup>5</sup> Bohannon, intro. to Morgan, p. vii.

## 1. Science

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of biology, geology, comparative anatomy, paleontology, philology, anthropology, ethnology and archaeology as separate disciplines. It was discoveries in some of these fields that undermined not only the received tenets of religion, but also the traditional interpretation of the original state of man and of nature. Hypothetical, abstract theories no longer seemed satisfactory when seen in the light of new scientific evidence. For instance, archaeological finds offered a vast and previously unimagined time scale on which to trace man's history. Furthermore, information gathered from the far corners of colonial empires suggested that conjectural models and Mosaic theology, both of which assumed the original unity of humankind, were inadequate to explain man's undoubted diversity. Even the concept that man, everywhere, was guided by the light of reason was questioned, for colonial administrators, travellers, and explorers provided a great deal of information about institutions and customs that were not explicable in utilitarian terms. These customs seemed to have some function since subjected peoples became upset when attempts were made to alter or abolish them, but what that purpose was, Europeans could not fathom.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Burrow, p. 170.

A new cosmology was needed to make sense of this changing world. Information gathered from previously unknown corners of the world and evidence discovered in the geological and fossil record had to be arranged, ordered and interpreted. Scientists stepped in with promises to discover absolute and universal natural laws to replace those they had confounded. The new sciences would discover the natural laws which governed man, society and the universe. These laws would be based on scientific methods and founded on physical evidence.

Burgeoning scientific fields of study influenced each other, but the impetus for change was the study of geology. Enormously influential, Sir Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology, published in 1830, provided the methods and theory that were later applied to the study of man and society. Lyell popularized the theory of uniformitarianism which postulated gradual change through a previously unimagined time scale. Changes observable in the geological record were interpreted to be operating as universal laws in processes that were slow, gradual and causally determined. Since these processes were universal, it was assumed that they would continue to act in the future as they had in the past.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Burrow, pp. 110-113.

Other fields of study, including anthropology, borrowed from these principles and applied them to the study of humankind. It was speculated that man, too, had changed gradually and slowly through eons of time. If man's development was causally determined, then it would be possible, when the appropriate data were collected and arranged, for scientists to trace man's development from his primitive origins to his present high state of civilization. Theories of causality and uniformitarianism allowed students of man and society to link the past to the present, as well as to predict the future.

## 2. Evolution

Darwin's On the Origin of Species, published in 1859, did not, as is commonly believed, singlehandedly shatter orthodox Christian beliefs. The currents of thought evident in Darwin's theories of biological change were apparent in earlier works such as Lyell's Principles of Geology. Like Lyell, Darwin postulated that change through time had been uniform, continuous and slow. Biological life forms, including humankind, had evolved through a process that was unchanging and would continue into the future.

The aspect of Darwin's work that had the most profound influence on his contemporaries was the idea that man shared

kinship with the animals. For the first time man was placed fully in nature, with a direct link to lower animals.<sup>9</sup> Just as controversial was Darwin's theory of natural selection which proposed that in the struggle for existence only the best adapted survived. Animals and plants that were less well suited to the environment failed to reproduce and eventually died out.<sup>9</sup>

Darwin's theory of evolution ended the monogenist-polygenist debate; multiple origins were no longer required to explain the diversity of man. Polygenists abandoned the great chain of being, a concept that linked races together in a hierarchical system, with Europeans at the top and blacks at the bottom.<sup>10</sup> This theory was held in some disdain because it distorted the Mosaic account of creation. Now the theory of evolution could be applied to the social, cultural and biological development of man. In the process, Darwin's hypothesis was distorted, however, the final result was a modern, scientific, socially acceptable theory in which races could continue to be ranked.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Burrow, p. 114.

<sup>9</sup> Murray J. Leaf, Man, Mind and Science: A History of Anthropology, (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 99.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Stepan, The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960, (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> J.R. Miller, p. 97.

The idea of removing God from creation frightened some Christians. Yet many were able to reconcile their religious beliefs with Darwin's hypotheses about man and nature; others rejected his ideas outright.

### 3. Social Darwinism

It was the challenge of the new social scientists - ethnologists, anthropologists, and sociologists - to construct theories of human development based on Darwin's and Lyell's principles and methods. Their aim was to discover laws which explained human society, and the processes which had brought man to his present position of ascendancy. As J.S. Mill put it:

The fundamental problem ... is to find the laws according to which any state of society produces the state which succeeds it and takes its place. This opens the great and vexed question of the progressiveness of man and society ...<sup>12</sup>

Of all who addressed this problem, the most influential was Herbert Spencer. Spencer devised a universal system, his "Synthetic Philosophy", which provided many Victorians with a satisfying interpretation of their world. Using an organic analogy of growth and development, he explained how the earth and everything on it had evolved. The common principle was the development from the homogeneous to the

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<sup>12</sup> J.S. Mill, A System of Logic, II, in Burrow, p. 108.

heterogeneous. Just as the earth evolved from a nebular mass, just as seeds grew into trees and embryos into animals and humans, so did societies develop from the simple to the complex.<sup>13</sup> According to Spencer this evolutionary process was nature's law which caused mankind and societies, through a process of adaptation, to become increasingly differentiated and complex.

Darwin's theory of natural selection became Spencer's "survival of the fittest". If humankind was allowed to follow the law of social evolution, the weaker elements, that is the less differentiated, would be eliminated, thereby making room for the superior, more complex types to advance. The ultimate goal was perfection, but this could only be achieved if the natural process of evolution was allowed to follow its course. Competition and conflict played an essential role in this process. According to Spencer, conflict between individuals, between classes, nations, and races was nature's way of weeding out inferior elements and bringing forth superior elements.<sup>14</sup>

Spencer's notions of what constituted complex or

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought, 2nd ed., (New York: George Braziller, 1955), p. 37 and Robert A. Nisbet, Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 124.

<sup>14</sup> Gosssett, p. 12.

heterogeneous societies and simple or homogeneous societies were predicated on the values and beliefs of his Victorian world. Characteristics of an advanced society clearly matched his own, while he drew examples of lower, simpler societies from colonized peoples who were little understood by Europeans. According to Spencer's universal system, all contemporary societies and their antecedents could be classified and placed in a chronological sequence which would reveal the development of Western civilization.

In this grand scheme of evolutionary progress, similarities to earlier theories of conjectural history are evident. But now the system was no longer based on conjecture and hypotheses; it was derived from scientific methods and universal law. Lyell and Darwin had proven that a uniform mechanism of change acted in the universe; this mechanism ensured that the same processes occurred in the past, the present and the future.<sup>15</sup> As conceived by Spencer and his contemporaries, a similar gradual, continuous, natural, and directional pattern was evident in man's social and cultural development. As a result, every stage in the development of civilization could be sequentially placed on this linear continuum.

The concept of social evolution became immensely

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<sup>15</sup> Nisbet, p. 184.



popular, providing an ideology which satisfied most Euro-Americans well into the twentieth century. Spencer integrated the rapidly accumulating, but inchoate, information about strange, alien peoples; he imposed a pattern on all societies, past and present, which made them intelligible and meaningful to his Victorian peers. Euro-Americans could now look at indigenous peoples and recognize in them elements of their own ancestry. This did not bring them any closer, but at least they could be explained and understood.

Victorians also found comfort in Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy because it gave a purpose and direction to the rapid social and economic changes which were transforming their society. Not only did it provide an explanation of change, it also promised a better future.<sup>16</sup> There was even hope for some simple societies: for those not fated to disappear, the direction of their progress was clearly laid out in the pattern of Western development. This optimistic outlook was an important factor in Social Darwinism becoming the prevailing paradigm. It satisfied the need to believe in a continually improving society, while it also placated underlying anxieties and fears.

Another reason for the ready acceptance of the idea of

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<sup>16</sup> Hofstadter, p. 45.

social evolution was that it validated the status quo. It seemed self-evident to Westerners that their ascendancy was a result of their natural superiority.<sup>17</sup> Hence, their success was explained and justified by the theory of social evolution which proffered that their almost world-wide hegemony was due to their advanced state of evolution.

While these theories of social development enhanced British and American self-esteem by placing their societies at the top of an updated ladder of progress, the position of indigenous peoples, such as the Micmac, continued to be denigrated. Long standing prejudices towards native people now had a new validation with social evolutionary theories continuing to place them near the bottom of the developmental ladder.

Further validation for the idea that native peoples were immature and child-like was at hand in the popular theory of recapitulation. This theory, a refinement of Spencer's model of organic growth, was used to explain both the development of children and of indigenous people. The concept stipulated that just as the embryo recapitulates the stages of evolution, so the mind of the child recapitulates the development of the human race from savagery to

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<sup>17</sup> Gossett, p. 140.

civilization.<sup>18</sup> The child must learn reason and self-restraint before he can become an independent adult. The parallel to indigenous people was self-evident to the Victorians. Science had once again proven what they had always assumed: savages were like children, they could not control their passions, they had no sense of purpose and they had volatile tempers.<sup>19</sup> The explanation for this childishness was that indigenous peoples had become sidetracked in the evolutionary process and were therefore in an arrested state of either childhood or adolescence.<sup>20</sup> Again this was an old idea in new, modern, scientific dress.

Theories of social evolution and progress had other implications for the way native peoples were regarded. Since the concept of linear development assumed continual improvement, indigenous peoples continued to be identified with Hobbes' rude, wild savage. The Noble Savage all but disappeared with only a few romantics lamenting his demise.

The Hobbesian savage continued to play his traditional role within the revised theory of man and society. He still represented the dark mirror image of everything that Euro-Americans held dear, that is civilized behaviour, rational

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<sup>18</sup> Gossett, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Todd, p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> Hofstadter, p. 193.

values, material comforts, and love of family. Rationality, as Victorians defined it, was economically driven, utilitarian behaviour which inevitably led to self-improvement. The corollary was that behaviour which seemed to have no utility or purpose, which consequently did not lead to advancement or improvement, was irrational and meaningless.<sup>21</sup> Euro-Americans perceived that there was little hope for people who had no interest in improving their condition. Furthermore, according to Social Darwinism, if outsiders interfered with the natural development of the evolutionary process, indigenous people would be irreparably harmed. Native people were used to being regarded with indifference, but now the apathy of the dominant society was sanctioned by science.

Conservatives found in Social Darwinism another rational for discounting the uncertain future of many native peoples. The belief that they would eventually become extinct was affirmed by evolutionary theory. In the battle for survival, the fittest were fated to overcome inferior races. It was unfortunate, but, most Euro-Americans believed, it was necessary that inferior races disappear in order for stronger, more advanced nations to take their place and continue the inevitable improvement of humankind. Extinction was the fate of any group which became

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<sup>21</sup> Todd, pp. 88-89.

sidetracked or arrested on the evolutionary path. Their own inherent flaws and weaknesses meant they would inevitably perish. Consequently, a large segment of the population believed that humanitarian gestures, although well-intentioned, were doomed to failure.<sup>22</sup>

Not everyone approved of this deterministic point of view. For instance, liberal humanitarians accepted the concepts of social evolution and progress, but not Spencer's idea that the environment shaped and controlled man. Instead, they believed that man had some measure of freedom as well as some control over his environment.<sup>23</sup> They modified other Social Darwinist ideas to accord with their optimistic outlook. They argued that, indeed, inferior peoples were in grave danger of extinction, but they could be saved if they got back on the right evolutionary track. The process, of course, would have to take place naturally and slowly. All that humanitarians could do was to treat native people kindly, and encourage and protect them until they were ready to advance on their own. The environment was a crucial factor in the "advancement" of indigenous peoples and was one element over which those trying to help had some control.

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<sup>22</sup> Haller, p. 207.

<sup>23</sup> Hofstadter, p. 125.

The idea that rapid and sudden evolutionary change was harmful to races that were not ready for it is a refinement of the degradation theory which prevailed in the first half of the nineteenth century. Science had explained progress, now it explained the inexplicable: why contact with superior white races harmed indigenous peoples. The explanation that contact with the inferior elements of Euro-American society resulted in degradation had not been entirely satisfying, as the lower classes, were in the final analysis, part of the dominant society. A new explanation was found in the evolutionary process. The Caucasian race had advanced through its own innate abilities, its own consciousness and sense of purpose. The only way uncivilized races could ascend the ladder was by acquiring the same characteristics and by evolving in a similar manner. Humanitarian efforts to assist indigenous peoples to advance were entirely misplaced for the civilized values and behaviour they sought to teach would be learned through compulsion or imitation. Both methods might lead to superficial assimilation, but this would actually be harmful to the people they were trying to help. Change had to be achieved through a natural process of self-development; it had to come from within the people themselves. If advancement was imposed, the process would be artificial and would result in moral, physical and social degeneration.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, determinists believed

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<sup>24</sup> Haller, pp. 143-144.

that there were many races who could never progress because of their inherent weaknesses.

Evolutionary theories justified what was already taking place. Native peoples were being isolated, arguably for their own benefit. Isolation, it was argued, would protect them from the unhealthy influences of white society and would allow them to "advance" through the essential gradual stages. Governments took a paternalistic approach, ostensibly treating immature native people kindly, while, at the same time, setting them on the right road to progress.

### 3. Comparative Method

A direct descendant of conjectural history, the comparative method has to be seen within the larger context of social development and progress. Like its predecessor, the comparative method arranged cultures in a series with the least advanced at the bottom and the most advanced at the top. But the new scientific method produced a more systematic result. The standard of evaluation, as before, was civilization as defined by Western values. Using these standards, social scientists were able to arrange their data in a pattern which showed linear progress from savagery to civilization. Moreover, evolution showed that progress was uniform through time and around the world. By comparing

contemporary societies at a particular stage to those from the past at a similar stage, it was possible to reconstruct the sequence of cultures which resulted in modern civilization.<sup>25</sup>

Civilization was divided into stages as the conjectural historians had done, but the stages were more clearly defined. In this area, Lewis Morgan's work was influential. He divided what he termed ethnical periods, or stages of culture, into three subperiods. Thus, the stages of savagery and barbarity were separated into older, middle and later stages. Each stage was defined by "some important invention or discovery which materially influenced human progress, and inaugurated an improved condition."<sup>26</sup> According to Morgan's categorization, most North American Indians had advanced to the later stage of savagery as they had acquired the bow and arrow. The acquisition of further "arts of life" were necessary if they were to progress any further.<sup>27</sup>

It was as representatives of a people at the lowest

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<sup>25</sup> Nisbet, p. 192

<sup>26</sup> Bohannon, intro. to Morgan, p. xxv.

<sup>27</sup> Morgan, p. 42. See Brian W. Dippie, The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), pp. 103-06 for a discussion of Morgan and evolutionary progress.



stage of evolutionary development that scientists, such as Lewis Morgan, became interested in native people. By studying aboriginal people, scientists, both professional and amateur, believed that they were examining people who were at the same stage as their own, recently discovered, palaeolithic ancestors. Consequently, by studying native people who had preserved the earlier stages of human development, Westerners could learn about their own pre-history. They could learn, among other things, how civilization progressed, how institutions evolved, and why some societies stagnated. There was much to learn from native groups, but little time to do it, as it was still assumed that they would soon become extinct. Time was of the essence as anthropologists undertook what came to be known as salvage anthropology.

#### 4. Race

Attempts to define and classify different races became an obsession of the era. Scientists attempted to define and categorize racial differences with the goal of arranging races on a linear scale. Eventually, they hoped to place all of humankind in a framework based on theories of evolutionary development. While this research recognized the wide diversity of humankind, as always, Westerners were given the pre-eminent position.

This task was undertaken by specialists in the new fields of anthropology and ethnology, both of which focused on the study of man and his culture. Classifying races by their physical differences became the major interest of physical anthropologists. The goal of finding pure races, became, according to Todd, their "Holy Grail."<sup>28</sup> Criteria for describing and defining racial differences were sought, with cranial measurements, human pigmentation, and hair colour becoming the most widely used.

The use of crania to determine racial types was not new. Skulls were obvious markers of race as they were readily available, provided a measurable unit of comparison, and contained the brain, an organ correlated with intelligence. Early in the nineteenth century, some scientists had used crania to classify different races and phrenologists had used them to illustrate the relationship between the contours of the skull and mental and moral characteristics.<sup>29</sup>

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, a famous comparative

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<sup>28</sup> Todd, p. 314.

<sup>29</sup> The "science" of phrenology became very popular in the first half of the century, eventually degenerating into a parlour game. In spite of its frivolous nature, phrenology was influential in that it spread the idea that physical characteristics could be equated with intellectual abilities and moral qualities. Stepan, p. 25.

anatomist active in the early nineteenth century, devised a system of race classification using cranial measurements as his criteria. It is of interest to note that his racial theories were initially not widely accepted as the climate of opinion was not ready for the idea that there were different races of man. Indeed, a series of articles called "The History of Man" which appeared in The Bee in 1838, suggests that Blumenbach's arguments were rejected at that time with the same arguments that would be used in the early twentieth century to challenge similar systems of racial classification. The author of "The History of Man" responds to Blumenbach's claim that there are five varieties of man:

But the truth is, that this and all other divisions are perfectly arbitrary, and we doubt much whether they should be received. The differences so established depend principally on the different configurations of the skull; but the truth is, that there is almost as much difference between the skull of an Irishman and that of a Scotchman, as there is between the skull of a Circassian and that of a Mongolian; nay, not only in the same country, and among the same inhabitants, but even in the same families, the most remarkable differences, in the form of the head ... are observable; yet we do not dream of classifying them into any definite order of varieties.

Furthermore, the author argues, Blumenbach's

"...observations were... founded on individual skulls, which can never be relied on as representing correctly those of the bulk of any nation." A final argument attacks Blumenbach's five varieties. Why five, the author argues, when it is possible to make fifty or a hundred with a little

ingenuity.<sup>10</sup> Similar arguments, including the infinite variations in skull shape, and arbitrary racial divisions were used by Franz Boas in 1912 to counter the by then entrenched study of craniology.<sup>11</sup> Between the criticism of these two sceptics, a period of over seventy years, the foundation that Blumenbach had built continued to grow. Using crania, scientists built complex and elaborate systems of racial divisions, their research contributing to the prevailing racist paradigm.

The appeal of skulls was simply overwhelming, as was the temptation to fit them into evolutionary patterns. Moreover, there was a new dimension to the study of crania not available to earlier scientists. The discovery of fossil skulls gave Victorian scientists the means to compare contemporary races to those of Stone Age peoples. Scientists arranged the ancient skulls in a linear sequence, correlating them to a similar pattern of contemporary "primitive" skulls.

Physical characteristics of crania were used to gauge both mental and moral qualities, the assumption being that

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<sup>10</sup> "The History of Mankind", The Bee, June 24, 1835, 1(5), p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Stepan, p. 104. For a summary of Boas and his influence see Bruce G. Trigger, Natives and Newcomers, (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), pp. 112-14.

one explained the other. The dimensions and shape of the skull and the size of the brain were measured using precise criteria. One method used to determine intelligence was measuring cranial capacity. Another widely used classificatory gauge was the cephalic index. This method involved "dividing the length of the skull into the breadth and multiplying the quotient by 100 to eliminate decimals". A long skull was called dolichocephalic and a round one, brachycephalic. These skull shapes, including an intermediate mesocephalic type, were used to define racial varieties. Another classification technique was the measurement of facial angles. The ideal angle, based on Greek statues, was  $100^{\circ}$ . A facial angle of  $60^{\circ}$  to  $70^{\circ}$  indicated a sloping forehead, assuming a close association with apes and low intelligence. The terms used for facial angles were, respectively, prognathous and orthognathous."<sup>22</sup> A complex system, indeed.

Such concepts were not limited to the scientific community; they became widespread and popular. By the end of the nineteenth century the skull had become the arbiter of racial theory."<sup>23</sup> This scientific research led to the widely held belief that human physiology, especially the skull, reflected intellectual and moral characteristics of

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<sup>22</sup> Gossett, pp. 69-76.

<sup>23</sup> Stepan, p. xviii.

individuals and of races. Craniometry did more than establish hierarchies of physically different races; it also offered a scientific explanation of the inability of some races to evolve. Spencer and some of his followers believed that inferior races were small-brained. The study of brain weight and convolutions explained why these races would never evolve any further than their current condition. They were outside the process of evolution and would never be able to progress.<sup>14</sup>

The work of physical anthropologists had a profound effect on attitudes towards the native people. Science was "proving", what many had always believed, that the "lower" races were, indeed, inferior; moreover, this inferiority was reflected in their physical appearance. This new attitude is apparent in Nova Scotia in 1862 when a traveller commented on the "degenerate" Micmac "squaws and children" he observed: "the low foreheads denote a lack of that higher order of intellect which designates the superior mind."<sup>15</sup> If temperament and intelligence were inborn, then there was little chance that these characteristics could be changed. The physical appearance of savages confirmed that they were stuck in an evolutionary backwater, with almost no chance of

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<sup>14</sup> Haller, p. 137.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew L. Spedon, Rambles Among the Blueberries, (Montreal: Lovell, 1863), p. 133.

escape. For them evolution was at an end.

Amongst the most extreme of the racial theories which developed in the nineteenth century was the concept of the Aryan or Teutonic race, a race which was supposed to have been the carrier of all civilized traits. This race was inventive, adaptable, expansive, the only one able to live in any climate and the only one suited for democracy. An Anglo-Saxon/Celtic variant most influenced Nova Scotians. For Nova Scotians, connected politically, economically and socially with Great Britain it seemed self-evident that Britain's dominant position in the world was a result of its citizens' inherent abilities and intelligence. It was Britain's destiny to rule much of the known world. In this circular argument Britain's success proved its superiority.

The idea that the abilities and talents of this privileged race also entailed responsibilities was widespread. It was the duty of civilized people to govern those less fortunate than themselves. Each race was governed according to the stage of evolution that they had reached, one practical reason that racial definitions were needed. Most subject peoples, it was believed, were not ready for liberty and required a paternalistic government. This was the "white man's burden", the daunting, but inescapable challenge facing empire builders.

## 5. Christian Views

By the latter decades of the nineteenth century, theories of social evolution, progress and inherited racial differences were taken for granted. They were the essential components of the way Euro-Americans perceived their world, but the acceptance of the new ideology was not without variability. While some accepted a completely materialistic and scientific interpretation of the cosmos which the new beliefs implied, many more adhered to traditional religious views.

Most Christians had no problem reconciling concepts of race and progress into their belief system, but evolutionary theory was another matter. Evolution eliminated the role of the Creator and made man an integral part of nature, concepts too blasphemous for many Christians to accept. However, Christians had little trouble with the idea that races were unequal because of the stage of development they had reached. The concept of the brotherhood of man had almost always, in practice, incorporated the idea that some groups were more advanced than others.

Polygenism was no longer necessary, so the quarrel between it and monogenism disappeared, to be replaced by debates about evolution and Mosaic creation. William



Dawson, a prominent Nova Scotian, became the leading scientific opponent of Darwin's ideas. In several books, he showed how it was possible to reconcile modern scientific knowledge with traditional belief in the Divine origin of humankind. But his works also illustrate that those who believed in the brotherhood of man did not necessarily believe that different races were equal in ability.<sup>26</sup>

Christianity also influenced the dominant society's sense of duty. Christians' sense of mission, their desire to "save" savages in every part of the world paralleled and sometimes exceeded the imperialistic drive of politicians and businessmen. Moreover, Christianity reinforced the self-righteousness of Euro-Americans. They believed that God had ordained that mankind should control the material world and if the white races were most successfully following his Divine plan, it followed that He favoured them, that they were his chosen people. Some Britons and their descendants in America took this idea so literally that they fostered the belief that they were the true descendants of the ten tribes of Israel.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For example see J. William Dawson, The Origin of the World. According to Revelation and Science, (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1877).

<sup>27</sup> Rev. James Christie, ed., Anglo-Saxon Ensign, V. 1, No. 1, Aug 1, 1880 (Truro, Nova Scotia: John Ross). The frontispiece of this journal states that it is "Devoted to the Identification of the British Nation with the Lost 10 Tribes of Israel and Kindred Subjects".

## 6. Romanticism

Industrialization and urbanization drove romantics, at least metaphorically, to find solace in solitary, pure nature, far from the contaminating influence of man. The image of the American native had once been part of this vision, but by the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was believed that most Indians had become tainted by the evils of Western civilization. As such, they were no longer viable symbols of virtue and innocence, except when placed in the past. Here, they continued to represent the ideal relationship between man and nature.

Writers continued to find images of nostalgia, death and disintegration in the anticipated extinction of the native peoples. Their passing served as a memento mori, a reminder that all things must pass. As heroic figures in the past they represented a time when men lived in peace and harmony with his environment. Writers also used stereotypical Indians characters to provide atmosphere in adventure stories or historical fiction. Indian myths, legends and place-names provided a sense of colour and drama to landscapes, which to Euro-Americans, were devoid of association.

A shift in ideology does not necessarily mean that the way aboriginal people were regarded and treated changed to any great extent. Rather, new ideologies offered a new justification for a social structure which continued to favour certain races and classes and oppress others. Old ideas, the need for hierarchy and order, the essential unity of man, conjectural history, the influence of the environment, all had served the interests of Euro-Americans. A shift in ideology also advanced their cause, but the new justification for oppressing subject races was, in their eyes, more authoritative. Western superiority was now validated by scientific theories which proved that their high status and position was just.

Scientists whose work on race was responsible for changing attitudes were not consciously racist. Nor did they lead public opinion on the question of race.<sup>38</sup> Their role was to organize masses of new and puzzling data, thereby giving order to potential chaos. However, it cannot be denied that the consequence of their research was a racist paradigm that was used to legitimate the status quo. A further consequence was the belief, frequently put into practice, that inferior races could be justifiably neglected as they were fated for extinction.

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<sup>38</sup> Stepan, p. x.

Science had an profound impact on late nineteenth century thought. By "proving" that races were separate and discrete according to their place on the evolutionary ladder, scientists challenged the Christian concept of the unity of man. Progress, too, in the early part of the nineteenth century had been assumed by reformers and philanthropists to include the less advanced races. Now, social scientists equated progress with Social Darwinism. This meant a harsh fate for those, like the native people, who were not "fit".

By the end of the nineteenth century, a racist paradigm, fostered by science, was so pervasive that few escaped its influence. History was interpreted from a racist point of view, literature extolled the virtues of the blond Nordic type, and legislation was enacted based on the assumption of the inferiority of particular races. Scientists upheld the belief in biological and racial determinants, rejecting cultural and environmental influences. It was not until the early twentieth century that paradigms based on racial concepts began to be questioned and decades later, that they were discarded.

## Chapter V

"Our Stone Men"<sup>1</sup>

Most literate Nova Scotians were interested in at least some aspects of the scientific debates current in their society. Many were familiar with the publications of scientists whose work influenced the debate, works by famous scientists and social scientists such as Louis Agassiz, Samuel G. Morton, Josiah G. Nott and G.R. Glidden, Herbert Spencer and, of course, Darwin.<sup>2</sup>

By 1862 the interest in science had reached the point that local scientists, both amateur and professional, felt the need for an organization as a focus for their enthusiasm. The Nova Scotia Institute of Natural Science was the result.<sup>3</sup> At meetings members read papers and subsequently published them in the Institutes' Transactions

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<sup>1</sup> J.B. Gilpen, "On the Stone Age of Nova Scotia", Nova Scotia Institute of Nature Science, Transactions and Proceedings, 3, 1871-74, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> Morton, Agassiz, Nott and Glidden influenced the development of race science. Their studies provided a base for polygenist theories as they argued that different races were distinct and had separate origins. Curtis M. Hinsley, Jr., Savages and Scientists, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), pp. 27-28.

<sup>3</sup> D.C. Harvey says that the Nova Scotia Institute of Natural Science grew out of a Literary and Scientific Society founded in 1859. "The Age of Faith in Nova Scotia", Royal Society of Canada, Trans. Series III, 15, Sect. II, 1946, p. 14.

and Proceedings. Topics were wide ranging, reflecting the non-specialist interests of the participants. They were also up to date, indicating a familiarity with contemporary topics, such as evolution, craniology and Social Darwinism.

Although not the major interest of members, a few papers dealt, directly or indirectly, with aboriginal people. The content and motivations of these papers varied, but all reflected the need to discover and record information about the Micmac before they became extinct. There was an awareness that little was known about the aboriginal people of Nova Scotia and that what was known had not been acquired according to scientific methods. Another contributing factor was the desire to keep up with the archaeological and anthropological work being done elsewhere in America and in Europe. In 1888 Rev. Patterson pointed out the drawbacks of investigative research in Nova Scotia. He pointed out that Nova Scotia had no caves or lake dwellings as had recently been discovered in Europe; nevertheless, there were sufficient resources to discover the history of the "primitive state of society found among us."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Rev. George Patterson, "The Stone Age in Nova Scotia, as Illustrated by a Collection of Relics Presented to Dalhousie College", Nova Scotia Institute of Natural Science, Transactions, 3, 1888-1889, p. 231.

Nova Scotian gentlemen scholars contributed to the expansion of knowledge by giving papers on contemporary topics such as archaeology, craniometry, philology, prehistory and evolution. Some publications were speculative, but others were based on research and the collection and analysis of artifacts.<sup>5</sup> They also continued the old debate between monogenism and polygenism, buttressing their arguments with new scientific data.

More than just abstract intellectual debates are represented in this scientific literature. The ideas expressed and argued were those that gradually came to influence Nova Scotians changing attitudes toward the Micmac. The idea that the Micmac were equivalent to Nova Scotians' European ancestors when they were at the same stage of development made them a new focus of scientific curiosity. However, for many Nova Scotians, this interest was limited, as distant stone age ancestors and savage Indians were equally far removed from "civilized" Euro-Americans. The ideas that had a greater impact on relations between the two peoples were those relating to Social

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<sup>5</sup> Three articles which suggest serious archaeological investigation, but are not discussed, are Henry Piers, "Aboriginal Remains of Nova Scotia", Nova Scotia Institute of Natural Sciences. Proc. and Trans., 7, Part III, 1888-89, pp. 276-90, "Relics of the Stone Age in Nova Scotia", Nova Scotia Institute of Science, 9, 1894-98, pp. 26-58, and G. Patterson, "Antiquities of Nova Scotia", Smithsonian Institute. Annual Report, 1881, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883).

Darwinism. The theory of social evolution and the concept of biological determinism were widely adopted, along with the belief that physical characteristics reflected a race's mental and moral qualities. Gradually, the idea that native people had become degraded through their weaknesses and inability to withstand temptations was transformed into the belief that degradation was genetic, predetermined, irreversible, and recognizable in the body's structure.

These new beliefs about aboriginal people did not completely nullify old ones. Modern scientific ideas incorporated many old concepts, giving them a new authenticity. The result was a paradigm which provided a modified rationalization for neglect and paternalism. A change in ideology meant little to the Micmacs as their lives were not altered, but from the point of view of the dominant society, the new concepts would have been very satisfying. Now Nova Scotians' belief system, their attitudes and their actions, were justified by the authoritative evidence of science.

A few Nova Scotians contributed to literature linking the North American Indian to the recently discovered palaeolithic man in Europe. The usual procedure was to compare the two peoples in such a way as to reveal the brutal character of early man as he was both in the stone



age and in the New World. According to this interpretation, man began as Hobbes' fearful savage, and then progressed according to the linear development of Social Darwinism. Occasionally, a scientist reversed the process, assuming a fall from an original state of grace. In this case, "stone men" and aboriginal people were proven to be pure and noble creatures, at least in their original state before degradation took place.

The latter was the argument advocated by J. William Dawson, one of Nova Scotia's most illustrious sons.<sup>6</sup> Dawson, a highly respected geologist and educator, endeavoured to reconcile religion and science by combining the Mosaic account of creation with up to date anthropological and archaeological information.<sup>7</sup> Dawson argued that primitive man, in particular the indigenous peoples of North Americans, shared the same impulses, the same intellectual abilities, and the same skills as Europeans' palaeolithic ancestors. To support his argument, he provides illustrations of artifacts that signify that the

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<sup>6</sup> For more on Dawson see Susan Sheets-Pyenson, "Sir William Dawson: the Nova Scotia Roots of a Geologist's Worldview" in Profiles of Science and Society in the Maritimes prior to 1914 ed. by Paul A. Sogaard (Mount Allison University: Acadensis Press), pp. 83-99.

<sup>7</sup> See J. William Dawson, The Origin of the World...; Nature and the Bible, (New York: Robert Carter, 1875) and Fossil Men and their Modern Representatives, (Montreal: Dawson, 1880).

"handiwork of the red man ... is of similar character to that of pre-historic man in Europe."<sup>8</sup> In physical appearance too, Dawson found similarities between rude hunting tribes like the Micmac and recently discovered Cro-Magnon man. He concluded that "the God and the demon were combined in these races, but there was nothing of the mere brute."<sup>9</sup>

This conclusion might lead one to assume that Dawson held a higher opinion of native people than he, in fact, did. Dawson did not escape the prevailing paradigm which ranked races from the lowest to the highest. Dawson's insistence on the original goodness and innate capability of native peoples rested on his belief in the Biblical version of creation. It was simply incompatible with this belief that man's progenitors could have been cruel, inhuman brutes, as Social Darwinists were making them out to be. Instead, Dawson argued, present day savages, such as the indigenous peoples of North America, had become degraded after the fall of Eden. A hard and difficult life had reduced him to savagery, but his "...earlier state was the best, ... he had been a good and noble creature before he became a savage."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Dawson, 1880, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

Throughout Dawson's work, we can see how those who advocated the unity of humankind shared the same beliefs as those who believed in distinct races. Whether the Micmac were savages near the bottom of the evolutionary scale or savages who had sunk into this condition from an earlier, noble state made little difference to the way they were regarded. In both their character and their physique, the Micmac came to be defined by their biological inheritance.

There was considerable interest in physical anthropology and craniometry in Nova Scotia, and it is in these fields that several contradictions appear in Dawson's work. He rejected the idea that races could be distinguished by different skull forms, however, they could be used to measure low and high culture in individuals and societies. Moreover, he conceded that if enough skulls were available the general character of a race could be determined.<sup>11</sup> His criteria were those accepted at the time:

...the small development of the frontal and superior regions of the skull, and the large size of the jaws and facial bones, are marks of low type. ... long heads with low frontal region generally belong to the lowest race; short and broad heads often to an intermediate stage of culture; and regular oval heads to the highest type.<sup>12</sup>

Dawson drew on the work of Dr. Daniel Wilson of the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 180

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

University of Toronto who studied the skulls of North American Indians. Algonquin tribes, Wilson had concluded, are long-headed. Dawson accepted this classification modified by his assumption that head-shapes changed through the process of degradation. As he stated: "... civilized peoples had more delicate and refined forms of face and head than the ruder tribes."<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Dr. Wilson, Nova Scotians did not appear to have access to the skulls of native people, so their participation in this field of research was limited. However, one such endeavour took place in the 1890s when W.H. Prest presented the evidence of his craniometric study of two Beothuk skulls to the members of the Nova Scotia Institute of Science. In the St. John's Museum Prest had been able to measure two skulls and to observe another that "showed features of a decidedly lower type than the others, particularly in the enormous superciliary ridges and narrow retreating forehead."<sup>14</sup> From his cursory examination, Prest determined that one Beothuk skull was meso-cephalic and one was brachy-cephalic verging on the meso-cephalic. Therefore he concluded that the Beothuks were intermediate between the inferior long-headed (dolicho-cephalic) races and the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>14</sup> W.H. Prest, "Measurements of two Beothuk Skulls", Nova Scotia Institute of Science. Proceedings and Transactions, 9, 1894-98, p. lxxxix.

superior round-headed (brachy-cephalic) races. Prest admitted that his study could not lead to the establishment of a tribal index as more skulls needed to be examined. In order to continue this scientific endeavour, Prest suggested the further exploration of Beothuk burial grounds.<sup>15</sup>

As an amateur scientist, Prest was contributing to the accumulation of knowledge, but he realized that this type of work was better left to experts. In ignorance, he had made an error in measuring from the bregma to the occipital condyle instead of to the basion, an error he freely admitted.

One Micmac skull did have to suffer the indignity of cranial analysis at a date beyond the scope of this study and as well, at a time when the validity of craniometry was questioned by scientists. However, the fact that the skull of a fifteen year old Micmac boy, Mike Mitchell, ended up in the Provincial Museum in 1872 is in itself significant.<sup>16</sup> The assumption can be made that when the boy was killed in a railway accident in 1854 the coroner kept the skull, likely against the family's wishes. Eighteen years later the skull was passed on to the Museum where it probably sat gathering

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Nova Scotia Provincial Museum Library, File Card, Micmac.

dust until Dr. John Cameron analyzed it in 1919. At this time, it is apparent from Dr. Cameron's study that scholars were still trying to define grades of races on an evolutionary scale. As he expected, his thorough analysis of the skull showed it to be "...midway between the highest and the lowest races of modern Homimidas".<sup>17</sup> Like Prest, Cameron deplored the lack of available skulls for the study of physical anthropology and called for the exploration of burial sites to rectify the situation.<sup>18</sup> Obviously, in some circles craniology was slow to disappear.

While it was the prevailing paradigm, data derived from craniological studies was used to support many different aspects of science. Angus Ross, another Nova Scotian scientist, used physical anthropology to support his argument that different races of men had different origins. In his article, "Evolution", Ross used measurements of facial angles to illustrate the evolutionary process, pointing out that the highest races and lowest races have

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<sup>17</sup> John Cameron. "A Craniometric Study of the Micmac Skull in the Provincial Museum of Nova Scotia", Nova Scotia Institute of Science, V. 15, Part I, 1918-22, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to contrast this attitude towards Micmac burial sites to the attitudes held by Gesner in the first half of the nineteenth century. While travelling in Prince Edward Island Gesner found a burial site exposed by erosion. Instead of collecting the bones for study he gathered them together and reburied them. Charles Elliot, "The Pictou Indians, an Original Poem", (Pictou: Eastern Chronicle Office, 1847), p. 14.

widely differing facial angles. To elucidate, Ross explained that the most developed races have a facial angle "made by a line passing from the forehead over the upper jaw, meeting another line passing along the base of the skull".<sup>19</sup> This near right angle is contrasted to the facial angles of lower races with their sloping foreheads and protruding jaws.

It is readily apparent that these kind of data could be interpreted to suit almost any argument. Whereas Ross used physical anthropology to further his polygenic argument, Dawson used the same evidence to argue for the unity of man. William Gossip, another Nova Scotian scientist, also used craniology to support his case for monogenism in "The Affinity of Races". He claimed "an affinity of races" because:

... in most instances the skulls of the remote stone age man, both in Europe and America, bear to each other strong resemblances. They are dolichocephalic or long headed.<sup>20</sup>

It is to be expected that this scientific study of crania and physical structure spilled over into the social and political world where Euro-Americans interacted with

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<sup>19</sup> Angus Ross, "Evolution", Nova Scotia Institute of Nature Science. Proceedings and Transactions, 3, 1871-1874, p. 424.

<sup>20</sup> William Gossip, "The Affinity of Races", Nova Scotia Institute of Nature Science. Proceedings and Transactions, 3, 1871-1874, p. 300.

native people. The scientific studies coloured the way native people were perceived, with Nova Scotians now sharply aware of the significance of the Micmacs' bodily form. Since physical form was now believed to reflect levels of development, Nova Scotians thought that by observing the Micmacs' physiognomy, they could find in it traces of native morality, intelligence and character. J. Bernard Gilpen takes this approach in "The Indians of Nova Scotia". He begins by identifying the Micmac as a racial type, the Mongolian:

He wears his hair cropped now which brings still more in relief the small and narrowed skull, high and broad cheek bone, high frontal ridges, and square heavy jaw bone of the red man, or Mongolian type.<sup>21</sup>

Other aspects of racial typing are discussed, such as eye and nose shape, skin colour and facial hair. Gilpen explains how the physical characteristics of "the Stone Man of two hundred and fifty years ago" have changed since the Europeans arrived. Evolutionary forces have been working on them, softening their savage features:

The ceaseless influences of civilization, of different food and altered habits, have worn down and softened his contour. The high cheek bone is lessened, the strong jaw is less square, and the wild aspect of savage life is softened. He has ceased to tear his meat like a dog, therefore the square jaw is more

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<sup>21</sup> Bernard J. Gilpen, "Indians of Nova Scotia", Nova Scotia Institute of Nature Science. Proceedings and Transactions, 4, 1875-78, in The Native Peoples of Atlantic Canada, ed. H.F. McGee, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 112.



pointed, and the cheek bone ... has fallen; nor has he the wild utterance or startled looks of one always fearing his enemy."<sup>22</sup>

Gilpen admits that these "advances" would be obliterated if the Micmac returned to their old environment, since "a strong cohesiveness of race has kept him so little unaltered".<sup>23</sup>

Not everyone considered that the physiognomy of the Micmac reflected a rude and harsh life. There continued to be people who admired both the appearance and way of life of the Micmac, but their admiration was also influenced by contemporary attitudes. This is apparent in the following note by Dr. Edward Breck describing a photo of Mattio Jeremy, a Micmac hunter and trapper:

The head seems to me so fine a type of its race, that I venture to send you a print. The race is deteriorating in type, owing no doubt to inter-marrying, so a pure specimen may be valuable later.<sup>24</sup>

Dr. Breck's interest in racial types, pure races, and head shapes was a result of the prevailing paradigm, which shaped the way he saw the Micmac, a people he appears to admire.

While scientific ideas taken from physical anthropology came to permeate most of Nova Scotian society, the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>24</sup> Nova Scotia Provincial Museum, Acc. 13.23 (4061).

scientific study of language had a less powerful impact. Philology was, however, of great interest to those, educated or self-educated, who were fascinated by language, history, and ethnology. It was widely believed that the study of language was the key to discovering the diffusion of mankind from his original place of origin. Through language, it was hoped that the patterns of tribal movement could be discerned and the relationships of different races discovered.

The Micmacs too had to be accounted for. How had they come to be in the Maritimes? Perhaps they were part of an early migration of pre-Aryan peoples, such as the Basques. Basque words were identified in the Micmac vocabulary, as were words that resembled Greek, Gaelic and Anglo-Saxon. Gentleman scholars, like George Patterson, dabbled in this kind of linguistic study, always looking for some way to connect the Micmac to ancient peoples of the past.<sup>25</sup>

Another Nova Scotian, William Gossip, used language as part of his argument to prove that the Indians of North America were the original, pre-Noachite peoples. In "On the Antiquity of Man in America", he argues that the aboriginal peoples spoke the original Aryan language which philologists

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<sup>25</sup> See George Patterson's History of the County of Pictou, Nova Scotia, (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1877).

are seeking. Gossip claims that Indian languages are directly connected to the original, basal language spoken before the flood:

It is derived from the language spoken in the old world some eight hundred years before the Noachian Deluge, when the ancestors of the Micmac may have been wending their way to this continent.

This connection, he continues, explains why some Micmac words are similar to ancient Greek.<sup>26</sup>

Intellectual detective work of this kind was popular in the nineteenth century, but it contributed little to the understanding of the language and history of aboriginal peoples. However, there was one scholar in Nova Scotia whose interest in philology and study of the Micmac language had lasting benefits. Silas Tertius Rand spent the better part of his life working with the Micmac, collecting their stories and translating religious texts into the native tongue. He did not succumb to philological trends, but studied Micmac and other languages, motivated by a perceived social need and a genuine love and fascination with language.

While Rand did not relate his work to speculative theories, others sometimes used it for this purpose. In

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<sup>26</sup> William Gossip, "On the Antiquity of Man in America", Nova Scotia Institute of Nature Science, Proceedings and Transactions, 2, 1867-70, p. 50.

fact, most of his papers were purchased by Prof. Horsford for the Library of American Linguistics at Wellesley College because the Professor thought that a study of Rand's Micmac papers would reveal evidence of a Norse connection.<sup>27</sup>

Rand was not above comparing Micmac to other languages such as Greek and Hebrew. But his comparisons resulted from a interest in language, not from a need to support a diffusion theory. When he compared Greek to Micmac it was to illustrate that the two languages "have a remarkable facility for compounding words".<sup>28</sup>

Before Rand began his work, it is probable that the general consensus in Nova Scotia was that the Micmac language, like other savage languages, was simple and crude. Rand implies that this is the common assumption when he states:

One would think [the Indian language] must be exceedingly barren, limited in inflection, and crude; but just the reverse is the fact, - it is copious, flexible, and expressive.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> H.L. Webster, intro. to Rand, 1894, p. vi. Charles G. Leland, author of The Algonquin Legends of New England; or, Myths and Folk Lore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Tribes, 3rd. ed. (Boston, New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1884) also perceived a Norse influence. Ibid, p. vi.

<sup>28</sup> Rand, 1894, p. xxxvi.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. xxxiv.

Rand's work did much to dispel misconceptions, but it probably did little to gain the Micmac new respect at the time, for his research is an example of information that does not fit into the prevailing paradigm and consequently is ignored. Nothing could shake the conviction that native people had a simple culture and a simple language that corresponded with their rude state. Typical is the author of a history of Cape Breton who claimed in 1869 that all the native people from the land of the Eskimo to Virginia, including the Micmac shared one primitive language.<sup>30</sup>

Philology was sometimes used to buttress theories of race, as was research in craniology and physical anthropology. However, the most powerful factor behind theories of race, in Nova Scotia, as elsewhere, was Social Darwinism. While there was controversy over Darwin's theories, there was little argument with Spencer's application of them to social theory. His theory, or a modification of it, combined with an always present faith in progress became part of the fabric of belief. This paradigm permeated society becoming almost unchallenged for a period of several decades.

A few articles in the Nova Scotia Institute of Science

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Brown, A History of the Island of Cape Breton, (London: Sampson, Low, Son, and Marston, 1869) p. 154.

reveal the influence of Social Darwinism. In Angus Ross' "Evolution", the direct influence of Spencer's complex synthetic philosophy is apparent. A polygenist, Angus Ross argues that the differences between races of men are so profound that they must have had independent origins. While rejecting the Darwinian notion that man shared an common origin with monkeys, he does accept the idea of evolution as identified with progress and the notion of natural selection. He explains how the process works:

... in Man as in the lower animals, ... the inferior and more synthetic types will be successively exterminated, the higher and more differentiated types will be continually expanding....<sup>11</sup>

The assumption is that the higher types will prevail over the inferior types as part of a natural process that will ultimately produce perfect human beings in a perfect society.

Gilpen's two articles on the Micmac in the Nova Scotia Institute of Science also reveal the influence of Social Darwinism. In "On the Stone Age of Nova Scotia" Gilpen's topic is the comparison of "our stone men" to the prehistoric men of Europe. He states that since the Micmac had never taken the "...first great step towards civilization ... by accumulating capital or agriculture..."

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<sup>11</sup> Angus Ross, "Evolution", Nova Scotia Institute of Science, 3, (Sec. Series), 1874, p. 435.

they are fated to disappear."<sup>22</sup> For Gilpen the reason is obvious:

...there is no recorded instance of an inferior race improved by a dominant one. They disappear before them. Many assert that they are unable, but it is better to say the progress is so slow that it cannot be measured."<sup>23</sup>

In discussing the fate of the Micmac, Gilpen claims that there was no violence involved in their extinction: "the doom was velvety; if it was inevitable".<sup>24</sup>

In a subsequent article, "Indians of Nova Scotia", Gilpen does concede that a few Micmac may survive by becoming assimilated. In the interest of science, Gilpen gathers together information about the Micmac, describing their "stone period" and their contemporary conditions. Even though Gilpen notes that their numbers are increasing, he insists that they are a doomed race unless they assimilate. Gilpen presents a contradictory portrayal of the Micmac as influenced by a civilization that simultaneously advances and degrades them. Benefits of European civilization, he claims, includes dry housing and Western dress, "English boots and trousers", both of which have improved Micmac health. On the other hand, the end of the Micmacs' wild life means that their hereditary skills,

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<sup>22</sup> J.B. Gilpen, 1871-74, p. 225.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

poise, and balance are gone, because these characteristics depend on their vanished way of life."<sup>15</sup>

Gilpen also touches on the controversy over whether different races could interbreed. Gilpen admits that this has occurred among a few white and native individuals, however, a mixture of black and native is not successful:

I saw one negro, whose half-breed child showed so many signs of unconformability of races: and I have never met her afterwards, or but a single trace of her descendants since, I think the cast has died out. The Indians themselves remarked it. "Me tink," said old Molly to me, "Indian squaws with wool, nasty, nasty."

Gilpen comments that "The biologist would have been equally disgusted, but would not have failed to note the Mongolian and Caucasian were more nearly allied than the negro."<sup>16</sup>

The idea that the natives' designated race, the Mongolian, was superior to the blacks was probably small comfort to the Micmac. The concepts of race that shaped attitudes towards them are obvious in Gilpen's articles. In them we see how ideas of biological determinism and social development explained the Micmacs' inherent inferiority and their ultimate demise. These attitudes led to the conclusion that it is a waste of time and money to civilize the Micmac. According to Gilpen, not only was the effort

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<sup>15</sup> Gilpen, 1875-78, pp. 113-114.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 113.



worthless, humanitarians ran the risk of "...injuring the race they sincerely sought to benefit."<sup>37</sup>

By drawing parallels from the Micmac to "men of the stone age", Nova Scotians expressed their belief that the native people would soon be as extinct as Cro-Magnon man. In North America as in Europe, a civilized race was fated to replace one that was rude and savage. This meant that Nova Scotians did not need to feel guilty over the impending disappearance of the Micmac. European colonizers had had no role to play in this drama; diseases, displacement and neglect did not count. Biology was at fault. This was clearly visible in the physical characteristics of the Micmac which identified them as "less evolved." Their demise was necessary, even beneficial, if mankind was to advance. Many Nova Scotian scientists accepted this paradigm, confirming it with their studies of the Micmac, their own "men of the stone age."

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

## CHAPTER VI

"Death song of a dying race"<sup>1</sup>

Many of the themes and images discussed in Chapter III continued to be used by Nova Scotian writers in the second half of the century. Writers persisted in depicting native people as Noble or Demonic Savages, as part of the natural landscape, or as an image of memento mori, reminding humankind of its mortality. Even though these literary conventions continued to be employed, their use was gradually modified. Images altered according to new ideas of science and race but, more importantly, these images were conceived in a social context in which the Micmac were an increasingly marginalized people.

Changing literary tastes also influenced how native people were depicted in Nova Scotian literature. Romantic literature gained in popularity and enveloped the defeated Indian into its realm. In mid-century the Noble Savage still served as the ideal romantic hero and heroine; they were the victims of fate, were powerless to overcome their adversities, and met their inevitable end with courage, honour and dignity. Readers found satisfying sentiment, and perhaps, for some, a feeling of smugness as they

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<sup>1</sup> Pierce Stevens Hamilton, The Feast of St. Anne and Other Poems, 2nd. ed. (1878; Montreal: Lovell & Son, 1890), p. 17.

contemplated the decline of what they regarded as an inferior race. Gradually interest in the Noble Savage waned, but the passing of indigenous races still aroused the sentimental feelings of authors and their readers. The Demonic Savage also continued to play a role in romantic tales of adventure for he added a sense of terror which European enemies could not match.

Changing attitudes towards the natural landscape also altered the way that native people were incorporated into it. No longer a place of fear and foreboding, the forests came to be depicted, visually and in literature, in the tradition of the picturesque. Adherents of this aesthetic admired aspects of nature which offered roughness of texture, irregular lines, strong contrasts of light and dark, and a hint of wildness.<sup>2</sup> In Europe, the most appropriate human inhabitants of the picturesque landscape were gypsies and bandits; in North America, the native people served a similar purpose. Suitably dishevelled and unkempt, identified as part of untamed nature, Indians were the ideal picturesque subject.

Aside from these general trends, there was one particular literary event which profoundly affected Nova

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<sup>2</sup> See Christopher Hussey, The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View, (London: Archon, 1967).

Scotian literature and the interpretation of regional history. Longfellow's Evangelina, published in 1847, threatened to destroy Nova Scotians' carefully constructed vision of their past. As M. Brook Taylor points out the legitimacy of British colonial domination was put into question by the famous poem.<sup>3</sup> Longfellow's version of the Acadian expulsion suggested it was not a justifiable military manoeuvre, a necessary prelude to the progress of the province; instead, it was a crime against humanity. In Longfellow's hand the Acadians were transformed into romantic heroes and heroines, helpless victims of British cruelty. Inextricably associated with the Acadians were their allies, the Micmac. If the Acadians were depicted as sympathetic characters, the Micmac also had to be seen in a different light. As allies of the French were they also to be perceived as victims of British injustice?

Questions such as these were troubling to Nova Scotians, but writers rose to the challenge, justifying the actions of their predecessors and reinterpreting their past. Novelists and poets devised many ingenious characters and plots which allowed them to include the romanticized Acadian while still adhering to dominant British values. One device

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<sup>3</sup> See M. Brook Taylor, "The Poetry and Prose of History: Evangelina and the Historians of Nova Scotia", Journal of Canadian Studies/revue d'etudes canadiennes, 23(1 & 2), Spring/Summer 1988, pp. 46-67.

was to make the heroes or heroines Huguenots, thus enabling them to uphold Protestant values, be enemies of the French, and allies and friends of the English.

Changing interpretations of history were central to writers of the time since a great deal of literature dealt with the past. The historian whose image of the native people most influenced other historians as well as creative writers was Francis Parkman.<sup>4</sup> Parkman's view of the indigenous peoples both reflected and influenced contemporary attitudes. The image of the Red Man that appeared in his works was based on his experience with the Ojibwa Sioux in the American West, a visit inspired by his desire to see "the Indian under his most fearful and characteristic aspect", that is preparing for war.<sup>5</sup> He recounted his adventures in The Oregon Trail, a book so popular it has gone through many editions and is still in print.<sup>6</sup>

Parkman's experiences were filtered through the usual stereotypes--the Noble and Demonic Savage. For Parkman, the

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<sup>4</sup> For Parkman's influence on Canadian historians see Trigger, pp. 10-20.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Parkman, The Oregon Trail (New York: Doubleday, 1946), p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> Howard Doughty, Francis Parkman, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 150.

attractive characteristics of native people were those that linked them to ancient peoples such as the Greeks and the Teutons. Like many North Americans, Parkman grudgingly admired the warlike characteristics of the "wild" Indians because incidents of war inspired valour and bravery. This fierce spirit raised them above the level of unwarlike tribes who have "little of humanity except form."<sup>7</sup> While this ferocious spirit prevented them from being debased, it also had a deleterious effect: war caused them to become merciless, treacherous and capable of "devilish cruelties."<sup>8</sup> While Parkman pays lip service to the Noble Savage convention, he scorns young warriors who like to joke and laugh, as this behaviour does not accord with the ideal. Parkman concludes that the Indians' fatal flaw is their "wild ideas of liberty and utter intolerance for restraint."<sup>9</sup> They are "thorough savages," "living representatives of the 'stone age'."<sup>10</sup> They will never change, will never "learn the arts of civilization", consequently, "he and his forest must perish together."<sup>11</sup> Once again the influence of stereotypes led a writer to deny full humanity to native

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>11</sup> Parkman, The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada, V. I, (1851; New York: E.P. Dutton, n.d.) p. 32.

people. Furthermore, Parkman's experiences among the Oglala provided him with an image of native people which he never altered or abandoned. He believed, as did his contemporaries, that since all Indians shared the same basic nature, one example could serve for all.<sup>12</sup>

Parkman's Indians are typical of those who appear in Nova Scotian literature and history, although comparisons to the classical era common in the first half of the nineteenth century were gradually replaced by comparisons to brutal "stone men" of the prehistoric past. Alternately reviled and admired, native peoples played a distinctive role in regional literature. Their use in literature can be categorized as follows: they were included as part of a picturesque background; they were depicted according to Noble or Demonic Savage conventions or as a degraded savage; they also were described as dependent children or as part of a disappearing race. Filling these various roles, the Micmac appeared in historical romances, children's adventure stories, poetry, and sketches composed by Nova Scotian writers.

By including the Micmac as part of a picturesque landscape, regional authors were able to give a distinctive character to their works. Nova Scotians, like other North

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<sup>12</sup> Dippie, p. 85.

Americans, regretted that, as newcomers, their ancestral record was not visible in the landscape. As the introduction to John McPherson's Poem, Descriptive and Moral puts it: "In lands of ancient refinement and renown, the elaborately rich landscape has castle and palace and cathedral, as marks of wealth and progress".<sup>13</sup> All Nova Scotia had to take the place of ancient ruins was a unique wild scenery and the native people who inhabited it. Indians had always been regarded as part of the landscape but as the wilderness grew less threatening, so too did its denizens. Gradually, the Demonic Savage and the heroic, but dying, Indian were reduced to being part of the picturesque scenery. As such, the Micmac appeared in Bartlett prints and in their literary equivalents.<sup>14</sup>

Typical is a scene from Mary E. Herbert's novel, Belinda Dalton or Scenes in the Life of a Halifax Belle.<sup>15</sup> It is one of two incidents involving the Micmac, neither of which is relevant to her story. Herbert's description of a picturesque Micmac camp is weakly integrated into the plot.

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<sup>13</sup> John McPherson, Poems, Descriptive and Moral (Halifax, N.S.: T. Chamberlain, 1862), p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> One example of a picturesque Micmac camp is Bartlett's print, "The General's Bridge, near Annapolis Basin". Charles P. DeVolpi, Nova Scotia: A Pictorial Record, 1605-1878, (Sherbrooke, Que.: Longman, 1974), p. 96.

<sup>15</sup> Mary E. Herbert, Belinda Dalton or Scenes in the Life of a Halifax Belle (Halifax, N.S., 1859). For a discussion of the writer and the novel see Gwendolyn Davies, 1977.



Fortuitously, her protagonists are having a "pic-nic" near an Indian settlement outside Dartmouth. They decide to visit the nearby camp and arrive just as a marriage celebration is about to take place. This affords Herbert an opportunity to describe the Micmac in their finest array. Their "gay and singular costume" is described, the bride declared to be "very pleasing" in her form and features; the groom is also worthy of admiration: "He was a tall, fine-looking man, whose dignified appearance would have been creditable in a civilized community."<sup>16</sup> The Indians appear in front of a charming backdrop:

The white tents that dotted the slightly undulating ground, forming a fine contrast to the deep green of the unbroken forests that lay behind the figures of the Indians....<sup>17</sup>

All of this forms "a highly picturesque scene, and one on which a lover of the beautiful would gaze with great delight."<sup>18</sup> Herbert follows this touch of local colour with an equally irrelevant episode in which the Micmac appear as ferocious savages (see p. 159-160). While Herbert's Micmac scenes serve no real purpose in her novel, they do add a note of distinctiveness. They root her novel in the Maritimes, in contrast to the plot that could take place anywhere and to the characters who have no qualities that

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

identify them as uniquely Nova Scotian.

Other writers featured the Micmac as a colourful background to the more important action between white characters. Pierce Stevens Hamilton, in a lengthy poem, "The Feast of St. Anne", uses the Micmac's St. Anne's Day festivities on Chapel Island for a setting.<sup>19</sup> Unlike Herbert's picturesque, but totally irrelevant scene, Hamilton's setting has some purpose. It serves as a background against which Hamilton's friends compose and recite poems embalming the "high, heroic" deeds and "thrilling tales" of his country's past.<sup>20</sup> The "rude and semi-barbarous revelry" of the "fading Indian race" is deliberately chosen to contrast with ancestral tales of romance and glory.<sup>21</sup>

Some writers allowed the native people to step out of the background and take part in the development of the action, but usually they emerge only as disembodied, nameless, and voiceless figures. Such are the Micmac in De Mille's The Lily and the Cross: A Tale of Acadia, a novel of

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<sup>19</sup> Hamilton, pp. 7-35.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 14 & p. 17.

romance and adventure.<sup>22</sup> DeMille's story is set in eighteenth century Acadia, a favourite time and place for writers and poets inspired by Longfellow's example. DeMille describes Acadia as a wilderness which harbours "wild and warlike Indians," who willingly submit themselves to their French allies.<sup>23</sup> Obviously the subordinate partners in this alliance, the Micmac serve the French as loyal and faithful guides, trackers, lookouts, and messengers.

The plot of Lily and the Cross hinges on the conflict between the hero, Claude, a French Huguenot, and the villain, Cazeneuve, a French Catholic. Both Claude and Cazeneuve have a band of devoted Indian followers who they refer to as "my Indians." "Their" Indians dutifully follow orders until Cazeneuve orders "his" Indians to seize Claude. They refuse to do so as "Claude's Indians" are their friends. Except for this action, integral to the plot, the Indians, although almost always present, remain in the shadows. Silent, cautious figures, they move in and out of their wilderness home, part of the landscape which acts as a background for the dramatic action and romance of the story.

Occasionally, an Indian will emerge from the background

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<sup>22</sup> James De Mille, The Lily and the Cross: A Tale of Acadia (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1890).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

sufficiently to be given a name. Such is Joe Takouchan in J. MacDonald Oxley's In Paths of Peril: A Boy's Adventures in Nova Scotia, a children's story set in the Acadia of La Tour and Charnsoe (sic).<sup>24</sup> But Joe's role is minor and conventional; his skills as a tracker mean that he is the only "man alive" who can carry a message through enemy lines. With amazing dexterity, stepping over the ground "as silently as a serpent," he carries out his mission, briefly emerging from the background to fulfil his mission.<sup>25</sup>

Characters like Joe appear to represent vestiges of the Noble Savage conventions. By the end of the century indigenous peoples were no longer compared to Greek gods. At best, like Joe, they were stoical, taciturn, loyal, and brave. The weakening of the tradition can best be illustrated by comparing Joe to his counterparts who appeared in a novel published in 1850. William Charles M'Kinnon's St. Castine: A Legend of Cape-Breton flaunts the Noble Savage convention.<sup>26</sup> The two native characters in the book, Castine and Frantzwa, are magnificent specimens,

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<sup>24</sup> J. MacDonald Oxley, In Paths of Peril: A Boy's Adventures in Nova Scotia. (London: S.W. Partridge, n.d.)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-79.

<sup>26</sup> William Charles M'Kinnon, St. Castine: A Legend of Cape-Breton (Cape Breton Herald Office) 1850. For M'Kinnon see G. Davis, "William Charles M'Kinnon: Cape Breton's Sir Walter Scott", Collections of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, 41, 1982, pp. 21-46.

glorying in their strength, valour, and sense of honour. Castine, one of Baron Castine's numerous half-breed progeny who fired the imagination of many writers, is compared to ancient gladiators and to Gods: [he appeared] "the complete impersonification (sic) of the Minstrel-god whose mighty Aegis hurled back Patroclus' spear when threatening the wall of 'heaven-defended' Troy."<sup>27</sup> Frantzwa, Castine's sidekick/aide is also a brave warrior who is rewarded at the end of the novel by being taken into General Wolfe's service.

Of all the ennobling characteristics of M'Kinnon's Indians, the only trait which continued to endure was the "stern Roman stoicism" customarily attributed to native people.<sup>28</sup> But this virtue, it must be noted, was one common to both Noble and Ignoble Savages. A typical portrayal of the "stoic Indian" is Hamilton's description of the Micmac in his poem, "The Rendezvous of D'Anville."<sup>29</sup> The Micmac became ill through contact with the men of D'Anville's fleet as they sheltered in the Bedford basin. Hamilton describes

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<sup>27</sup> M'Kinnon, p. 68. Writers had great license with Castine's offspring because the names of some of them were unknown. In M'Kinnon's novel the French born, but English raised, hero turns out to be Castine's half-brother. This device puts Castine on the English side where he aids Wolfe in the capture of Louisbourg.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>29</sup> Hamilton, pp. 27-35.

how the plague

... marked them for his prey.  
 Confused they crawl to savage lair  
 And crouching yield them to despair,-  
 Not to lament, or moan, or cry;  
 But - Stoic to the last - to die."<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to this calm acceptance of death are the French who die with "shrieks of anguish" and "moans of dull despair."<sup>31</sup>

Associated with the alleged stoicism of the native people were other qualities which helped to explain their lack of volubility in the presence of whites. They were considered to be impassive, taciturn, inscrutable. Some believed that the Indians' inexpressive demeanour masked feelings and emotions, an incongruous belief as Euro-Americans also thought that the Indians' major flaw was their inability to restrain their passions. Another explanation for their silence was expressed by the historian, James Hannay: "Unlike civilized men, they know nothing of the news of the world, [of] the business of life." In other words, they are silent because of the limited range of subjects on which they can converse."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> James Hannay, The History of Acadia from its First Discovery to its Surrender to England by the Treaty of Paris (St. John's, N.B.: Printed by J. & A. McMillan, 1879), p. 49.

While the conventions surrounding the Noble Savage diminished, those reflecting the Demonic Savage continued to flourish. The villainous Indian played too useful a role in creating dramatic conflict and a sense of terror to be abandoned. He also continued to serve as a justification for conquest; he was the enemy who had to be overcome for peace, prosperity and progress to triumph. Most often these two designated roles, titillation and vindication, were combined, usually in the form of Indian attacks on helpless white settlers.

Herbert includes such a tale in Belinda Dalton even though it has no point in her plot. Following her description of the picturesque Micmac camp, an elderly lady recounts how in her youth her grandparents and other settlers living in a community near Halifax were massacred by Indians. She describes how the Indians burned down the settlers' homes, killing with their tomahawks those who tried to escape from the flames:

The vivid glare of the fire, the heart rending aspect of the wretched settlers, as they rushed from the raging element within, to savage fury without, the painted visages of the Indians, as they flitted about, demon-like, in their work of destruction; and, above all, the mingled sounds of horror, the shrieks of women and children, the piercing war-whoop ... will never pass from my memory."

This tale of horror may have been based on the Micmac attack

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" Herbert, p. 37.

on the fledgling settlement of Dartmouth in 1751, but Herbert does not specifically identify it as such.<sup>34</sup> Many writers were inspired by this incident, usually embellishing it in order to heighten the difficulties their ancestors faced. The story appears in poems, histories and novels, eventually making its way into tourist literature and school texts.<sup>35</sup>

Even writers sensitive to the situation of the Micmac succumbed to the temptation to paint the Micmac as fiendish devils in their accounts of this incident. One such writer, Elizabeth Frame, was able to maintain her sympathy for the Micmac by transferring the responsibility for their alleged atrocities to the influence of the French, in particular the unscrupulous missionary, Le Loutre.<sup>36</sup> It was the priest,

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<sup>34</sup> Monkman, p. 168, says that this Indian massacre is based on those that took place in New England a generation before, but Herbert clearly states that it happened in a settlement adjacent to Halifax.

<sup>35</sup> Shields' "Witch of the Westcoast" is an early example. An account of the "massacre" appears in a book of Notman photos, Illustrated Halifax... by Norbert Metzler, (Montreal: J. McConniff, 1891), p. 22. The story continued to be part of Dartmouth mythology until fairly recently. See John Patrick Martin, The Story of Dartmouth, (Dartmouth, N.S., 1957), pp. 83-84.

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Louis Le Loutre, a missionary active in military activities, was a convenient villain. It was a commonplace of Nova Scotian history to hold him responsible for the Micmac ravages. This in turn made him responsible for the Expulsion. If he had not "stirred up the Acadians and savages to mischief and bloodshed" the British would not have mistrusted the Neutrals. Adams G. Archibald, "The Expulsion of the Acadians", Nova Scotia Historical Society, V. 5, 1886-87, p. 50.



she claims, who by promises of gold, artful praise, and support from the neutral Acadians, incited the Micmac to attack the defenceless village. The attack itself is described in subdued language with the Micmac scalping two men and firing their house. Frame places a greater emphasis on the Indian warrior who is killed and the subsequent funeral ceremonies. These scenes reveal Frame's anthropological interest as does her description of a Micmac camp. Unlike Herbert's picturesque camp with its gaily dressed denizens, Frame's camp scene rings with the truth of careful observation.<sup>37</sup>

Frame's point of view was not the one usually adopted by novelists and authors of triumphal histories. The Demonic Savage was much too useful to be jettisoned in favour of Machiavellian French priests. Only the "red devils" could inspire a sense of horror, for the French, when all things were considered, had to be acknowledged as civilized men. Writers could cast the Indians in the villainous role while allowing the French to abjure any responsibility for their atrocities as does Oxley in Five and Drum at Louisbourg.<sup>38</sup> In this boy's adventure story, the native people are given a much larger role in the

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<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Frame, Descriptive Sketches of Nova Scotia (Halifax, N.S.: A. & W. Mackinlay, 1864), pp. 186-197.

<sup>38</sup> Oxley, Five and Drum at Louisbourg. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1899).

defense of Louisbourg than history accords them. Their role was heightened because they could be depicted as colourful villains who would inspire a sense of horror in the reader. The central incident of the novel involves the capture of one of the youthful protagonists by "skulking red devils."<sup>39</sup> He is threatened but another party of New Englanders who surrendered to the Indians are killed in cold blood or are "fiendishly tortured."<sup>40</sup> Conflict with native people, not that between the French and the English, forms the core of this novel.

Obviously, Nova Scotian history was a rich source for writers. It allowed imaginative writers to create a variety of heroes or villains, depending on their point of view. The only certainty was that the British were always righteous and honourable. In particular, writers took care to explain that Britain had not acted unjustly by expelling the Acadians. While Frame and others blamed French interference for the violence which sparked the expulsion, others blamed the Micmac. The latter is the approach taken by Maude Alma in her short story White Rose in Acadia.<sup>41</sup> She models her Acadians after Longfellow, but rejects the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>41</sup> Maude Alma [Clotilde Jennings], White Rose in Acadia (Halifax, N.S.: Bows, 1855).

notion that the British were responsible for their plight. The villains are the Micmac who have carried on "unprovoked and intolerable warfare."<sup>42</sup> The Acadians are depicted as a simple people of good faith caught in the middle of a conflict in which they have no direct interest. Tragically, they are forced to leave because the British are "exasperated by the continued treachery and violence of the Indians."<sup>43</sup> For no fault of their own, but because the British associate them with the Micmac they are forced into exile.

The Indian played a useful, as well as an adaptable role, in stories set in the past. But could the Micmac be depicted as Demonic Savages in contemporary literature? It was possible if the writer believed, as most did, that the Indian, by nature, was inherently violent. This violent nature was still evident as Hamilton notes in his poem, "The Feast of St. Anne." He observes the Micmac "reproduce":

The wild, fierce movement of the dance of braves,  
With brandishing of knife and tomahawk,  
And savage bounds, and fierce, soul-thrilling yells  
Which waken echoing terror on the hills, -  
As wont their fathers when, in demon guise,  
They sallied forth upon the path of war."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>44</sup> Hamilton, pp. 13-14.

The Micmac displayed this ferocious behaviour as part of a performance, but their "savage" nature could also manifest itself under other conditions. De Mille, in a children's story, Fire in the Woods, shows how the Indian's savage nature is exposed through alcohol. In the novel a nameless Indian guide gets drunk while he is taking a group of boys and their elderly black servant, Solomon, through the New Brunswick forests. The boys are terrified by the Indian's transformation:

Every moment he grew worse and worse. ... he might grow violent enough to make an attack upon them. Already he looked far more like a wild beast than a human being. The maddening fumes of the liquor might excite the natural ferocity of his race, and urge him to deeds of horror."

Solomon comes to the rescue of the boys with the author suggesting that his ire is aroused by similar, but usually repressed, savage feelings. Obviously, DeMille included the incident to add dramatic tension to his story. While he titillates his readers he does not allow them to believe that Indians could actually do them harm. Later in the novel the boys encounter the same, but now sober, Indian. He is introduced as "Sam" and it is explained that he is usually "all that a chief should be" except when he gets his hands on alcohol. He "can't resist temptation" even though "it makes him simply insane."<sup>44</sup> As a result, DeMille's

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<sup>44</sup> DeMille, Fire in the Woods, (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1872), p. 88.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 321.

Demonic Savage is reduced to an almost pathetic character, degraded by a weakness for alcohol.

This brings us to the degenerate Indian, another image of the native people used in literature. Less useful in fiction and poetry than the two traditional stereotypes, the degraded Indian appears more often in sketches and historical accounts. He makes an appearance in Uniacke's Sketches of Cape Breton and Hannay's History of Acadia.<sup>47</sup> In the chapter of his book devoted to the native people, Richard John Uniacke finds few traces of the Noble Savage. Occasionally, he sees a face that reminds him of "the lofty and enduring savage," but most display a "degenerate countenance."<sup>48</sup> He fears that "their nature appears now to be hopelessly sunk" because "his contact with the white man has infected his nature with vicious habits."<sup>49</sup> In spite of their degradation Uniacke acknowledges that the Micmac still have typical savage virtues: fortitude and endurance. Hannay presents a similar picture in his History of Acadia. According to Hannay, the native people of the Maritimes are demoralized and degraded. When they are exposed to

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<sup>47</sup> Richard John Uniacke, Uniacke's Sketches of Cape Breton & Other Papers Relating to Cape Breton Island, ed. C. Bruce Fergusson, (Halifax, N.S.: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1958). Orig. published in New Penny Magazine in the 1860's.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 106 & 112.

temptation they have no power to resist; thus they become enervated and eventually meet a miserable death.<sup>50</sup>

The inability to resist temptation suggests an inherent weakness in the Indian character. Social Darwinists would interpret this as a racial deficiency, but Nova Scotian writers of fiction and poetry were slow to adopt ideas of inherent racial differences. Indeed, Uniacke, in the 1860s, still adheres to the theory that environmental or climatic conditions explain different "traditions and habits."<sup>51</sup> However, DeMille's account of the fight between the "brother savage[s]", Sam, the Indian guide, and Solomon, the black servant, in Fire in the Woods suggests a racial inheritance of savagery.<sup>52</sup> Other writers sometimes indicate that certain characteristics of native people are "in the blood", as does Marshall Saunders in her contemporary Acadian story, Rose à Charlitte. She describes an Acadian character who has Indian ancestry:

Very little of the Indian strain had entered her veins, except a few drops that were exhibited in a passion for rambling in the woods, but her aunt had the lazy, careless blood ....<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Hannay, p. 58.

<sup>51</sup> Uniacke, p. 105.

<sup>52</sup> De Mille, 1872. pp. 89-90.

<sup>53</sup> Marshall Saunders, Rose à Charlitte: An Acadian Romance (Boston: L.C. Page, 1898), p. 373.

The growing interest in race is apparent in Nova Scotian literature, but most often unique racial characteristics are attributed to the English and their inveterate enemy, the French. For instance, Claude, the Huguenot hero of De Mille's The Lily and the Cross, is called the "hope of the final redemption of your race."<sup>54</sup> Writers most likely ignored the racial characteristics of Indians because they were only accessories to the major conflict between the French and the English.

A further role for native people in literature was as dependent children. All of the native people in Oxley's adventure story, In Paths of Peril, fit into this category. The novel is very loosely based on Constance La Tour's life in Acadia, with a fictional nephew acting as the youthful protagonist.<sup>55</sup> Constance La Tour is depicted as a saintly woman deeply interested in the native people of Acadia. She strives "to reach the hearts of the pagans, and help them to better things." She teaches her "dusky pupils" practical skills as well as the Christian religion. She shows them how to bake bread,...

how to raise corn, pumpkins and melons, the mode of preserving the fruit that was so plentiful in the

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<sup>54</sup> De Mille, 1890, p. 188.

<sup>55</sup> The story of Madame La Tour was another source for tales of romance and adventure. She was renowned for valiantly attempting to defend her husband's fort at the mouth of the St. John River.

autumn, and the art of making maple-sugar, all of which helped to benefit them, no less than the Gospel message she never failed to give also."<sup>56</sup>

This picture of a European benefactress trying to uplift her benighted charges runs completely counter to the reality of Micmac life as we know it. At the time the novel was set, it was the native people who were teaching the Europeans the essential skills they needed to survive in the wilderness. But novelists are not handicapped by facts or a sense of reality. Oxley's portrait of Madame La Tour is designed to create a good deal of sympathy for her, thereby heightening the tragedy of her death. Moreover, his portrait of the native people would not be questioned, based as it was on an accepted stereotype, the "wild children of the forest." Few, if any, of Oxley's readers would think it strange that skilled and experienced native people would look up to a European woman, newly arrived in the wilderness, as if she were divine.

The idea that native people were in the earliest stage of development meant that it was appropriate to picture them as immature and untutored. As one of these simple and ignorant peoples, the Micmac, some Nova Scotians argued, could not be responsible for the pictographs found at various places around the province. John McPherson's poem,

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<sup>56</sup> Oxley, n.d., pp. 15-16.



"Fairy Falls", expresses this point of view. He admits that Indian legends claim ownership of the rock carvings

But less romantic annuals show  
That when Acadians fled their foe  
Some loitered on their way,  
Depicting thus, by lake and grove,  
Memorials with which exiles love  
To sooth the darker day.<sup>57</sup>

Apparently, some Nova Scotians were not even able to credit the Micmac with the ability or desire to commemorate important events in their lives.<sup>58</sup>

The last image to be considered was the most widespread and pervasive, the vanishing Indian. As part of the prevailing paradigm, the idea that the Indians would soon become extinct had become so commonplace that evidence that contradicted it was ignored. Evolutionary theories, sentiment and convenience demanded that the Indian disappear.<sup>59</sup> Poets continued to express their sorrow over this impending loss in elegies. Images from nature, of which the Indian was a natural extension, were often used. Sunsets, falling, withered leaves, Indian summer, and dying

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<sup>57</sup> McPherson, p. 36.

<sup>58</sup> Two letters to George Patterson suggest the controversy surrounding the rock inscriptions at Fairy Lake. George Creed (Apr. 27, 1885) believed that they were carved by the Micmac from semi-hieroglyphic characters taught them by the Jesuits. Another correspondent, W.A. Calnek, claimed the inscriptions were a fraud (May 25, 1885). PANS, George Patterson Scrapbook.

<sup>59</sup> See Dippie for a discussion of this idea in an American context.

nature in autumn were some of the metaphors used for the death of the Indian race.

The Nova Scotian poets, Elizabeth Frame, Mary Jane Lawson, and Ada A. Desbrisay used these images and themes in their poems about the Micmac. Their poems are couched in terms of sentimental regret but they also reflect some guilt. Frame goes so far as to blame the whites for the demise of the Micmac:

Your vacant plains the white man scan;  
Reversing all the dread command,  
They covet, take your native land.  
In vain to them does scripture bring  
The tale that moved Israel's king,  
But o'er the land they bear the sway,  
Plant deep the seeds of your decay,  
With niggard hand you food deny -  
Acadia's children fade and die.<sup>60</sup>

Desbrisay's "The Micmac's Wish" contrasts the contented life of the Micmac before the arrival of the Europeans with that after they were displaced. Her native character laments:

But alas, what a change! now the white man is here,  
He has taken our lands, all our forests so dear;  
His axe has demolished our sheltering pines,  
And his mill-dams have frightened the fish from our  
    lines.

....  
Now our people are scattered, our chiefs are all poor,  
And our little ones beg at the white stranger's door;  
Oh! we weep for the days when Acadia was ours,  
And when plenty and happiness reigned in her bowers.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Frame, pp. 78-79.

<sup>61</sup> Ada A. Desbrisay, "The Micmac's Wish" in M. B. Desbrisay, History of the County of Lunenburg, 2nd. ed. (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1895), pp. 350-51.

Lawson expresses a similar sentiment in her poem to the LeHave River:

Where are those dusky warriors? A failing, feeble  
band,  
Wanderers and almost exiles in their own fatherland.<sup>62</sup>

These poets seem to feel a genuine sense of loss; they regard the extinction of the Micmac as inevitable, but consider it to be truly unfortunate.

Not all poets regretted the fate of the Micmac. For instance, Hamilton exults in their defeat and their replacement by a superior race. He ends his romantic poem, "Bertram and Madeleine" with the defeat of the Micmac and the victory of the English:

Another race have spread - another tongue -  
Unlike as from another planet flung;  
And peaceful arts and labour's busy hand  
have spread a brightening glory o'er the land.<sup>63</sup>

Even the ever sympathetic Frame felt that the British conquest was justified since the English had improved Nova Scotia beyond the abilities of the earlier inhabitants.<sup>64</sup>

Some poetic laments for the fate of the Micmac were expressed in the form of memorials. The last vestiges of

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<sup>62</sup> Mary Jane Lawson (Katzman), "The LeHave River" in Desbrisay, pp. 230-32.

<sup>63</sup> Hamilton, p. 78.

<sup>64</sup> Frame, p. 246.

the Micmac presence, the melodious names they gave to Nova Scotian landmarks, were to be treasured as mementos of the past. They were also to serve another purpose, providing the landscape with evocative associations. These could serve as a substitute for the much regretted memorials of human history left behind in Europe. Frame wrote a poem, "Micmac Names" on this theme, but the most well known was "The Indian Names of Acadia" by Richard Huntington.<sup>55</sup> This poem must have struck a responsive chord as it was included in several books and anthologized in Songs of the Great Dominion. However, one of the authors who included the poem, qualifies his admiration. Bourinot in his history of Cape Breton cautions: the Micmac are "far from being 'the gentle race' here described" and they have not passed away, but "do not increase."<sup>56</sup> For Huntington's poem leaps ahead to the day when "the gentle race ... has passed away forever." His poem contemplates their fate:

The memory of the Red Man  
How can it pass away  
While their names of music linger  
On each mount and stream and bay;  
While Musquodoboit's waters  
Roll sparkling to the main;

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<sup>55</sup> Frame's untitled poem is in A List of Micmac Names (Cambridge: John Wilson & Son University Press, 1892). Richard Huntington's poem can be found in Uniacke, p. 116, in John G. Bourinot, Historical and Descriptive Account of the Island of Cape Breton (Montreal: Brown, 1892), p. 95, and in Lighthall's anthology, Songs of the Great Dominion, 1889. According to Bourinot the anthology incorrectly attributes the poem to De Mille.

<sup>56</sup> Bourinot, p. 96.

While falls the laughing sunbeam  
On Cheogin's fields of grain.<sup>67</sup>

Just as Micmac place names embellished a raw landscape, so too did their myths and legends. The interest in native mythology was widespread but it was Glooscap, the Micmac and Malecite cultural hero who most influenced Euro-American writers during the latter half of the century. A discussion of Micmac legends and their impact on regional writers is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is worthy of note as it reflects an interest in and appreciation of this aspect of native culture.<sup>68</sup>

Nova Scotian authors were not innovative. They used the same formats, themes, and images as did those in other parts of Canada, Great Britain and the United States; however, they did adapt these conventions to a regional consciousness. The works I have discussed are rooted in the Nova Scotian landscape; they take place in identifiable locations such as Chapel Island, Louisbourg, the Bedford Basin, Fairy Falls and the La Have River. Local settings provided a unique sense of place as did the inclusion of the

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<sup>67</sup> Uniacke, p. 116.

<sup>68</sup> For a discussion of the use of native myths and legends in English-Canadian literature see Monkman, pp. 128-132. Influential publications of the time include Rand's Legends of the Micmac and Leland's The Algonquin Legends of New England ... Leland called Glooscap "the most Aryan-like of any ever evolved from a savage mind" in Rand, 1894, p. xxi.

Micmac, the original inhabitants. Unfortunately, the latter are always depicted according to popular stereotypes.

Nor did these images change significantly as the nineteenth century progressed. True, the Noble Savage gradually disappeared, always dying with dignity and valour. Eventually, he was superseded by his rivals, the Degraded and the Demonic Savage. But at the same time, all three stereotypes merged and blended into the dominant, overriding image--the Vanishing Indian. That literary convention suppressed reality was recognized by Rand: "we have deemed them capital subjects for romance, fiction, and all kinds of exaggeration."<sup>4</sup>

The material evidence provided by anthropological research appears to have had little impact on Nova Scotia's imaginative writers. There are some exceptions, such as Frame, whose work includes perceptive descriptions of Micmac life although her themes remain conventional. An interest in archaeological data is also apparent in the concise descriptions of Micmac material culture which appear in local histories, such as Wilson's A Geography and History of

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<sup>4</sup> Rand, "An Indian Legend", New Dominion Monthly, July 1870, 6, p. 27.

the County of Digby County, Nova Scotia.<sup>70</sup> Wilson's description of stone implements and ornaments made from feathers and porcupines can be seen as a kind of memorial to the Micmac.

Pressed by the certainty that the Micmac were soon to disappear, information was gathered, artifacts collected, and stories recorded so that Nova Scotians would have a memory of their vanished Red Man. It was this shadowy image that writers eulogized or condemned in their sketches, novels, poetry and histories. Most often, the image of the Micmac faded to the point where they only appeared in order to provide a touch of local colour; they formed a picturesque background for the more important action between white protagonists. The small role played by indigenous people in literature mirrored their position in Nova Scotian society; their influence in both was negligible.

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<sup>70</sup> Isaiah W. Wilson, A Geography and History of the County of Digby, Nova Scotia (Halifax, N.S.: Holloway Bros., 1900), p. 22.

## Chapter VII

"They and we have been strangers"<sup>1</sup>

The image of the degraded Indian that shaped public policy and humanitarian efforts in the first half of the nineteenth century continued its dominating influence into the latter half of the century. The assimilative policy based on the precepts of civilization, private property and agriculture, also continued unchanged. However, there were a few modifications in policy including a greater stress upon the role of education in assimilating native children. This coincided with the growing importance of education in society as universal schooling came to be regarded as an agent of social change.

The notion that the native people would soon become extinct also played a role in the development of government policy and the attitudes of the public. Developmental theories, such as Social Darwinism, now confirmed popular prejudices. Common opinion held that it was only a matter of time before most native people would disappear in the face of a superior race; the remnant would disappear through assimilation. In anticipation of this event some Nova Scotians speculated on the date of the Micmac's final

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<sup>1</sup> Rand, 1850, p. 3.



extinction.<sup>2</sup> This was not just wishful thinking; disease, poverty, and depleted resources had led to a drastic decline in the Micmac population. By mid-century the Micmac numbered just over a thousand,<sup>3</sup> a statistic that contributed to the belief that they were soon to disappear. Thereafter, their population began a slow, but steady increase, a fact noted by their supporters but dismissed by most Nova Scotians.

The idea that the Micmac would conveniently disappear contributed to their neglect and justified taking reserve land. As Hendry, an Indian agent, reported to the provincial government in 1862: there is "melancholy evidence of the gradual wasting away of the race." Therefore, he suggested, they do not require as much land as before so there was no harm in allowing squatters who had settled on the Middle River reserve keep the land they had improved.<sup>4</sup> Entrenched as this theory of a doomed race may have been, sympathizers continued to contradict it; the 14th Annual Report of the Micmac Missionary Society asks "where is the inexorable law that the Indian tribes alone must pass away

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<sup>2</sup> Micmac Missionary Society, First Annual Report, 1850-51, (Halifax, N.S., 1851), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Upton states that the Micmac population in Nova Scotia was 1,156 in 1847. Upton, pp. 127-28.

<sup>4</sup> LANSJ, 1862, App. 30, p. 8.

before a fast progressing civilization?"<sup>5</sup>

While the basic framework of ideas that figured in the stereotyping of native people continued unchallenged, in many respects negative attitudes hardened. The increasing irrelevancy of the Micmac to government and settlers alike, plus the growing popularity of Social Darwinism and biological theories of inherent deficiencies confirmed Nova Scotians' preconceptions. This is clearly revealed in the contrast between the attitudes of the Indian commissioners of the first half of the century and William Chearnley, the commissioner for Indian Affairs from 1853 to 1857 and from 1859 to 1862.<sup>6</sup> Indian commissioners like Howe, Gesner, and Perley had been sympathetic towards their charges. While assimilation had been their goal, they had worked on behalf of the Micmac, with the assumption that the aboriginal people had the abilities and intelligence to become valuable Nova Scotian citizens. Chearnley, on the other hand, held out no hope of altering the native way of life. It was, he claimed, "impossible to impress upon the Indians the necessity of husbandry", nor was it possible to induce them to settle.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, there was little to be done

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<sup>5</sup> Micmac Missionary Society, 14th Annual Report, 1862-63 (Halifax, 1864), p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Ralston, p. 488.

<sup>7</sup> LANSJ, App. 26, 1854, p. 211.

except to dispense blankets and greatcoats (used, if possible) to ease their misery until they all disappeared. Chearnley's pessimistic attitude reflected the growing ascendancy of the idea that the Micmac's own inherent deficiencies doomed them. A sense of obligation and responsibility to the people Nova Scotians had displaced was reduced to a charitable impulse to aid a pauperized people.

If the Micmac could never become assimilated, why, Nova Scotians argued, were they allowed to keep large areas of under utilized land, thereby impeding the progress and development of their province. The solution complemented the theory that native people could be motivated to industry if they held land individually. S.P. Fairbanks, commissioner of Crown Lands and Indian Affairs, advised the government to subdivide reserve lands, holding some for the heads of Micmac families, and selling the remainder; the funds raised to be used for the benefit of the Indians. This advice was undoubtedly a response to political pressure as squatters demanded the right to keep the reserve lands on which they had settled. As Fairbanks explained:

I think I express a general feeling, entertained in the island, that it is time these lands should be made available for settlement, - that reserving such large tracts unimproved is injurious, and retards the progress of the country. If it be the policy of the Legislature to escheat those tracts which are held by individuals without performing the conditions of the grant, it follows that the same policy ought to apply to lands which are not only left without improvement, but fail to accomplish that object for which they were

reserved - the expectation of improving the condition and comfort of the Indians.<sup>9</sup>

The Indian agent for Queen's County agreed with this policy, reiterating the argument that allowing the Indians to keep large reserves of land which they did not cultivate retarded the settlement of the province. Furthermore, he claimed, the reserve lands were of no benefit to the Indians. If the reserve land in Queen's County were subdivided and granted to Micmac families, most would sell to white settlers. As for the Micmac, "They would be no worse off without it than they are now."<sup>9</sup>

When the responsibility of Indian affairs was handed over to the federal government at confederation, it was assumed that the same policies of distributing charity to the aged, destitute, and ill, and subdividing reserve lands would continue. A report of 1867, just before the transfer took place, explains that the Indians' lack of progress has not been due to the commissioners' lack of effort. The blame, the report continues, lay with the Micmacs' own nature and habits that had led them to reject the government's many inducements to settle.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> LANSJ, Indian Reserves, 1860, p. 297.

<sup>9</sup> LANSJ, App. 16, 1863, pp. 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> LANSJ, App. 39, 1867, p. 1.

In the transition period following confederation, the Micmac were neglected by both levels of government until 1870 when Joseph Howe was appointed superintendent general of Indian Affairs. Howe developed a coherent policy, organizing the province into districts, each with an Indian agent responsible to the Department. However, as a man of his time, Howe accepted the prevailing ideology that governed policy. He believed that if the remnant of the Micmac were to be saved, they had to be encouraged "to abandon the chase...and fall back on the cultivation of the soil." Assistance and supplies were only to be given to those who demonstrated a "disposition to advance and help themselves."<sup>11</sup> The Micmac benefitted from one aspect of this reaffirmed policy; if they were to become owners of property and successful farmers, their land had to be protected. To this end, Howe advised the Indian agents to remove squatters and make the Micmacs feel more secure in the ownership of their reserves.<sup>12</sup>

The protection of reserves did not mean that the Micmac were to be allowed to hold their land communally. Private property remained the key to native assimilation to the dominant society. Following the wishes of the federal Department of Indian Affairs, in 1880 the Indian agent at

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<sup>11</sup> DCPSP, 22, 1872, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Chester divided reserve land into 100 acre lots "with a hope of encouraging more and more a love for self-aggrandizement and industry."<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, the government hoped that all Indian lands would be subdivided, after their "strange aversion" to this process was overcome.<sup>14</sup>

The Micmac's aversion to freehold land tenure also applied to farming on the scale their guardians envisaged. While the yeoman image continued to be the ideal adhered to by the Indian Affairs Department, the comments of some agents suggest that the Micmac were less enthusiastic. One agent noted that "The Micmac was never intended to be a systematic farmer,"<sup>15</sup> while another stated that "They do not take kindly to tilling the soil."<sup>16</sup> A few, like Rand, recognized that while the Micmac were not "born farmers", they had other talents, being "born mechanics."<sup>17</sup> These comments suggest that it was the inborn nature of the Micmac that predicated his abilities or lack of them. The acceptance of biological determinism meant that social and

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<sup>13</sup> DCPSP, 14, 1881, p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> DCPSP, 6, 1882, p. xivii.

<sup>15</sup> DCPSP, 14, 1880, p. 40.

<sup>16</sup> DCPSP, 14, 1900, p. 69.

<sup>17</sup> Rand, Short Account of the Lord's work among the Micmac Indians with some reasons for Rand's seceding from the Baptist Denomination, (Halifax, N.S.: Macnab, 1873), p. 5.

environmental factors became less of a concern. It was the Indians' nature, not outside influences that shaped his character. Accordingly, the self-flagellation that earlier sympathizers of the Micmac indulged in when blaming whites for contaminating the "weaker" native race almost disappeared. Environmental influences were not completely discounted. Good role models were still considered to be worthwhile, but now they were to be provided by Indian families who had adapted to the yeoman ideal imposed upon them.

Paralleling its growing importance in society was an increased emphasis on education as a agent of social change within the aboriginal community. Although funds were allocated for native schooling, the results were irregular and discontinuous. In spite of the high value put on education, it remained a weak tool of assimilation among the nineteenth century Micmac. Schools were occasionally established for short periods of time and some Micmac children attended school with their white neighbours; however, problems of language and the Micmac need to move from place to place to gather resources and sell handicrafts meant that native education was sporadic.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Relston, op. cit., for a discussion of education up to 1872.

Almost all the efforts to "advance" the Indian was carried out under the paternal eye of government. As wards of the Crown the Micmac were to be "uplifted" and tutored until they became civilized and were ready to join Euro-Canadian society. As one agent expressed it: "In the business of cultivating the soil and accumulating property the Indian is but a child, and requires aid and protection until he can go alone."<sup>19</sup> Some agents also denigrated the Micmac's intellect. When one agent was asked whether he thought if it was feasible to establish a system of municipal government in his area, he responded: "such a system would prove wholly impracticable in this county. The Indians are not intelligent enough to assume responsibility of such a nature."<sup>20</sup>

Most Indian agents reported that under their tutelage the Micmac were making small, but incremental, progress. As federal employees, they were unlikely to do otherwise for a negative report would have meant that they were not adequately carrying out their duties. The occasional agent, instead of reporting small gains, made a plea for his charges. In 1881, the agent for Cornwallis, King's County pleaded that the Micmac in his jurisdiction were in a desperate state because they did not have sufficient land on

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<sup>19</sup> LANSJ, App. 30, 1862, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> DCPSP, 14, 1881, p. 42.



which to live:

The game is all gone. The timber which they require for their handiwork is becoming very scarce.... When sickness comes, destitution and starvation stares them in the face.... I see no prospect ahead but destitution and misery, and finally extinction of the race here.... I am not overdrawing the picture, the reality is coming home to us... the only fear is that we become too callous and indifferent to their misery."<sup>21</sup>

This compassionate outcry echoes those of earlier humanitarians, but in 1881 it was rare. Explanations for indifference cover many possibilities. Perhaps most Nova Scotians felt that the Micmac were being adequately cared for by government or perhaps the belief that they were soon to disappear was enough to justify neglect. Rationalization was also at hand in development theories that recommended non-interference in the advancement of savage peoples. Probably, the most significant factor was that the Micmac had become increasingly marginal in Nova Scotian society. This is not to suggest that active humanitarians were completely absent in the latter half of the nineteenth century, or that sympathetic observers had disappeared. However, they were fewer in number and seemed more willing to delegate social responsibilities to agencies or government.

The most notable exception was Silas Rand who,

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<sup>21</sup> DCPSP, 6, 1882, p. 25.

motivated by missionary zeal, worked for decades among the Micmac, evangelizing, collecting myths and legends, translating, and teaching. He did not act alone. Always in the background were his supporters, first the Micmac Missionary Society, founded through his efforts, and later, supporters who kept his mission going through voluntary donations.

Rand, and by association, his supporters, were more concerned about the spiritual condition of the Micmac than with their material life, however, they did assume that one influenced the other. This assumption was based on the belief that the Protestant religion was the only avenue to advancement and civilization. The Roman Catholic religion, in their view, had deliberately kept the native people in ignorance, bigotry and darkness. Only the Bible, "the true knowledge of salvation", could lift the Micmac out of their misery and degradation.<sup>22</sup>

In many respects Rand shared the stereotypical view of the native people, but he rejected the idea that the Micmac were inherently, and irredeemably, inferior. Rand was never shaken in his traditional Christian belief that all men are brothers. As such, the Micmac, even if "untutored semi-savages", were capable of improvement. In his Short

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<sup>22</sup> Rand, 1850, p. 3.

Statement, designed to convince Nova Scotians that the Micmac were deserving of the attention of evangelical Christians, he based his case on developmental arguments and theories of cultural relativity. He pointed out that the ancient inhabitants of Britain resembled the Indians in their ferocity and cruelty and that the civilized people of the time, the Romans, held them in contempt. The ability of the British to elevate themselves, reflected, he argued, "on the possibility of elevating the Indian from his present degradation, to the rank of a man." As for the nature of the Indian, it was not more cruel than that of other men; the English and the French, he claimed, must share the blame for inciting them to violence."

Rand's faith in the ability of the Micmac to progress, to advance, was part of his traditional Christian faith, but as he worked with them, his respect for their capabilities and intelligence grew. His work was hampered as he was often considered an unwelcome intruder by the Micmac and a dangerous rival by the priests. He persevered, studying the Micmac language, translating parts of the Bible into Micmac, then reading it to the Micmac, as well as teaching some how to read. It was not a one way street; as Rand gained the confidence of some native people, they taught him their

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" Rand, 1850, p. 6.

history and literature.

Rand was supported by the Micmac Missionary Society, a group of evangelical Protestants, from its founding in 1850 until he withdrew from it in 1865. The annual reports of the Society suggest that the members felt some responsibility for the present condition of the Micmac, but they were firmly convinced that offering the Micmac "the blessing of Christian civilization" was a fair recompense for taking their land. As they explained the object of their mission:

As a recompense for the injustice which they have suffered, and for the neglect and contempt with which they have been treated, we would present them with the best gift one child of man can bestow upon another - "The Book" - "Fountain of Knowledge and of Life".<sup>24</sup>

The Mission Society soon learned that the Bible was not sufficient, by itself, to impart the virtues of civilization. A central mission was needed to encourage the Micmac to settle and to develop industrious habits. Their Fourth Annual Report clearly states the relationship between a settled life, industry and the comforts that resulted:

... the manly struggle with circumstances which begets intelligence, industry, and forethought, is unknown for the life of the wigwam is only an ignominious and often repeated flight from the difficulties of one position, to seek, ready to their hand, without the outlay of labour or reflection, in some other locality, such

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<sup>24</sup> Micmac Missionary Society, 5th Annual Report, 1853-54, p. 13.

circumstances as suit them. It would be the dawn of a better day to the Indian than he has ever known, when, instead of this, he was induced to avail himself of the advantages of any one situation, and create, and gather round him, by patient industry, those elements of comfort and progress, which cannot possibly be gleaned from the scattered and barren tracts of a wandering life."

Land was purchased in the Hantsport area and the Micmac encouraged to settle. The Mission also set up an enterprise to buy and sell Micmac handicrafts. It was so successful that it had to be discontinued; the Micmac produced more goods than could be sold. The Micmac Missionary Society did not regard this as a failure; the effort was deemed a success because they had proven that the Micmac were capable "of persevering in the occupations of industry for a length of time."<sup>24</sup>

Not everyone supported Rand's efforts. Often he had to defend his work against detractors who made much of his failure to gain converts. Of particular interest is Rand's response to Gilpen's article, "Indians of Nova Scotia" in which Gilpen claimed that Rand and his supporters had wasted their time and money, and had actually injured the race they sought to benefit. According to Gilpen these misguided evangelists had tried to carry the Micmac "back to their old

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<sup>23</sup> Micmac Missionary Society, Fourth Annual Report, 1852-53, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Micmac Missionary Society, Sixth Annual Report, 1854-55, p. 5.

worn-out life and language" when they should have been teaching them English and "to wear shoes and stockings and to eat from tables."<sup>27</sup> Rand's defense suggests that he was as interested in turning the Micmac into whites as was Gilpen. He claimed that the Indians were making steady progress in acquiring the habits of civilization due to the efforts of his mission:

we have taught them to wear shoes and stockings, and to eat from tables, and to dress like their white brothers and sisters. I cannot remember when I have seen the old peaked cap on an Indian woman's head, or the old blanket around their shoulders. And WE have taught them to live in houses, and to send their children to school, and in a goodly number of cases, to be steady, sober, industrious and comfortable."<sup>28</sup>

Rand had always presented the use of Micmac as a transitional measure. Its temporary use was necessary in order to reach the native people, to evangelize them and to civilize them. With assimilation the goal, Rand assumed that Micmac would eventually cease to be a spoken language as they would "adopt the language with the manners of the people to whom they become assimilated."<sup>29</sup>

Gilpen was not the only Nova Scotian to suggest that

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<sup>27</sup> Gilpen, 1875-78, p. 115. For a discussion of Gilpen's article see pp. 152-54.

<sup>28</sup> Rand, The Micmac Mission. (Hantsport, N.S., 1882), p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Micmac Missionary Society. Fifth Annual Report 1853-54, p. 9.

Rand's work was pointless. In response, Rand often marshalled arguments in defense of his work and to convince sceptics of the Micmacs' potential. Several of these arguments are presented in the Tenth Annual Report of the Micmac Missionary Society. To the complaints that missionaries are often doomed to disappointment and that "Indian preachers" often end up to be failures, he counters that "These complaints ... apply to every nation, tribe, and people." A similar response is made to the argument that native people will not give up the hunt:

But white people hunt too; and what would our governors, military officers, judges, lawyers ... say to the doctrine that an uncontrollable propensity to scour the woods, to shoot moose, to "rise" salmon, and "kill" trout is a proof of semibarbarism, and of a disposition that cannot be moulded into harmony with civilization, and refinement.<sup>30</sup>

Rand points out that whites also share two other "misdemeanours" of the Micmacs - drunkenness and neglecting to pay their debts. The conclusion he always draws is that the Micmac are like other men and should be treated as "we would wish to be ourselves treated."<sup>31</sup>

But the Micmac were not quite like other men, even to missionaries like Rand. This is apparent in Rand's response to the argument that "an Indian 'like a partridge' cannot be

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<sup>30</sup> Micmac Missionary Society, Tenth Annual Report, 1858-59, pp. 32-33.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

tamed."<sup>32</sup> He uses an example to illustrate that this view is in error, but, of course, while arguing that an Indian can be tamed, Rand is also assuming that he needs to be "tamed". The Indian whose "savage" nature was subdued was a fourteen year old orphan, James Meuse, who had been taken in by Mr. Josiah P. Doane. Mr. Doane tamed this individual member of homo silvaticus as other wild animals would be tamed. Rand explains that James was content until other Indians were about and then he ran away. It was not easy to catch him but

Mr. Doane persevered. If the child screamed, ran away, and hid himself; and if the men and women came out to protect him with noisy gesticulation, he would kindly reason with them. Having at length secured the prize, Jim would at once become gentle and confiding as ever."

Some of Rand's critics did not express their hostility on the level of intellectual arguments. On one occasion "He was interrupted and assailed with coarse obscene language by sundry white men in the garb of gentlemen" while he was on a steamboat speaking to some Micmac.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, Rand did have many supporters,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Micmac Missionary Society Eighth Annual Report, 1856-57, pp. 10-11.

<sup>34</sup> Micmac Missionary Society, Ninth Annual Report, 1857-58, p. 13.



enough for him to live in reasonable comfort throughout the forty-three years he worked with the Micmac. Positive attitudes are also suggested by the fact that the whites living in the neighbour of the Hants Mission were informed of the plans and did not object.<sup>35</sup> In 1882 Rand claimed that the Micmac had made many advances, giving as evidence the acceptance of Indian children in white schools.<sup>36</sup>

While Rand's supporters indicate some sympathy for the Micmacs within the Nova Scotian community, the existence of detractors suggests that antipathy continued. Developmental theories, as part of the prevailing paradigm, would have been accepted by all, but whether they were interpreted positively or negatively depended on the individual's point of view. A devout Christian would have believed, like Rand, that all men, no matter how savage, could advance, if given the opportunity. After all, all men had fallen from Grace and needed Divine intervention to be uplifted. This perceived gift of evangelization was considered a fair recompense to the Micmac for taking their land and depleting their resources.

But development theories also offered the opportunity to dispense with feelings of guilt and responsibility.

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<sup>35</sup> Micmac Missionary Society, Fifth Annual Report, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Rand, 1882, p. 10.

Evolutionary arguments were marshalled to explain the demise of a race so weak it could not stand against one of superior energy and intellect. Hannay, in his history of Acadia, explains that the Micmacs' impending doom is due to inherent weaknesses and a way of life, so reckless and baneful, it leads to inevitable misery and death. Europeans were not to blame for the introduction of diseases that decimated the indigenous population; it was the native lifestyle, "their uncertain means of subsistence and indulgences," that undermined their constitutions and made them susceptible to disease. Further diminishing the impact of introduced disease on the native people, Hannay claims that the Indian population in Acadia had been greatly exaggerated. The number of Micmac in Nova Scotia, 1666 in 1871, was probably, he claims, the most the area had ever supported. This is because an uncultivated country can only support a limited population. Hunters and gathers need a wide range of territory to obtain the meagre resources necessary to sustain a small group. This life of hardship and privation is fatal to all but the most hardy. Lifestyle also explains why the Indians were unable to resist the temptations offered to them by the lower elements of European society.<sup>37</sup> Weak, demoralized and degraded, the native people of Acadia, according to Hannay, would soon disappear with no blame to be attributed to the white population. The myth of a

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<sup>37</sup> Hannay, pp. 43-51.

wandering, homeless tribe, inherently feeble and resistant to change, absolved Nova Scotians of any guilt or responsibility.

By the end of the nineteenth century the idea that "Their inherent character is averse to the genius of modern civilization"<sup>38</sup> was entrenched among most Nova Scotians. The Micmac had stubbornly clung to their own language and customs for three hundred years, a constancy interpreted by whites as rigidity and an inability to change. As Hannay expressed it:

You cannot mew up the eagle of the mountain like the barn-door fowl, nor tame the forest stage like the stalled ox. So to the red man the trammels and fetters of civilized life are irksome. They chafe his very soul.... He assimilates not with our habits.<sup>39</sup>

Just at the time when the Micmac were beginning to respond to pressure to live in houses, to take up farming and to send their children to school, the stereotypes that branded them hardened into images that would not even begin to dissipate until well into the following century.

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<sup>38</sup> W.H. Withrow, The Native Races of North America, (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms, 1895), p. 69. A copy of this book was owned by the Brunswick St. United Church, Halifax.

<sup>39</sup> Hannay, p. 69.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, two questions need to be addressed. First, one may ask, why dig up evidence of past mistrust, mistreatment and prejudice? The obvious answer is that it is important to understand the ideas that underlay Euro-American attitudes towards native people, attitudes which have formed the basis of interaction between the two peoples for centuries.

Without a clear understanding of the ideological underpinnings of late eighteenth century and nineteenth century society it is easy to misinterpret literature of the period. Literary conventions of the Noble and Demonic Savage are particularly liable to misunderstanding. Because the Noble Savage convention accords with late twentieth century points of view, writers who employed this stereotype are sometimes described as "men before their time." However, when viewed within the context of their time, it is clear that these writers, although esteeming the Noble Savage, did not reject the basic tenets of their society. Savages, because they were close to nature, had virtues which were worthy of admiration; they could be used to criticize a corrupt society, but, in the end, they lacked refinement, they were "uncivilized."

The distance between civilized and savage was the determining factor. Civilization meant arts, science, industry, and above all, the comforts of life. In 1865, this is how A.H. Munro, a Nova Scotian, defined civilization:

Its accepted and legitimate signification is, the superiority of man in a state of culture above man in a barbaric condition. Civilization then is the degree of advantageous change effected in the character and circumstances of man, and measuring his distance from savage life.<sup>1</sup>

Munro makes the necessity of the concept of the "savage" explicit. Savagery was the standard of measurement against which civilized societies were measured. It is as if their self-definition rested on the comparison: savages were what Euro-Americans were not.

As part of the dominant society, Nova Scotians believed that their values, their beliefs, their way of life, were the best. Consequently, attempts to impose their culture on others were viewed as benevolence, not oppression. This is a clear reflection of ethnocentrism, "the belief that one's own group is best or superior to others."<sup>2</sup> This universal

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<sup>1</sup> A.H. Munro, Characteristics of the present age and the duties of the educated classes as suggested by them: an oration delivered before the Associated Alumni of Acadia College, June 5, 1865, (Halifax, N.S.: "Christian Messenger", 1865), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Daniels and Harry H. L. Kitano, American Racism: Exploration of the Nature of Prejudice, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 2.

phenomenon was recognized by Rand: "The Micmac feel that they are the bravest and best of all Indian nations.... And what nation on the face of the earth, thinks otherwise respecting their own superiority?"<sup>3</sup>

This leads us to the second question that needs to be addressed--was Nova Scotia a racist society during the period I have discussed? Roger Daniels and Harry H.L. Kitano make a distinction between ethnocentrism and racism by defining the latter as "the belief that one or more races have innate superiority over other races."<sup>4</sup> I would argue that the label of racism is applicable to the second half of the nineteenth century, but not to the earlier period dealt with.

There is no question that Nova Scotians, as part of Euro-American society, thought they were superior to the indigenous people during the entire period under discussion. But it was the new world view which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century that gave racism credibility and led to the hardening of attitudes. Nova Scotians, in the earlier period, felt secure in their hierarchical social structure, ordained by God, in which everyone knew his place. In 1850, Rand expressed this principle of order in the

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<sup>3</sup> Rand, 1850, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Daniels & Kitano, p. 2.

aphorism, "a place for every thing and every thing in its place; a time for every thing and every thing in its time; a station for every one, and every one in his station."<sup>5</sup>

Characteristics of superiority and inferiority were clearly defined and were inherent in the different ranks of society. This structure was not rigid, as individuals, and groups, could rise and fall within it; however, the distance to be travelled was generally limited.

Conforming to Christian views of the universal brotherhood of man, the native people of Nova Scotia were incorporated into this hierarchical structure. Because they were considered to be "uncivilized," they were placed close to the bottom, but they could, through assimilation, rise up through the ranks, most suitably, to the level of yeoman farmers.

I would argue that this ethnocentric view was not racism. The native people were usually judged, and condemned, according to accepted notions of what it meant to be civilized. Their behaviour and values lumped them together with other groups that were also considered to be wanting. Race and colour were not significant factors as the Irish, gypsies, and vocational groups such as sailors and soldiers were also judged to be inferior.

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<sup>5</sup> Rand, 1850, p. 14.

The idea that the white race was innately superior developed during the latter half of the nineteenth century when scientists "proved" what some had always suspected: the existence of separate, discrete races, some of which were inferior to others. This racist doctrine satisfied the needs of the dominant society to keep certain groups subservient. As the eighteenth century's hierarchical structure and its ranking system dissolved, a new arrangement based on biological differences took its place. It should be emphasized that in spite of the different justifications, the end result was the same: the subordination of certain groups.

Regardless of the differences between racism and ethnocentrism and the appropriateness of my interpretation, there is no question that a great deal of prejudice existed during the period under discussion. The prejudgments on which prejudice was based were founded on stereotypical images of native people drawn from ancient tales myths and legends. The Noble Savage, the Demonic Savage, the Degraded Savage, even the categorization of the savage as a development stage, all were a means of keeping the native people separate from, and subservient to, white society. Even those who admired the Micmac and tried to help them, saw their future only in terms of assimilation. As an authentic, viable, functional society, the Micmac did not



exist. Not surprisingly, even the most broad-minded Nova Scotians could not see beyond the limits of their culture. The attitudes which formed the basis of their interaction with the Micmac were distorted by the prevailing images of the time.

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 LANSJ. Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia Journals.  
 PANS. Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

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