ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE ON THE PROBLEM OF INDIGENEITY

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE ON AMERICAN EXPANSIONISM AND THE PROBLEM OF INDIGENEITY

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

McMaster University MASTER OF ARTS (2018) Hamilton, Ontario (Religious Studies)

TITLE: Alexis de Tocqueville on American Expansionism and the Problem of Indigeneity. AUTHOR: Patrick Edwards, B.A. (McMaster University) SUPERVISOR: Professor Zdravko Planinc. NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 82.

This thesis examines the way that Alexis de Tocqueville misrepresents the history of Indigenous peoples in his book *Democracy in America*. I argue that his discussion on the history of American colonialism depicts Indigenous peoples in a way that fails to appreciate their culture and suggests that their destruction is simply the tragic result of the triumphant march of European civilization. I also argue that, for Tocqueville, the democratic movement in Europe is an historical inevitability that is impossible to resist.

This thesis explores Alexis de Tocqueville's representation of Indigenous peoples in his book *Democracy in America*, a subject largely overlooked in the history of Tocqueville scholarship. I argue that his narrative on the history of American expansionism creates a simulacrum of Indigeneity as a rhetorical trope to convince the reader of the impossibility of the resurrection of European feudalism. In the process he exposes the brutality of American decadence while paradoxically endorsing the principles that motivate European colonialism. Tocqueville's historical narrative essentially writes Indigenous people out of history and offers a tacit justification for some of the injustices they suffered. Although some modern scholars read him as a critic of American tyranny, I suggest that his juxtaposition of savagism and civilization presupposes a progressive concept of history that condemns Indigenous peoples to an unavoidable destruction.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Zdravko Planinc for his patience, encouragement and continued support. Prof. Planinc afforded me the latitude to do my own work, but whenever I began to veer off the rails he was always able to get me back on track.

In addition, I owe a debt of gratitude to my committee advisor, Prof. Alan Mendelson, whose friendship and persistent confidence in my ability to get the work done has been a reliable source of motivation.

I would also like to thank Prof. Rick Monture from the Dept. of Indigenous Studies whose insightful comments and criticisms were an invaluable source of reflection on what was to become the final draft.

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Introduction.

Alexis de Tocqueville, in his landmark treatise on American democracy, includes an important discussion of American racial tyranny as the penultimate chapter of the first volume. He explains that he relegates this subject to the end of the volume because he did not want this uniquely American phenomenon to interrupt his analysis of democracy proper. In "Some Considerations on the Present State and the Probable Future of the Three Races That Inhabit the Territory of the United States," Tocqueville focuses his attention on the sociology of Indigenous culture and its confrontation with the great movement of European civilization. Although hastily written and seeming an afterthought, its inclusion reflects his strongest and most paradoxical objection to the inherent goodness, or the historical desirability, of modern democratic regimes. Longer than any other discussion in *Democracy in America,* this chapter deals with perennial issues of democratic expansionism and European colonialism, yet it has received relatively little scholarly attention. The lack of interest is not surprising: Tocqueville himself introduces the topic with a declaration of its irrelevance to his broader project.[1]

[1] He writes: "The principal task that I have imposed on myself is now fulfilled; I have shown, at least as far as I was able to succeed, what the laws of American democracy are; I have made known what its mores are . . . In the course of this work my subject has often led me to speak of the Indians and the Negroes, but I have never had the time to stop in order to show what position these two races occupy in the midst of the democratic people that I was occupied with depicting." *Democracy in America.* Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, eds and trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 303. Henceforth cited as *DA.*

For example, in one of the most comprehensive commentaries written on Tocqueville and Beaumont's journey to America, George Pierson writes of their analysis of Indigenous people:

> Tocqueville and Beaumont could not help but recognize that the Indian was indolent, improvident, and unadaptable. They therefore detected some of the fatal flaws of character, unfitting him for civilization.[2]

However, despite this negative assessment, and

> against the received judgement of generations of Americans, the two young Frenchmen were coming to look on the Indian as in many ways a noble and an admirable being. . . . He was an honourable person.[3]

Concerning this latter assessment, Pierson is so surprised that "two such intelligent and level-headed young men" could have reached such "an extraordinary conclusion" he feels compelled to offer an explanation. On the one hand, he reasons, they

> had come to America full of impressions from Cooper and Chateaubriand, and full of the liberal and romantic notion . . . that the red-skin was that paragon long sought of the philosophers: a noble savage.[4]

On the other hand, the real Indians they did encounter, that is, those "savages still uncontaminated by civilization" like the guides they employ on their journey to the Saginaw or those encountered in Michilimachinac, were not "of the fierce Iroquois, of the war-like Sioux or the predatory Apache . . . [but] belonged to the relatively peaceful and harmless tribe of the Chippewa." Tocqueville, he says,

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[2] George William Pierson, *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 287.

[3] Ibid., 288.

[4] Ibid.

made the mistake of assuming that "all the different nations of red-men were like the scattered, harmless hunters whom they had before them."[5] The combination of these errors results in their self-deceptive misapprehension of savage treachery and barbarity, and their confusion of the Indian's "stoic stupidity" with "noble pride."[6]

Leaving Pierson's derogatory comments aside, he is correct to note the influence of Cooper and Chateaubriand but incorrect to infer that either Tocqueville or his mentor Chateaubriand subscribed to the state-of-nature theories popularised by Rousseau and other French philosophers of the day. In the words of Ernst de Blosseville, to make this comparison is to confuse the state of nature with the wild state (*l'état sauvage*).[7] In a more recent assessment, Harvey

[5] Ibid., 288-9.

[6] Ibid. The use of the word "Indians" as a collective term for First Nations peoples in Canada or Native Americans in the United States is difficult to avoid when referring to historical discourse. Where possible I use tribal designations, or the term Indigenous peoples when speaking generally. Thomas King points out that "there never has been a good collective noun because there never was a collective to begin with," but explains that the term "Indian" for all its faults and problems remains the North American default. Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in America,* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2013), xiii.

[7] Ernst de Blosseville, trans. John Tanner, *Mémoires de John Tanner: ou Trente Années dans les Déserts de L'Amérique du Nord,* (Paris: Libraire de la Société de Géographie, 1835), xi-xii. Blosseville writes that Tanner's rustic and unpoetic narrative conveys a convincing account of Indigenous peoples that contradicts conventional state of nature thinking about Indians: "Cette relation, telle qu'elle est dans son originale simplicité, contredit presque **à** chaque ligne le philosophisme du dix-huitième siècle. C'est la réponse la plus péremptoire **à** tant de soi-disant moralistes qui ont sans cesse gonfondu l'état de nature avec l'état sauvage, comme le leur a si justement reproché M. de Chateaubriand." Blosseville

Mansfield claims that Tocqueville "praises Indians for their 'aristocratic pride,' but for nothing else. In themselves they are inferior to civilized whites and their way of life is no reproach to the sophistication of white civilization."[8] Yet despite their presumed inferiority Mansfield notes that

> Tocqueville says quite severely that the civilized whites did not deal justly with the Indians. That treatment calls into question the superiority of white civilized justice, but does not imply an endorsement of the noble savage.[9]

Mansfield is right on both counts, but he has nothing more to say on the matter.[10] His comments do, however, suggest further lines of inquiry: If Tocqueville does not ascribe to Rousseau's thesis on the noble savage, what does his representation of Indigenous people signify? And how does Tocqueville reconcile the superiority of civilized Europe with its doctrines of colonial expansion and the tyrannical injustices caused by its encounter with America's Indigenous inhabitants? Marvin Zetterbaum in his *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy* provides some insight when he argues that Tocqueville

> admits that the unrestrained pursuit of material well-being arises inevitably under democratic conditions; that the principles by which it is justified are incontestably true; and that the inequality of fortune in which it results is

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is a colleague and friend of Tocqueville who translated Tanner's *Memoires* for French readership from a copy that Tocqueville had brought back to France.

[8] *DA*, xxxix.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Some years later, Mansfield returns to the topic and explains that the "deeper intent" of this chapter "is to reveal the nature of majority tyranny and what can be done to prevent it, by way of an analysis of pride and freedom." Harvey Mansfield, *Tocqueville: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 42. I will return to this analysis below.

> both natural and just. Moreover, he acknowledges both the power of the spirit of acquisitiveness and its social utility. A paradox indeed.[11]

Furthermore, he writes, "Tocqueville's evaluation . . . may be seen in his attitude toward the Americans' conquest of their continent. Generally, he approves, as his readiness to accept the displacement of the Indians suggests."[12] Zetterbaum points to the relation between majority tyranny and the spirit of American acquisitiveness, even suggesting Tocqueville's tacit theoretical acceptance of the inevitable demise of Indigenous people, but he does not take the discussion of Tocqueville's representation of Indigeneity and American expansionism any further.

In more recent scholarship Tocqueville's discussion of American Indians is often read as the paradigmatic expression of the easy movement of American political expansion westward.[13] Such readings, according to Hendrix and Burke, that "merely" emphasize Tocqueville's acceptance of Indigenous extinction, inure us from those moments of "clear moral anger" when he decries the bureaucratic and institutional agency that compelled American expansion and made impossible any form of Indigenous resistance. While their nuanced approach demonstrates Tocqueville's recognition of, and moral outrage against, the material force of

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[11] Marvin Zetterbaum, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 127.

[12] Ibid., 129.

[13] Burke Hendrix and Alison McQueen ,"Tocqueville in Jacksonian Context: American Expansionism and Discourses of American Indian Nomadism in *Democracy in America." Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 15 no. 3 (September 2017), 663-677.

American tyranny, I argue that Tocqueville's characterization of the inevitable destruction of the American Indians results from his understanding of their inherent savagism, which makes them unfit for civilization and renders all forms of Indigenous resistance ineffective. By attempting to read Tocqueville's encounters with the Iroquois, Ojibway, and Métis on the Canadian frontier and the "five civilized tribes" in the American south against the broader context of an Indigenous perspective, I will demonstrate Tocqueville's Eurocentric misrepresentation of Indigenous culture and his "writing over" some significant moments in their political history.

I will begin with a brief discussion of Tocqueville's historical context and the conditions which gave rise to his journey to America. Then I follow him chronologically using his travel notes and discuss his interpretation of the historical experience of the Indigenous communities he encounters. He uses these encounters to construct a theory of history that envisions the progress of humanity from its nomadic infancy in the forest to the advent of civilization and modern commercialism.

Historical Context and Motivation.

In the spring of 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville, with his childhood friend and lifelong colleague, Gustave de Beaumont, both junior magistrates of the French court, set sail from the Port of Le Havre France on a journey to the New World that would culminate in the publication of Tocqueville's landmark *Democracy in*

America, widely considered to be both "the best book ever written on democracy and the best book ever written on America."[14] Arriving in New York in the early years of Andrew Jackson's presidency, Tocqueville and Beaumont would spend the next nine months traversing major centers on the eastern seaboard to as far north as the Canadian frontier, and south along the Mississippi to what was formerly the French colony of New Orleans, a journey of more than 11,000 kilometers. With an official mandate to study the American penal system and armed with numerous letters of introduction, the young aristocrats had access to all echelons of American society ranging from statesmen, religious leaders and government officials to colonial settlers and a variety of Indigenous peoples living around the Great Lakes basin and in the American south, where they encountered members of what were then referred to as the "five civilized tribes." They witnessed first-hand the "tyrannical measures adopted by the legislators of the southern states" as they happened upon a group of Choctaws suffering through the material effects of President Jackson's Indian Removal Policy.[15]

Tocqueville had looked forward to the opportunity of seeing Indigenous people in their natural state; to see them in such a miserable condition was not

[14] *DA*, "Introduction," xvii.

[15] Ibid., 321. Signed into law on April 28, 1830 The Indian Removal Act legalized the expulsion of approximately 100,000 indigenous inhabitants from the south-eastern states to territory west of the Mississippi, resulting in thousands of deaths from disease, privations and wars of resistance. Some tribes, like the Choctaws negotiated removal treaties, others like the more intrepid Cherokee would eventually be forced off their lands at gunpoint.

what he was expecting. Like many French aristocrats of his day, Tocqueville's interest in North American Indians was largely influenced by his famous uncle François-René de Chateaubriand and the American author James Fennimore Cooper. Their romantic depictions of American Indians and tales of adventure along the frontier were a regular source of nourishment for his youthful imagination.[16] During the period of the July Monarchy, it was his uncle René who encouraged him to travel to America to escape the turbulent atmosphere created by the recent political events.[17] As the middle son in a high status aristocratic

[16] Chateaubriand was a regular visitor to the Tocqueville estate. He speaks fondly of Alexis as he remembers him growing up alongside the nephews he adopted after his brother Jean-Baptiste and his wife were executed for their loyalty to Louis XIV. Eduardo Nolla, "Editor's Introduction," Alexis de Tocqueville, *Historical Critical Edition of De la Démocratie en Amérique.* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Inc., 2010), lx. Henceforth cited as *DAHC.*

[17] Chateaubriand was himself advised to exile to America by Tocqueville's maternal grandfather Chrétien Guillaume Lamoignon de Malesherbes. Ironically Malesherbes too had been counselled to leave France during the revolution but refused and was arrested by the revolutionary committee along with Tocqueville's mother and father. At the time of the revolution the Tocquevilles were the seigneurial landholders over the village of their name on the Cotentin peninsula in Normandy and were on good terms with their vassals. As the revolution unfolded his father joined the national guard in defense of Louis XVI and was eventually arrested and imprisoned by members of the revolutionary committee, along with Alexis' mother, grandfather, uncles and cousins. His mother and father, along with most of her family managed to secure their liberty. However, his great grandfather Malesherbes and his uncle Jean-Baptiste de Chateaubriand brother to François René de Chateaubriand, were both guillotined. Malesherbes was followed to the scaffold by his daughter and granddaughter, and Chateaubriand by his wife along with her father and mother. Hervé de Tocqueville never overcame the ordeal. No doubt this family history played an indelible role in shaping Alexis' political consciousness. François René de Chateaubriand's book *Atala,* published in 1801, had a formative influence on Tocqueville's preliminary thinking about natives in America. And as Eduardo Nolla notes concerning Malesherbes, "At one time he would conceive the project of writing a book on his ancestor. The idea would come to nothing, but the

family whose ties reached back to the Norman conquest in 1066, the recent events of the July Monarchy would give Tocqueville pause for grave concern.[18] This "exile" across the Atlantic was a welcome reprieve from the unpredictable public response to the installation of yet another quasi-democratic government, an opportunity to confirm theories he had begun to develop on the nature of American democracy, and a source of excitement as he was intent to seek out personal encounters with the Indigenous people he had read and heard so much about. Most importantly, travelling to America he hoped to discover insights that would help explain the political instability of modern France as it struggled to free itself from the vestiges of European feudalism.[19]

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shadow of Malesherbes hovers over many pages of *Democracy*. A bust of the President of the *Cour des Aides*, placed on the worktable of the author, would preside silently over the writing of many works." *DAHC*, l.

[18] Tocqueville writes that he undertook this adventure in order to "put a quarter of the diameter of the globe" between himself and "the political tempest" occurring in France. The tempest was such that he laments not having pursued a military career; "Those in the army are also humiliated, but they have a thousand occasions before them to rise up again, and we do not. The thought of striking a saber blow for France . . . is the only one that rouses me amid the disgust that surrounds me. Love of independence of our country, of its external grandeur, is the only sentiment that still makes something in my soul vibrate." Letter to Eugene Stoffels, Ibid. lii.

[19] Since the French Revolution in 1789, France transitioned from the Bourbon Monarchy to a constitutional republic, then to the Jacobin republic (commonly known as the Reign of Terror), then to the parliamentary reaction against the Jacobins and the fall of Robespierre, then to Napoleon's empire, then to the Bourbon restoration, followed by the installation of Louis Phillipe's bourgeois, quasi-constitutional monarchy, which was the catalyst for his journey to America. During the remainder of his life he would see the rise of the Second Republic under which he was arrested and released, and the establishment of the Second Empire under Louis Napoleon III, to which Tocqueville responded by retiring from politics.

After their return to France in late March 1832, Tocqueville and Beaumont fulfilled their obligation to the Crown with the publication of their observations on American prisons in *On the Penitentiary System in America and its Application in France*, Beaumont wrote most of the text while Tocqueville managed the notes.[20] Afterward, Tocqueville set about working on *Democracy*, while Beaumont recorded his impressions of the American ethos in his highly fictionalized yet equally sociological *Marie: ou l'Esclavage aux Etats Unis, Tableau de Moeurs Américaines*. Both were published in the same year. Beaumont's account was well received but soon forgotten, whereas Tocqueville's *Democracy* won him international recognition as one of the prominent liberal thinkers of his time.[21] No sooner did the first volume appear in France than it was

[20] In a letter of support for Beaumont's election to the Académie des sciences morales et politiques Tocqueville states that "M. de Beaumont was so to speak the sole author" and that he "only provided [his] observations and a few notes." *DAHC*, lxxv.

[21] Beaumont's *Marie* was well received but only in France, winning him the Prix Montyon by the Académie Française, which contributed to his election to the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in 1841. It was little known outside of France until Barbara Chapman's English translation appeared in 1958. Gustave de Beaumont, *Marie: or Slavery in the United States, a Novel of Jacksonian America,* Barbara Chapman trans., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), xv. The popularity of Tocqueville's *Democracy* was met with such unanimous acclaim that it surprised even the author himself. The list of admirers included Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Guizot, and Royer-Collard; one French reviewer, Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, compared him to Montesquieu and in reference to the comprehensiveness of Tocqueville's political observations Narcise-Achille de Salvany proposed he add to the book the subtitle, "The Spirit of American Laws." Cf. *DAHC*, lxxxix-xc. Tocqueville's book was so successful that his speaking engagements were regularly sold out, and at one event he was even given audience by the Queen. Cf. *Selected Letters on Politics and Society*. Roger Boesche ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 158.

translated into English and found wide readership in England and later in America. John Stuart Mill, for example, wrote long introductions to both volumes in which he praised *Democracy* as a book that

> has at once taken its rank among the most remarkable productions of our time; and is a book with which, both for its facts and its speculations, all who would understand, or who are called upon to exercise influence over their age, are bound to be familiar.[22]

Although Beaumont proved to be the lesser luminary of the two he remained his closest friend, collaborator, academic colleague and fellow statesman whose political and literary career intertwined with Tocqueville's throughout their lives.[23] Their shared perspectives on American democracy is evinced by their correspondence, literary consonance, and shared political objectives.[24]

Aside from their stylistic difference and Tocqueville's superior, more comprehensive analysis, his *Democracy* is in such theoretical agreement with

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[22] Cited in the "Introduction" to *Democracy in America*, Henry Reeve trans. (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), xiv. For the history of Tocqueville scholarship in America see Matthew Mancini, *Alexis de Tocqueville and American Intellectuals: From His Times to Ours* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006).

[23] After Tocqueville's death in 1859, Beaumont edited and oversaw his posthumous publications until his own death in 1866.

[24] In a rare moment of disagreement, while on his second tour of Algiers in December 1846 Tocqueville, writing to Beaumont concerning a disagreement whether they should lend their support to Louis Adolphe Thiers, who he regards as unprincipled, opportunistic and duplicitous states that is "with a great deal of sadness that, although we are in agreement about the end toward which our actions should tend, having in the last analysis the same tastes and the same general opinions in politics, we are unhappily divided on the course of conduct to take at this moment." *Selected Letters on Politics and Society*, Roger Boesche ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 179.

Beaumont's less celebrated text *Marie* that it is instructive to read them as companion pieces. In *Marie*, Beaumont follows the experiences of Ludovic, a French trader, and his *half-caste* wife Marie, as they journey through Jacksonian America in search for their own corner of democratic tranquility, but every step of the way they are met with nothing more than deep-seated racial hostility and moral disillusionment. In the prologue to the novel Beaumont explains to the reader that whereas Tocqueville's main objective is to illuminate "the democratic institutions of the United States," his is to portray its customs, or what he calls, its "physiognomy."[25] He is perplexed that in a society were liberty is the primary motivating force behind its development, it continues to foster and propagate the violent prejudices that make slavery possible and make impossible any hope for the political unification of the races.[26] Nevertheless, although they approach the topic of American democracy from different orientations, and although they do not use "the same colors in order to paint it" the reader would be remiss to think that they "did not form the same judgements on the country [they] traversed together."[27] Where the organizing theme of Tocqueville's exegesis is the "equality of conditions," the generative force giving shape to all American institutions, Beaumont's work is driven by a succession of serious observations about the deepening abyss of racial prejudice and the violence and dangers it portends for

[25] Gustave de Beaumont, *Marie: or Slavery in the United States, a Novel of Jacksonian America,* Barbara Chapman, trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 4.

[26] Ibid., 4-5.

[27] Ibid., 7.

America's future.[28] Taken together it is clear that in America, the generative power of democratic equality is unable to transform the social prevalence of racially motivated tyranny of the majority.

Tocqueville begins *Democracy* with an overview of the history of the French Revolution reasoning that the events that seemed to overtake France so quickly and with such overwhelming force have been gradually unfolding in Europe for the last eight hundred years. Against contemporary liberal theorists who viewed the democratic revolution as the welcome product of enlightenment rationality, Tocqueville maintains that its motivating passion, the love of equality, is due more to the advent of Christianity than to "the discoveries of the modern moral philosophers."[29] Christianity, for its part, did not establish new virtues in place of the old, it simply rearranged them in a new ethical hierarchy.

> [Where] certain rude and half-savage virtues had been on the top of the list, Christianity put them on the bottom. The milder virtues, such as neighbourly love, pity, leniency, the forgetfulness even of injuries had been at the bottom of the antique list; Christianity placed them above all others.[30]

And by extending "the realm of duties" beyond the masters to include the slaves, "Christianity put in grand evidence the equality, the unity, the fraternity of all men."[31] Where in the ancient world morality was considered a civic obligation,

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[28] Ibid., 5-6.

[29] In a letter to Arthur de Gobineau, in Alexis de Tocqueville, *The European Revolution and Correspondence with Gobineau*, John Lukacs ed. and trans. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1959), 190.

[30] Ibid., 190-1.

[31] Ibid., 191.

sanctioned by the state, with little emphasis on an after-life, "Christianity put the ultimate aim of human life beyond this world; it gave thus a finer, purer, less material, less interested, and higher character to morality."[32] For Tocqueville, the problem is that, as the influence of Christianity fades, morality becomes "more concerned with the legitimacy of material needs and pleasures."[33] When humans attempt to find the legitimacy of morality in this life alone, not being able "to place them with absolute certainty in the life thereafter," they end up falling into such concepts as "the doctrine of benevolent interest, about honesty paying dividends and vice leading to misery," as is the case with English Utilitarians.[34] However, along with its moderating influence Christianity's other-worldly orientation tends to weaken civic virtues in deference for individualistic pursuits. Tocqueville concedes that one innovation the modern moral philosophies have contributed to modern democracy is to reinvigorate public spiritedness and blend it with the principles of Christian morality.[35]

Beginning from this foundation, Tocqueville speculates about the present success and the future of the American republic. With some qualification, it looks promising; but insofar as America's Indigenous inhabitants are concerned, he concludes they have simply been overwhelmed by a kind of civilizing process of attrition. This is perhaps to be expected, since if the half-savage virtues of

[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 192.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 193-4.

antiquity were overturned by the advent of Christian morality, how should one expect the full-savage virtues of the Native American to survive? He begins his analysis with America's Puritan foundation and sees this genesis as a uniquely American phenomenon: "When I think about what this original fact produced, I seem to see the whole destiny of America contained in the first Puritan who reached its shores, like the whole human race in the first man."[36] Despite its seminal importance, Tocqueville never connects the Puritan mission with the development of American racism. The democratic spirit that has been transplanted here from the old world, for all its brotherly compassion and gentle virtues, has developed an insatiable appetite for land and ascribes to a variety of doctrines of racial and cultural superiority, some biblical and some philosophically oriented to justify the elimination of its Indigenous inhabitants.

Tocqueville argues instead that America's Christian inception and its continued influence on social *moeurs* is what mitigates the kind of democratic excesses he experienced in post-revolutionary France. Tocqueville's France had been the arena of tremendous social upheaval and political transition. Frenchmen looked to America for guidance at the time when they were having to determine whether the democratic revolution was a decline into disorder, or the evolution of a new political order.[37] Tocqueville argues for the latter, but not without

[36] *DAHC*, 455.

[37] Harry Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters: European Travelers and North American Indians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 65-6.

qualification. Yet for all of his political sensitivity, he finds nothing lasting in his encounter with Indigenous peoples, the victims and legacy-holders of Anglo and French-European colonialism. As a result, his exegesis on American democracy functions as a kind of writing over Indigenous history, as his narrative treats the Indian as an artifact of history doomed for immanent destruction. Their confrontation with the totalizing movement of American civilization, was tempered by an ancestral unwillingness to bend to the yoke of European colonialism, resulting in the impossibility of assimilation—their only option except for outright war.

In Tocqueville's analysis he, like his friend Beaumont, somewhat unwittingly exposes the paradoxical ethos of American democracy as it grapples with issues of justice and pluralism. Yet in the process he joins a league of writers who present the institutional genocide orchestrated against Indigenous peoples throughout North America as an inevitability against which it would be futile to resist. By characterizing the steady process of attrition Indigenous people experienced, both in terms of territorial displacement and human mortality, as an historical inevitability, Tocqueville provides the unreflective reader with an easy justification for American expansionism and racial oppression. On one occasion he goes so far as to claim that, since Indians are strictly speaking "a hunting people," a few well placed European settlements were sufficient to drive away the game, leaving the nomads no alternative than to follow them in their westward flight: "It is therefore not, properly speaking, the Europeans who chase the natives

from America, it is famine: a happy distinction that had escaped ancient casuists, and that modern doctors have discovered."[38]

Tocqueville appropriates the North American Indian as a symbol both for the end of French aristocracy and for the excesses of American democracy. He develops a thesis on the inevitability of the demise of Indigenous peoples in the face of American expansion as an analogy for the "providential" democratization of Europe. The steady, and one could almost say necessary destruction of Indigenous peoples in America functions as a warning to French proponents of the old regime against the futility of resistance to the movement of a thoroughly democratic Europe. "To wish to stop democracy" he writes, is "to struggle against God himself." What remains is "for nations to accommodate themselves to the social state that Providence imposes on them."[39] This social state is characterized by what he calls the "equality of conditions," which in America takes the form of a society dominated by a totalizing desire for equality that begins with the reasonable pursuit of legal and social justice, but whose rapacious materialism compels it toward the levelling out of every condition necessary for the continuity of a progressive, yet liberal society. For Tocqueville the future of democracy is a "frightening spectacle," it carries within itself both the promise of liberty, and the recipe for a new form of mediocre tyranny that he terms "democratic despotism." What frightens him is that "the movement that carries [Christian peoples] along is

[38] *DA*, 310.
[39] Ibid., 7

already strong enough that it cannot be suspended;" what he hopes is that this movement "is not yet rapid enough to despair of directing it."[40] Time is of the essence. If democratic liberty is to survive, the modern statesman must develop a "new political science" to "instruct democracy, if possible to reanimate its beliefs, to purify its mores, to regulate its movements." Even though, as Tocqueville believes, man is the same everywhere,[41] the world in which he lives is forever changing, and the world in which he now finds himself has no historical precedent. It is altogether new. For this reason, it would be wrong to entertain any hope for the resurrection of aristocracy—this would be as futile as to hope for the preservation of any form of indigeneity in the face of the expanding democracies of the New World. However, in contrast to Tocqueville's aristocratic colleagues, whose moderation he hopes to enlist against the decadent instincts of "extreme" egalitarianism, Indigenous peoples are in no position to instruct democracy, or protect themselves from the degenerative effects of its overwhelming influence.

To establish this point, Tocqueville creates a simulacrum of Indigeneity.

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[40] Ibid.

[41] This is a point of disagreement in Tocqueville scholarship, but his own testimony puts historicist or relativist interpretations of his concept of human nature to rest: "In history all nations, like individuals show their own peculiar physiognomy. Their characteristic traits reproduce themselves through all the transformations that they undergo. Laws, morals, religions alter; dominion and wealth change hands; external appearances vary . . . prejudices vanish or are replaced by others. Through these diverse changes you always recognize the same people. Something inflexible shows through in spite of all man's adaptability." Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J.P. Mayer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 365. Henceforth abbreviated as *JA*.

The weakness of Indigenous people, he claims, is their savagism.[42] Whether he describes the Indian as repulsive, abject and ignorant, or as proud, courageous, high-minded and noble, for Tocqueville the Indian is essentially a fossil of humanity still living in a semi-primal state. His discussion of Indigenous people oscillates between the effect that American expansionism has had on their traditional way of life, and esteem for their natural virtues which are reminiscent of those he associates with European aristocracy. This polarity in his concept of savagism is in turn a reflection of how he understands Indigenous authenticity, which he consistently relates to their condition before European contact. Tocqueville's authentic Indian either battles against or flees from European encroachment. His only other option is to become civilized; but due to the absolute inflexibility of his nature he is impossible to assimilate, and he does not seek to coexist.[43] These are the Indians that Tocqueville admires, whose aristocratic pride will not permit them to intermingle with a people whose ways they perceive to be inferior to their own. It is not that Indigenous people fail to

[42] I use this word advisedly, taking it from the title of Roy Harvey Pierce's *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). The concept of the savage, or savagism is expressed, according to Pierce, through the literary symbolism of the Indian first imagined as redeemable, and therefore a prospect for assimilation, or as time proved, inconvenient, whose savage attachments and way of life reduce him to a stubborn obstacle in the way of civilized progress. Tocqueville's customary term for North American Indians in *Democracy in America* is savages. He uses tribal designations when he is aware of them, but regardless of whatever distinctions exist between tribal groups, they are all Indians, by which he means to signify the savage, uncivilized, and on occasion barbaric.

[43] *DA*, 306.

recognize the genius of European technology, it is that they consider industrial and agricultural work to be demeaning: "Hunting and war seem to [them] the only cares worthy of a man."[44]

Tocqueville's Encounters with the Iroquois

When Tocqueville arrives in America, he writes:

> I was full of recollections of M. de Chateaubriand and Cooper, and I was expecting to find the natives of American savages, but savages on whose face nature had stamped some of the proud virtues which liberty brings forth. I expected to find a race of men little different from Europeans, whose bodies had been developed by the strenuous exercise of hunting and of war.[45]

But this type of Indian had all since disappeared. When he first encounters a group of Iroquois who had come down to Buffalo to receive their monthly payment for land cessions, he writes "Never, I think, have I suffered a more compete disappointment in seeing these Indians." They were

> small in stature, their limbs . . . thin and not wiry, their skin, instead of being red as is generally thought, was dark bronze and such as at first sight seemed very much like that of Negroes. . . . Generally their mouths were disproportionately large, and the expression on their faces ignoble and mischievous. There was however a great deal of European in their features, but one would have said that they came from the lowest mob of our great European cities. Their physiognomy told of that profound degradation which only long abuse of the benefits of civilisation can give, but yet they were still savages. Mixed with the vices they got from us, was something barbarous and uncivilised which made them a hundred times more repulsive still. . . . At first sight one might have been tempted to mistake each of them for some wild beast of the forest to whom education

[44] Ibid., 314.
[45] *JA.*, 198-99.

> had been able to give some slight look of a human being, but who nonetheless remained an animal.[46]

These first Indians he encounters are a striking contrast to those he was expecting. On the day of this encounter Tocqueville recounts in his notebooks some stories that John C. Spencer told him about the recently deceased Seneca leader Red Jacket, citing him as an example of "one of those whom one might call the last of the Indians."[47] What impressed Tocqueville about this Chief was his sagacious resistance to European subjugation:

> Sometimes one sees even among those Indians who are encircled now by European possessions, men whose better intelligence foresees the destiny of the Indian race and whose savage energy still seeks to fight against a future from now on inevitable.[48]

One doesn't know who else Tocqueville has in mind, but there are many regional examples of Indigenous leaders known for their resistance to European encroachment.

This is high praise indeed coming from Tocqueville, whose general opinion is that Indigenous people "indulging in the childish insouciance of the

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[46] Ibid., 199.

[47] *JA*, 196-7. John Canfield Spencer was a prominent New York lawyer who had fought in the War of 1812. When Tocqueville met him, he was sitting for a second term on the New York State Assembly. He later edited Tocqueville's *Democracy* for publication in America. Red Jacket was neither a war chief nor a hereditary chief but obtained his status as a "Pine Tree Chief," through recognition of his oratory proficiency first as a speaker for the women (who in Iroquoian society embody substantial political authority) and later as a representative of the Seneca Council. These distinctions are simply lost in Tocqueville's narrative. For a discussion of the office of Pine Tree Chief cf. Fenton, 11 and 30-1.

[48] Ibid.

morrow that characterizes the savage nature, wait for the danger to arrive before occupying themselves with it."[49] They are too short-sighted to be mindful of the danger they are in until it is too late to act. Or in the words of Cass and Clark whom he often cites in support of his views: "Their improvidence is habitual and unconquerable. The gratification of his needs and wants is the sole passion of the Indian."[50] Yet despite this natural flaw, in their "modes of acting there reigned an habitual reserve and a sort of aristocratic politeness."[51] The warriors among them such as Red Jacket were:

> Mild and hospitable in peace, pitiless in war, even beyond the known boundaries of human ferocity, the Indian would expose himself to die of hunger in order to assist the stranger who knocked at the door of his hut in the night, and with his own hands he would tear off the palpitating limbs of his prisoner. The most famous ancient republics had never admired a firmer courage, prouder souls, a more intractable love of independence than was then hiding in the New World.[52]

Red Jacket was not, however, the paragon of savage virtue that Tocqueville makes him out to be. While he did obtain a reputation for his eloquence in diplomacy, and was known for his exhaustive memory and poignant use of sarcasm and irony defending Iroquoian culture and Native rights, he also gained a reputation as a coward in battle who struggled with alcoholism later in

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[49] *DA,* 313.

[50] Tocqueville is in complete agreement with William Clark and Lewis Cass, Jackson's Secretary of War whom, although he is ironically critical of their duplicitousness in their orchestration of the Indian Removal Act, he often cites in support of his thesis: "The experience of the past is lost, and the prospects of the future disregarded. This is one of the most striking traits in their character, and is well known to all who have much intercourse with them." Ibid., 311-12 fn.7.

[51] Ibid., 25.

[52] Ibid.

life. He is known to have fled the battle of Oriskany in 1777, he avoided the Battle at Wyoming Valley in 1778, and left before the fighting was over at the Battle of Newtown in 1779. On one occasion, after fleeing the battlefront he was spotted killing a cow with his tomahawk which he later tried to present as evidence of his bravery in the field. From this point on Chiefs Joseph Brant and Cornplanter ridiculed his cowardice by assigning him the epithet "cow killer." By the time of his death in 1830 his leadership was no longer recognized by his people, although for the majority of his life he was the voice of Iroquoian resistance in America.[53] It is impossible to know if Tocqueville was aware of these details, it is more than likely they were known to his otherwise informative interlocutor from whom he hears the stories he records. If Spencer had informed Tocqueville of Red Jacket's moral shortcomings, it is easy to see why he would choose to leave them out: they would interfere with the rhetorical purpose of his

[53] Cf. Carl Benn, *The Iroquois in the War of 1812* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 83, and Barbara Mann and Bruce Johansen eds., *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 251-2. There is some confusion in the literature about Red Jacket's status as a Chief. In the *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee* Red Jacket is said to have suffered the humiliation of being deposed of his antlers in 1827, three years before his death. Deer antlers are a symbol of a tribal authority that can be deposed if a leader is judged to behave in a way that is below the dignity of his office. Cf. Fenton, 200 and 219-223. In Iroquoian politics the act is a form of democratic impeachment. The dehorning of an Iroquois Sachem is an open and formal process, involving a series of warnings, which if left unheeded, the case is brought before the Grand Council and the act of impeachment is then publicly performed by the head warrior. However, antlers are only a symbol of the authority of an hereditary Chief, which he was not. Cf. Christopher Densmore, *Red Jacket: Iroquois Diplomat and Orator*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 7-8.

narrative. If not, Tocqueville simply assumes that an Indian with such a reputation for oratory proficiency must also have been a great warrior, because for him the romanticized Indians he had read about are necessarily both. The point here is not to disparage Red Jacket, but to point out that the only person Tocqueville cites as an historical example of savage nobility does not conform to the limitations of his own categorical definition.

Moreover, it is difficult to know how Tocqueville understands Spencer's meaning when he says that his exemplar Red Jacket "feeling that the time had passed for struggling with open force against the Europeans" tried to prevent his compatriots "from becoming fused in the midst of European society." For Tocqueville, co-existence is not possible without assimilation, or trading in Indigenous nobility for European degradation. If warfare is no longer an option, all that is left is flight; and flight condemns "them to a wandering and vagabond life, full of inexpressible miseries."[54] It is true that Red Jacket, like many other contemporary Native leaders at the time, argued for the cultural and political separation of the races, but like most Indigenous peoples living in the antebellum period, he spent most of his life negotiating the terms for a meaningful and dignified coexistence, which always meant compromise. Even the Shawnee Chief Tecumseh, who advocated for the creation of a pan-Indian territory in the Ohio valley, was compelled to become involved in Anglo-European politics.

[54] *DA*, 305.

Coexistence always requires toleration and cooperation; it does not necessarily imply integration but when it does, the reciprocity of benefits and the cultural and political translation that make it possible are often historically determined. As Red Jacket points out in a widely circulated speech, printed in 1821: When the Europeans began to settle in the New World,

> their numbers were small. They found friends, not enemies. They told us they had fled from their own country for fear of wicked men, and had come here to enjoy their religion. They asked for a small seat. We took pity on them, we granted their request and they sat down amongst us. . . . The white people had now found our country. Tidings were carried back and forth and more came amongst us. Yet we did not fear them. We took them to be friends. They called us brothers. We believed them, and gave them a larger seat.[55]

From the beginning of European contact, Iroquoian policy toward the English was one of acceptance, friendship and support. It was governed by the political principles celebrated in the Confederacy's *Great Law of Peace*. The Iroquoian attitude toward European emigration is commemorated in the Two Row Wampum, which "symbolizes the agreement and conditions under which the Iroquois welcomed whites to this land."[56] This wampum is two rows of purple beads running parallel on a white background. Each purple row represents two vessels travelling side by side along a river: a birchbark canoe for the Haudenosaunee with their laws and traditions, and a ship for the Europeans with theirs. It is essentially a non-interference agreement between sovereign nations. In

[55] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans; A Narrative of 1757* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), frontispiece.

[56] Tehanetorens (Ray Fadden), *Wampum Belts of the Iroquois*, (Summertown: Book Publishing Company: 1999), 72.

the language used to seal the agreement the Iroquois make it clear "We will not be like Father and Sons, but like Brothers. This wampum belt confirms these words."[57] This is not simply a matter of semantics, for Iroquoian diplomacy is a formal and ritual process with kinship terms taking on metaphoric political significance. We hear the same words echoed in Red Jacket's speech quoted above. The belt was first constructed and given to the Dutch, but in later years an identical belt was given to both the French and the British. The belt, signifying a brother to brother agreement conveys a philosophy of cooperation and coexistence along with a recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and political autonomy.[58]

Where Red Jacket argues for the possibility of peace and coexistence, Tocqueville sees only warfare or assimilation:

> At the birth of the colonies it would have been possible for them, by uniting their forces, to deliver themselves from the few foreigners who came to land on the shores of the continent. More than once they attempted it and were at the point of succeeding. Today the disproportion of resources is too great for them to be able to think of such an undertaking.[59]

As evidence he cites the examples of Wampanoag hostility against the New England colonies in 1675, and "the one the English had to sustain in 1622 in

[57] Ibid.

[58] Rick Monture, *We Share Our Matters: Two Centuries of Writing and Resistance at Six Nations of the Grand River*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 13-14.

[59] *DA*, 313.

Virginia."[60] The latter can only be a reference to the Powhatan massacre led by Opechancanough of several hundred Virginian settlers that year. Early encounters between the Powhatan and British colonizers were often hostile, and peace with the Indians was eventually achieved with the marriage of Captain Smith to the Chief's daughter.[61] This peace was subsequently broken in response to what the Powhatan perceived to be the unrelenting encroachment of land-hungry tobacco plantations directly threatening their survival. It is impossible to determine whether Opechancanough's political objective was to send a warning to the colony that Powhatan interests were to be taken seriously, or if they were in fact campaigning for the complete restoration of territorial hegemony. Whatever the objective, this limited regional uprising accomplished little more than to provide a moral justification to the increasing influx of Virginian settlers for the outright conquest and expulsion of its Indigenous inhabitants. The Wampanoag uprising fifty-three years later was slightly more comprehensive, bringing together scattered Algonkian speaking tribes of the region into a unified military offensive. But it is somewhat disingenuous to characterize their colonial antagonists as comprising just a "few foreigners," who had recently landed on their shores. By 1675, the New England colonies were comparatively well established boasting a

[60] Ibid., 313 fn. 10.

[61] This is the dubious story of Pocahontas. As Thomas King points out, at the time of their alleged marriage Smith would have been twenty-seven and Pocahontas would have been between ten and twelve: possible, but unlikely. Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2012), 7.

population in excess of 80,000 with a militia of approximately 16,000 footmen. The colonies consisted of 110 towns, each having its own defensive garrison. Against these forces the Wampanoag Chief Metacomet was able to muster an army of fewer than 2,500 warriors. They were outnumbered by more than 6:1. Despite the imbalance of forces, in the spring of 1676 the confederation of Algonkians was gaining the upper hand over the colonists. In order to secure victory, perhaps encouraged by their success or perhaps thinking they shared a common cause, Metacomet sent a delegation to Schaghticoke to enlist the support of the Mohawk, whose traditional opposition to the Algonkians living in the area was well known. This proved to be the beginning of their undoing. Mohawk interests at the time were better served by lending support to the British. By spring the following year Metacomet's revolution was suppressed.[62] Prior to the uprising the Algonkian tribes lived in relatively peaceful coexistence with the New England colonies, but as with the Powhatan wars, disputes inevitably arose over land use and entitlement. Neither event is contextually broad enough to be taken as an example of the near-success of a national unification of pan-Indian forces against early colonial incursions; and in the case of the Wampanoag war it was the introduction of Mohawk forces that led to their defeat.

Where Tocqueville's account begins with the necessity of martial deliverance from the arrival of European civilization and ends with the futility of

[62] James D. Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press: 1999), 122-3.

resistance, Red Jacket's begins in peaceful coexistence and ends in the diplomacy of cultural and political survival. There are many points of intersection along their narrative trajectories. However, for leaders like Red Jacket, Cornplanter, Joseph Brant or Tecumseh, the turning point in Native and Anglo-European relations occurred in the years leading up to American Independence and was clarified by events that transpired as a result of the Revolutionary War. During this period there could be little doubt that Europeans were never really interested in peaceful coexistence. As their numbers increased it was no longer a matter of wanting more land. In the words of Red Jacket: "they wanted our country." Even so, Iroquoian alliances continued to play a decisive role in shaping the political landscape during both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. As Tocqueville well knew, the Iroquoian Confederacy had maintained the balance of power in the region for many generations. But his awareness only goes so far as to recognize the Confederacy's influence over competing French and British interests in the area. He seems unaware of, or perhaps it is more a question of being uninterested in the formative role that the Confederacy played in the establishment and protection of Canada. As one reads through first-hand accounts of battles fought on the Canadian frontier during the latter war, one finds numerous occasions where Iroquoian military involvement was a decisive factor in determining the outcome. As recently as twenty years prior to Tocqueville's sojourn in America, the Confederacy was still able to wield considerable political influence in the region. That Red Jacket supported the British in 1776 but later

changed his allegiance and fought for the American cause in 1812, speaks to the complexity of the circumstances in which Indigenous people have had to navigate as they sought to protect their cultural integrity and political continuity. For Red Jacket, against Tocqueville, it was never a question of recognizing, but tragically fighting against the inevitability of their demise rather, it was how best to ensure their continued survival in the midst of increasing European expansion. An important difference.

It was not always so, however. "Before the arrival of whites in the New World," Tocqueville tells us, "the men who inhabited North America lived tranquilly in the woods."[63] For centuries, these "few tribes wandered in the shade of the forest or across the prairie lands."[64] Before European contact, the Indian "multiplied freely in the wilderness;" owing nothing to anyone except himself, unencumbered from the bonds of family or the obligations of society, he grew up confident "in the wild independence of his own nature."[65]

> The savage is delivered to himself as soon as he can act. He has hardly known the authority of the family; he has never bent his will before that of those like him; no one has taught him to distinguish voluntary obedience from shameful subjection, and he is ignorant even of the name of law. For him, to be free is to escape from almost all the bonds of society. He takes pleasure in this barbarous independence, and he would rather perish than sacrifice the least part of it. Civilization has little hold on such a man.[66]

[63] *DA*, 304-5
[64] *DAHC*, 39
[65] Ibid., 40.
[66] *DA*, 305.

Tocqueville's seemingly pastoral descriptions of Indian life are reminiscent of Rousseau's concept of the noble savage, but they differ in several important respects. In contrast to Rousseau's Indian whose Edenic life in the forest is free from the wants of necessity, Tocqueville's Indian may have been living tranquilly, but he was never happy: "living within the liberty of the woods, the Indian of North America was miserable,"[67] and he becomes even more miserable to the extent that he engages with or attempts to integrate with European society. Enlightenment does not civilize the Indian, it simply imposes upon him a new spectrum of material desires that can only be obtained through subservience to American commercialism, making him the repository of its dehumanising effects. Furthermore, unlike Rousseau's savage who in his most abstract form is both pre-political and pre-historical, never having the experience of virtue or vice, Tocqueville's Indian, if "left to ordinary vicissitudes of savage life," displays all of "the vices and virtues of uncivilized peoples."[68] In short, Tocqueville contrasts Rousseau's image of mankind in the state of nature with an image of mankind in the savage state.

[67] *DAHC*, 536.

[68] Cf. *DA*, 305 and Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings,* Victor Gourevitch ed. and trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 150-52. This is not to overlook their innumerable points of agreement, not least of which are: savage ignorance of law and government; and the lack of the most essential components necessary for the development of civilization, agriculture or metallurgy.

Tocqueville's first use of the term *sauvage* in *Democracy* is a reference to the terrors of the French Revolution, to his fear that democracy, if it be allowed to proceed without intervention, "abandoned to its savage instincts," will "take us backward toward the abyss."[69] Concerning the European, he only uses the term savage to refer to civilization's vagabond children who know only of democracy's vices and excess; but concerning the Indian, the term refers both to those who have been corrupted through contact with Anglo-European culture, and those aristocratic Indians, long since disappeared, who sought to maintain their traditional way of life:

> All the Indian tribes that used to inhabit the territory of New England—the Narragansetts, the Mohicans, the Pequots--no longer exist except in the memory of men; the Lenapes, who received Penn a hundred and fifty years ago on the shores of the Delaware, have disappeared today. I met the last of the Iroquois: they asked for alms. All the nations that I have just named formerly extended to the shores of the sea; now one must go more than a hundred leagues into the interior of the continent to meet with an Indian. These savages have not only withdrawn, they are destroyed.[70]

The Indians that Tocqueville had hoped to encounter in America are gone. The Iroquois he meets in New York are the corrupted, tatterdemalion remains of a once noble people in all its vagaries. This depiction is in stark contrast to their pre-contact status when a few scattered tribes wandered about in the shadow of the forest. In their pre-contact state, full of savage virtue, they were few. But in their post-contact, corrupted state their numbers are said to have "extended to the

[69] *DA*, 7.
[70] Ibid., 307-8.

shores of the sea." As with the European, abject peasantry is limitless, noblemen are few. Regardless the contradiction in numbers, the dichotomy expresses Tocqueville's categorical classification of Indigenous people as either "formidable," possessing the warrior virtues of savage nobility; or "inoffensive," by which he means "ignoble and nasty," "weak" and "depraved," unable to defend themselves or engage in viable forms of resistance. Their inoffensiveness denotes both their political weakness and their new-found dependency on the American regime, not their lack of repugnance.[71] Tocqueville's representation of Indigenous people is historically determined in degrees of their encounter with the decadence of American democracy. But whatever position they occupy on the historical scale, their lack of experience with either law or government mixed with the stoic inflexibility of their nature, makes them especially vulnerable to the enlightened devises the American employs toward the legal dispossession of their traditional territories.

The impression Tocqueville intends to create in his discussion of Indigenous people in *Democracy* is that he develops his thesis about the inevitability of their demise through observations he makes while in the field, observations drawn from encounters with them are purely coincidental to his primary itinerary. However, Tocqueville's notebooks indicate that from the moment he conceived of the idea to travel to America, both he and his companion

[71] *DAHC*, 1304.

Gustave de Beaumont not only looked forward to the possibility of discovering Indigenous people in their pre-contact, or authentic state. And what is more, they travelled hundreds of miles out of their way through dangerous circumstances to seek them out. On August 1st, while traversing the upper Great Lakes aboard the steamship *Superior,* Tocqueville writes:

> One of the things that pricked our most lively curiosity in going to America, was the chance of visiting the utmost limits of European civilisation, and even, if time allowed, visiting some of those Indian tribes who have chosen to retreat into the wildest open spaces rather than adapt themselves to what the whites call the delights of social life.[72]

What is clear in this passage is that even before having set foot on American soil, Tocqueville had already developed a thesis on indigenous retreat, which he associates with their disdain for bourgeois decadence, a passion he shares. Tocqueville's categorical representation of indigeneity as either authentically nomadic or enslaved and dehumanized through their attempted engagement with civilization serves two purposes. On the one hand, it provides empirical evidence for the dangers associated with unrestrained acquisitiveness, and on the other it functions as a warning about the impossibility of the restoration of a feudal regime. However, in the case of the Natives their retreat is not simply motivated by the incongruity of two divergent cultures, it is also a reflection of what he describes as their savage intransigence mixed with their aristocratic pride, their ardent passion for liberty and love of independence, a lethal combination making

[72] *JA*, 328. On the second leg of their journey into the western frontier, Beaumont calculates they travelled 603 leagues, or 1810 miles in two weeks. Quoted in Pierson, 290.

Indigenous people naturally unfit for civilization. For they perish, not so much as a result of their vices, but because of their savage virtues.

The Journey West.

After arriving in America on May 9, 1831, Tocqueville and Beaumont spent their first few weeks acquainting themselves with the bustling commercial activities in and around New York and were given open access to a broad spectrum of New York's social elite.[73] On July 4 they set out from Albany toward Auburn, the site of a famous penal colony, with the additional intention of visiting Frenchman's Island on Lake Oneida. Tocqueville had read about the island as a boy in a romantic novel written about a countryman who was exiled there with his young bride because of the Revolution. He memorialized this leg of his travels in his notebooks under the subtitle "the Journey West," writing of it later that he was "always looking for the savages and the wilds."[74] On the day of his departure he writes the first version of what I refer to as his Indian thesis:

> *Journal* of 4th July 1831
>
> One might say that the European is to the other races of man what man in general is to the rest of animate nature. When he cannot bend them to his use or make them indirectly serve his well-being, he destroys them

[73] Much to their amazement, when Tocqueville and Beaumont arrived in New York the press had already published news of their commission, and the two young magistrates were well-received. In a letter to his mother Beaumont writes "Every one here overwhelms us with courtesy and services. . . . Our arrival in America has *created a sensation.*" Quoted in George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 59.

[74] *JA.*, 329.

> and makes them vanish little by little in front of him. The Indian races are melting in the presence of European civilisation like snow in the rays of the sun. The efforts they make to struggle against their destiny only hasten for them the destructive march of time. About every ten years the Indian tribes who have been pushed back into the wilds of the West, see that they have gained nothing by retreating, and that the white race advances even faster than they go back. Angered by the very sense of their own impotence, or enraged by some new injury, . . . They rush through the country, burning dwellings, killing flocks and carrying off some scalps. Then civilisation goes back, but goes back like the tide of a rising sea. . . . A regular army marches to meet them, and not only is American territory reconquered, but the white, driving the savages before them, destroying their villages and carrying off their flocks, go and establish the further limit of their possessions a hundred leagues beyond what it was before. Deprived of their new adopted fatherland by what wise and enlightened Europe is pleased to call the *right* of war, the Indians start again on their march to the West until they come to a halt in new wilds where the white man's axe will not be slow to make itself heard again. In a land which they have recently plundered and which is now safe from invasion, there rise up smiling villages which soon (so at least the inhabitants are convinced) will be populous cities. Marching before the immense European family of whom he forms as it were the advance guard, the pioneer in his turn takes possession of the forests recently inhabited by the savages. Their he builds his rustic hut and waits till the first chance of war opens his way to new wilds.[75]

Up to this point, he has not had any encounters with Indians, and won't have until two weeks later on July 18th in Canandaigua.[76] Nevertheless, while still in Albany he writes this synopsis laying out the principles that will both guide his further inquiries and serve as a foundation for his analysis of the fate of Indigenous people. There is nothing he experiences in the field that changes this seminal statement and as he proceeds on his travels he single-mindedly seeks out evidence

[75] Ibid.., 123-4.

[76] He sees his first Iroquois while travelling aboard stagecoach from Utica to Syracuse at Oneida Castle. As they were in transit he did not have time to observe them, merely noting that they ran after the coach begging for alms. *JA*, 129.

to support it. On August 7, just one month after writing this account, Tocqueville interviews a bivouac of French-Canadian fur-traders on the banks of the Mackinac River. Inquiring about their impressions of the Indians with whom they are familiar he remarks "I have only noted in this conversation things which fitted in with all impressions I had formed before."[77] This surprising qualification of his interrogative method underscores the importance of this foundational thesis statement.

The day after Tocqueville records these words, while staying at a hotel in Utica, Beaumont writes home to his mother "Here I am now, penetrating into the west. You will probably find Utica on the map. . . . It's on the banks of the Mohawks [sic] that Cooper places *The Last of the Mohicans*."[78] It is not difficult to imagine that Fenimore Cooper's novels were a regular topic of conversation as Tocqueville and Beaumont made their way toward Lake Oneida, nor is it difficult to see Cooper's influence on their shared conception of the inevitable destruction of the Indigenous nations that used to populate this landscape.[79] In the same letter Beaumont continues much in the same line of reasoning as Tocqueville:

[77] Ibid., 35. Pierson notes that "this procedure was characteristic with Tocqueville, whenever he had begun to make up his mind about a question." Pierson, 302.

[78] Pierson, 191.

[79] Among the reference works they carried in their baggage from France was a text by Cooper, and it is obvious from Beaumont's statement in his letter to his mother that he was in the forefront of their minds. I have not been able to identify the specific text, but it would not be a stretch to infer it was *The Last of the Mohicans*. *DAHC*, lxiv.

> I haven't time to tell you what emotions we experience in traversing this half-wild, half-civilized country, in which fifty years ago were to be found numerous and powerful nations who have disappeared from the earth, or who have been pushed back into still more distant forests; a country where are to be seen, rising with prodigious rapidity, new peoples and brilliant cities which pitilessly take the place of the unhappy Indians who are too feeble to resist them. Half a century ago the name of the Iroquois, of the Mohawks, their tribes, their power filled these regions, and now hardly their memory remains. Their majestic forests are falling every day; civilized nations are established on the ruins until the day when other peoples make them undergo the same destiny.[80]

Tocqueville's narrative begins with the inherent superiority of European civilization and ends with a pronouncement on not just the end of Iroquoian sovereignty over their traditional territories but also the demise of entire Native cultures. This is a recurrent trajectory in his thinking about Indigenous peoples, especially as it evinces the persistence of their inherent savagism. There are three essential components to his thesis. First, is the futility of resistance: the very struggle against their destruction only hastens their demise. The natural resentment incurred by the recognition of their omnipotence against the totalizing

[80] Quoted in Pierson, 191. The similarity of these two accounts, to one of Copper's explanatory notes in *The Last of the Mohicans* is striking: "There existed for a long time a confederation among the Indian tribes which occupied the northwestern part of the colony of New York, which was at first known as the 'Five Nations.' At a later day it admitted another tribe, when the appellation was changed to that of the 'Six Nations.'. . . There are remnants of all these people still living on lands secured to them by the State; but they are daily disappearing, either by deaths or by removals to scenes more congenial to their habits. In a short time there will be no remains of these extraordinary people, in those regions in which they dwelt for centuries, but their names." James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans; A Narrative of 1757* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 20.

movement of American expansion results in a revolution without teeth: they are simply compelled to retreat further into the wilderness to await the next invasion which they are powerless to repel. Second, is the ease by which this destruction proceeds: it is as sublime as the snow melting before the rays of the sun. This romantic characterization has the tone of a plaintive eulogy both for its natural inevitability and for its immutable finality. That this destruction takes place according to "the march of time" casts the process in the light of an historical certitude. And like time, the process is relentless, seemingly increasing faster than Indigenous people can retreat. Third, is Tocqueville's moral irony regarding the abject tyranny experienced by Indigenous peoples as the American colonies increase.

Tocqueville cautions, however, that it would be wrong to judge the Indian race by the example of the "lost offshoot of a wild tree that had grown up in the mire of our cities." For those "weak and depraved creatures" who looked more like a "beast of the forest" in European garb than like a man, are what's left

> [of] one of the most famous tribes of the former American world . . . the celebrated Confederation of the Iroquois whose manly wisdom was no less known than their courage and who for a long time held the balance between the two greatest European nations.[81]

These once noble figures have all but ceased to exist other than in the memory of men.[82] In the introduction to *Democracy*, Tocqueville recounts that "while

[81] *DAHC*, 1306.
[82] *DA*, 460.

crossing one of the uninhabited districts that still cover the state of New York, [he] reached the shores of a lake entirely surrounded by forests as at the beginning of the world." Nothing there "announces the presence of man" except for the column of smoke on the horizon that seems to "hang from rather than rise into the sky." He goes on to describe how he takes advantage of an "Indian canoe [that] was pulled up on the shore" and rows out to a small island where he discovers the overgrown remains of a homestead long since abandoned, the only evidence that the area had once been inhabited. Somehow the presence of the Indian canoe and the fire burning in the distance are not evidence of human habitation, in the sense that Tocqueville understands it. Instead they are evidence of a disappearance—a disappearance that happened so swiftly that all that remains is the smoke of their last campfire hanging from the sky as if no longer connected to the presence of a people still living below.

In another narrative of the same event published after his death, we discover that it is the shores of Lake Oneida he has reached, and that this was no chance encounter.[83] From the time he and Beaumont departed for America from the Port of Le Havre, the two were planning to make the journey there. In the version that Tocqueville recounts in *Democracy* he stresses the emptiness of the wilderness. There are no inhabitants, colonial or Indigenous. The mere proximity of European expansion has been enough to cause the Indian to abandon the area

[83] Published posthumously under the title *Journey to Lake Oneida*, but written while in America.

westward, portrayed figuratively in the deserted canoe and the smoke in the distance hanging from the sky. It is curious that in this version he gives the impression that they "happen upon"[84] the lake while traveling in the uninhabited regions of New York and neglects to speak of colonial activity around the lake, yet the very next day he finds himself staying in

> a magnificent hotel placed in the middle of a small town of 2000 souls, all of whose houses have well furnished shops. Auburn is today the centre of an immense commerce. Twenty years ago they hunted deer and bear here at their ease.[85]

Auburn is about forty miles southwest from the shores of Frenchman's Island. Fort Brewerton is situated on the Oneida River at the mouth of Lake Oneida. It is from this vantage point that he first saw the lake.[86] They could have set out to Frenchman's Island from there but decided to travel north-east through the woods to where they invariably would have reached the shores of Big Bay, the most north-western extent of the lake. The journey is about two miles. After the first mile, he tells us they ventured along a path that "opens in the forest; we hastened to take it." After "a windy night had followed a morning without any cool breeze . . . we found ourselves . . . in the middle of one of these deep forests of the New World whose somber and wild majesty grips the imagination and fills the soul with a sort of religious terror." Yet this narrow tract of woods between Fort

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[84] In the margin in the manuscript he actually adds the words "by chance." *DAHC,* 461.

[85] From a letter to his mother. http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/TOUR/aubtxt.html

[86] *JA*, 130

Brewerton and Big Bay, by his own testimony, has been overhunted to as far as Auburn to the south-west and is only a couple of miles out of town. In Beaumont's fictionalized account of the same event in *Marie*, Ludovic, passing along Lake Oneida discovers Frenchman's Island and exclaims "Was this not the retreat I sought?" and then answers himself "No: the shores of the lake were overrun with Europeans. No more hospitable Indians, but American Innkeepers."[87]

When Tocqueville reached the shores of Lake Oneida many of the Indians who had formerly inhabited the area had indeed departed. The demise of Oneida Indians from the area was the result of a long chain of events beginning with the introduction of European epidemics in the 1660s, followed by the destruction of their principle settlement of eighty longhouses by a French expedition in 1696. In time they recovered. But due to the Oneida's decision to support the patriots in the American Revolution against the majority of Iroquois, they subsequently suffered from inter-political resentment between members of the Confederacy, as well as settler encroachment after the war. Since Iroquoian subsistence is largely agricultural, they were not prone to flee westward in pursuit of game scared off by advancing European cowbells.[88] They were, like many Indigenous peoples, avid

[87] Gustave de Beaumont, *Marie: or Slavery in the United States*. Barbara Chapman trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 136-7.

[88] The Oneida, like other members of the Iroquois Confederacy adopted corn as a staple crop around 1000 CE. *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee*, Bruce Elliot Johansen and Barbara Alice Mann, eds. (Greenwood Press: Westport, 2000), 224.

farmers for whom the importance of agriculture is imbedded in their traditions and myths, subsisting on an array of crops and various livestock, while at the same time living from hunting, fishing and gathering. Traditionally living in longhouse communities, by the time of Tocqueville's visit many had adopted the style of European log and wood framed homes. Tocqueville, however, only looks for Natives in wigwams and bark huts.

On the way to Saginaw he writes,

> We traveled through some places famous in the history of the Indians; we encountered valleys that they named; we crossed rivers that still carried the name of their tribes, but everywhere the hut of the savage has given way to the house of the civilized man. The woods had fallen; the uninhabited places took on life.[89]

However, the famous Pine Tree Chief Joseph Brant, renowned for his bravery in the battlefield as well as his lifelong resistance to European encroachment, lived until his death in 1807 in a house that stands prominently amidst a Haudenosaunee settlement of framed houses on the banks of the Grand River, the post-revolutionary centre of the Confederacy and present-day home of the Grand Council. It is of the same architectural style as the community's Anglican church built there in 1787. If Tocqueville were to have happened upon this frontier scene in his travels, he would certainly have mistaken it for a quaint European village.[90]

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[89] *DAHC*, 1303.

[90] Cf. *The Mohawk Village*, watercolor by Elisabeth Simcoe, 1793 (Archives of Ontario, F47-11-1-0-109) reprinted in Carl Benn, *The Iroquois in the War of 1812*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 82(i). There exist two versions of Beaumont's depiction of the settlement at Sault St. Marie. In the first sketch he draws two teepees in the foreground, in the second he has replaced the

Even when he comes across wigwams surrounded by fields of corn he persists in his nomadic stereotype of Indians as hunters and warriors. From the beginning of the nineteenth century Iroquois communities often consisted of log and frame buildings largely indistinguishable from their European counterparts, and they didn't lose a shred of their Indigenous identity in the process.

America's Revolutionary War brought division within the Haudenosaunee League, when the greater part of the Oneidas and Tuscaroras joined the American cause, while the Mohawks, Cayugas, Onondagas and Senecas continued to honour their treaty obligations to the British Crown. This was the only time in the history of the Confederacy that the chain of consensus was broken. After the war, the Treaty of Paris made no mention of Iroquoian contributions on either side of the border. Joseph Brant, who was the Mohawk War Chief and an outspoken ally of the Crown, appealed to Governor Haldimand and in recognition of their military alliance and as compensation for land lost to the Americans during the war, the Confederacy was granted approximately 950,000 acres of land, extending six miles on each side of the Grand River stretching from Lake Erie to its source in Upper Canada. Here the Iroquois who had been dispersed during the war began to congregate, restoring the league "along traditional lines to govern what later

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teepees with wigwams. As teepees are traditionally used on the plains, it seems he may have felt their presence was out of place, as they were not what he was accustomed to seeing. In Pierson, 301 and 305.

became the Six Nations Reserve."[91] In the meantime, south of the border the Indian Committee of Congress, citing the right of conquest proceeded to expel whatever "hostile Indians" still remaining in the northern states, arguing that they should join their compatriots in Canada. Those Tuscaroras and Oneidas who joined the revolutionary cause faired little better; however, concessions were made to grant them land in western New York, though in the eyes of the Indian Committee of Congress it had been forfeited by enemy Senecas during the war. Subsequent relations broke down even further when James Duane, chairman of the committee, impressed upon Congress and the governor of New York to abandon long-established protocol for negotiating with Indians as sovereign nations, to drop the use of native metaphors, to stop addressing them in kinship terms, and to no longer recognize the Six Nations as a confederacy. His objective was both to demoralise them and to signify their political inferiority.[92] At the Treaty of Fort Stanwix government representatives "exacted territorial concessions and forced unauthorized Iroquoian representatives to sign the treaty."[93] Division ensued among the Iroquoian league as Cornplanter refused to acknowledge Mohawk Aaron Hill's delegated authorization to negotiate on behalf of the western nations as well as the Six Nations Confederacy. As a result,

[91] William N. Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 601-2.

[92] Ibid., pp. 113, 608.

[93] William N. Fenton, *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 200-1.

"Cornplanter was severely censured by the Seneca council when he returned home, and the League refused to confirm the treaty."[94]

Although Cornplanter's obstinacy reflects a continued division among Iroquoian ranks, prior to the Council held at Fort Stanwix, factions among the Oneida, Tuscarora and the Senecas were partially healed through the Condolence ritual held at the "woods' edge." It is a curious fact that the division in the Confederacy itself proceeded according to the traditional rules of Iroquoian diplomacy. When a consensus for war could not be reached, the division was resolved with the construction of the Revolutionary War Two Road Belt representing the road of the British and the road of the American colonists. Joseph Brant introduced it before the Council with the words "Let each nation be responsible for its own members. Let each nation decide for itself what course it will take in the war."[95] This war-time fragmentation and subsequent reinvigoration of the pre-war confederacy speaks to both the strength and the weakness of its constitution. On the one hand, it demonstrates the importance placed on the preservation of individual liberty and the right to dissent; on the other hand, its requirement for absolute consensus can delay or stagnate political processes, and its lack of a centralized authority that can override individual

[94] Ibid.

[95] Tehanetorens, *Wampum Belts of the Iroquois* (Summertown: Book Publishing Company, 1999), 100-12.

interests for sake of the common good, lends itself more easily to the problem of disintegration.

After the Revolutionary War the Oneida found themselves the object of Iroquoian reprisals under the leadership of Joseph Brant because of their decision to join the American patriots against the British, their traditional allies. Particularly onerous was their participation in General John Sullivan's scorched earth campaign which destroyed hundreds of acres of crops and numerous homesteads. In addition, their military alliance with the revolutionary cause won them little favour in the eyes of American settlers who made no distinction between their Oneida allies and the Indians who had attacked them alongside the British from the north. Notwithstanding the assurances of congress, Oneida territorial guarantees found no material protections from federal or state authority. As a result, they were subjected to both European and Iroquoian hostility, and ended up moving, some to the Thames River, near London, Ontario, and others to Green Bay Wisconsin. Tocqueville, however, endorses the view of an American host who tells him that the Iroquoian Confederacy, and Indians in general, "are becoming extinct; they are not made for civilization: it kills them."[96] Building on this theme, Tocqueville continues:

> Man becomes accustomed to everything. To death on the fields of battle, to death in hospitals, to kill and to suffer. He gets used to all sights. An ancient people, the first and legitimate master of the American continent,

[96] *DAHC*, 1304

> melts away daily like snow in the rays of the sun and disappears before your eyes from the surface of the earth.[97]

Once again, with a rhetorical flourish Tocqueville captures the pathos of humanity and writes Indigenous people out of history. It is not just that they have suffered the effects of European tyranny, the problem is that they are savages from the start. European contact has only "rendered them more disordered and less civilized than they already were."[98] Portrayed in their best light, even their dogs are savage.[99] It is difficult to know precisely what Tocqueville means when he refers to the Iroquois as an "ancient people" who were "the first and legitimate masters of the American continent." He certainly does not mean this to be understood as a recognition of Indigenous sovereignty. Although he does not announce it, it is clear from the importance he places on the relation between agriculture and enlightenment, and his insistence that Indigenous people do not engage in agriculture, that he does not recognize the legitimacy, however ancient, of Indigenous sovereignty over the land. When the Jesuits in Canada and the Puritans in New England attempted to bring enlightenment to the Indians, Tocqueville explains that the reason for their failure was that they did not understand that "to succeed in civilizing a people, it is necessary above all to get them to settle down, and they can only do so by cultivating the soil; so it was first a matter of making the Indians farmers."[100] This is the "indispensable preliminary

[97] Ibid.
[98] *DA*, 305.
[99] *JA*, 145.
[100] *DAHC*, 530-1.

of civilization" that the Indians do not possess, and even if they wanted to "it is very difficult for them to acquire it."[101] The Jesuits and the Puritans brought them the gospel but were unable to deliver them from their wandering ways (*leurs moeurs vagabondes*) "Civilization was born in the hut and went to die in the woods."[102]

Elsewhere Tocqueville infers from his study of Indigenous linguistics that since "the[ir] languages strictly speaking are very few in number . . . the nations of the New World do not have a very ancient origin."[103] So even if they are ancient, they are not very ancient. At any rate, their antiquity doesn't seem to count for very much. And if the antiquity of their presence in the land does not legitimize their sovereignty, neither does their savage nobility: "For the Indian . . . has his imagination filled with the alleged nobility of his origin. He lives and dies amid these dreams of his pride." Furthermore, since Indigenous languages "are all formed . . . on the same model, and subject to the same grammatical rules . . . in all likelihood, all the Indian nations come from the same stock."[104] He reserves the term "savage" for use only in relation to North American Indians. Whether he is referring to "the five civilized tribes," the Iroquois Confederacy, or any other tribal group, "Indian" and "savage" are interchangeable terms for Tocqueville.

[101] Ibid., 531.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 659.
[104] Ibid.

Although all savages are barbarians, not all barbarians are savages, however. The closest Tocqueville comes to identifying barbarians and savages is when, referring to the Germanic tribes that conquered Rome or the Mongol hordes that invaded China, he calls them "half-savage" barbarians.[105] He uses this expression for the sake of explaining one of the reasons why Indians will never become civilized: their combination of ignorance, poverty, and powerlessness, leaves them no alternative but to withdraw or be destroyed.[106] For, Tocqueville says, it would be a rare occurrence for a barbarous nation, when it is conquered by a more enlightened nation to become civilized.[107] In contrast, when a barbarous nation conquers an enlightened nation, there is a reciprocal exchange of power for enlightenment, which provides the catalyst for assimilation. Because the American Indian has no enlightenment to exchange for a share of European power, he is not only vanquished, he is completely destroyed. For the road to assimilation, his only option for survival, is not open to him.

The Indians in South America are, however, the exception that proves the rule. When the Spanish arrived in the New World, Tocqueville claims, "If the Indian tribes had not already been settled on the soil by agriculture . . . they would have undoubtedly been destroyed in South America as in North America."[108] Tocqueville does not explain what distinguishes agricultural practices between the

[105] *DAHC*, 535.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] *DAHC*, 546, fn.28.

South Americans and, the Cherokees for example, other than to say that in the case of the latter, by the time necessity had driven them out of the woods to change their mores and learn to farm, it was already too late.[109] Tocqueville reasons that the Cherokee had not been farming long enough to compete with the sophisticated techniques of their enlightened conquerors. But since the South Americans had been farming for a longer period of time, they had obtained a greater measure of agricultural equality with their Spanish invaders. They were better situated for "intermingling . . . and adopting their religion and their mores."[110] Because they had already relinquished their savage nomadism, they were perhaps one step further along the path to enlightenment. When the Spanish arrived, it was an easier transition for them to give up their culture in order to preserve their lives.

The relationship between enlightenment and agriculture as it pertains to the survival of Indigenous peoples, in Tocqueville's understanding, cannot be overstated. Speaking about tribes living further west who were still unaffected by American expansion, Tocqueville reasons that if they

> could find in themselves enough energy to become civilized, they would perhaps succeed. Superior then to the barbarian nations that surround them, they would little by little gain strength and experience, and, when the Europeans finally appeared on their frontiers, they would be in a state, if not to maintain their independence, at least to make their rights to the soil recognized and to become integrated with the conquerors.[111]

[109] Ibid., 546.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 535.

Even if the remaining vestiges of Indians still living a nomadic existence were to band together and form themselves into a confederation of farmers, it is only to prepare them to become the beneficiaries of European integration.

Tocqueville is obviously an advocate of colonization. He never questions the moral imperative of the Christian mission in the New World, even though it has acted as the spearhead for Indigenous cultural reform. To be sure, like his colleague Beaumont, Tocqueville was a staunch advocate of the military annexation of Algiers, arguing that it was a political necessity for "the glory of France." The Spanish may represent the extreme limits of colonial brutality, but this does not mean that he is squeamish about it, or that he does not endorse whatever necessary level of brutality is required to obtain imperialist objectives. Excesses aside, what the Spanish did get right is that the goal of European expansionism is assimilation of the conquered Indigenous into the dominant culture. In this way Spain fulfils the moral imperatives associated with a more enlightened and historically realized civilization. Tocqueville's involvement in Algiers reflects this commitment. Not only will the emancipation of Algiers improve the tribal, barbarian Algerian's station in the world, it will help to raise France out of its civic malaise. By providing a distraction to the degenerative influence of the increasing equality of conditions in France, Tocqueville reasons that colonial imperialism can be used as a philanthropic activity that raises national pride by broadening civic consciousness and encouraging the *demos* to reflect upon the greater good.

Comparing American colonialism with the Spanish conquistadors he says that although the Americans are less bloodthirsty, they are "profoundly more destructive."[112] Whereas the Spaniards "kill, burn, massacre . . . without pity as without discrimination," they do not destroy everything. The American conquest is more moderate. It proceeds under the guise of a false humanity, both in terms of presuming to act on behalf of Indigenous interests, and in terms of ensuring that land cessions advance under the sanction of law. Unlike the Spanish, however, who eventually assimilate the people they conquer, Americans separate to eliminate, destroying every vestige of Indigeneity in the land: "It is impossible to doubt [he writes] that within a hundred years there will remain in North America, not a single nation, not even a single man belonging to the most remarkable of the Indian races."[113] Concerning Algeria, "Tocqueville suggests taking into account the errors of the conquest of America and preventing the destruction of the Arabs by Western civilization."[114] Clearly he argues for a more humanitarian policy toward Algerian Arabs than he saw effected against Native Americans at the hands of the British. Robert Boesche, comparing his policies to those of his contemporary Thomas Robert Bugeaud, the French military commander in Algiers in 1841, writes:

> In general, Tocqueville had no strong quarrel with Bugeaud's military undertakings in Algeria, but he did disagree with Bugeaud on the

[112] Tocqueville, *Selected Letters on Politics and* Society, Roger Boesche ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 71.
[113] Ibid., 71.
[114] *DAHC,* 536, fn.u.

> government in Algeria. Unlike Bugeaud, Tocqueville wanted to educate the Algerians, to respect the indigenous Algerian culture, and to promote civilian instead of merely military colonists.[115]

Tocqueville's customary irony concerning American legal duplicitousness and spiritual hypocrisy must always be read against the backdrop of his advocacy for European colonialism and his affirmation of the Christian mission in the New World. Moreover, his irony should never be interpreted as to suggest that if cultural assimilation were available as an avenue of survival, Tocqueville would have lent his support. For Tocqueville, the Indians he discovers in the New World have simply run out of time. Democracy is advancing too quickly, and due to their savage insouciance, their preoccupation with the pleasures of the day, they are ill prepared to anticipate the miseries of the morrow.

Tocqueville's Encounters with Indigenous Nobility

> In very inhabited regions they are only spoken about with fear and scorn, *and I believe that there in fact they deserve these two feelings*. You could see above what I thought about them myself when I met the first of them at Buffalo. As you advance in this journal and as you follow me amid the European population of the frontier and amid the Indian tribes themselves, you will conceive a more honorable and, at the very same time, more accurate idea of the first inhabitants of America.[116]

The feelings of fear and scorn they are sometimes deserving, is a reference to the reception he received when he attempted to solicit assistance for a young Iroquois man he came across passed out in the street. He thought he was dead, but after closer inspection it became clear "he was still alive and struggling against one of

[115] *Selected Letters on Politics and Society*, 178 fn.27.
[116] *DAHC*, 1326. Italics mine.

those dangerous fits of drunkenness brought on by brandy."[117] After watching his compatriots pass him by with little concern, and after chasing off a woman who began to beat him while he lay motionless, they went to a nearby Inn offering to pay his expenses if someone would assist him. He was surprised to discover that in the eyes of those whose aide he was seeking, the life of an Indian was not worth a pittance. Better not to interfere, he is told; better just to let him die; to help him is only to prolong the inevitable; they are not fit for civilization; the sooner they die the sooner we can take their lands and in the process our conscience is clean. Upon hearing these words, he notes that although these Americans

> do not let their dogs hunt the Indians as do the Spaniards in Mexico . . . it is the same pitiless feeling which here, as everywhere else, animates the European race. The world here belongs to us, they tell themselves everyday: the Indian race is destined for final destruction which one cannot prevent and which it is not desirable to delay.[118]

It is noteworthy that here Tocqueville moves the discussion beyond an assessment of the Anglo-American to include European colonialism in general. It is clear from this statement that the racism he discovers on the American frontier is a European import, and as such it has broader implications for the spread of democracy throughout the world. What he is suggesting here is that there is an intrinsic racism toward Indigenous people built into every colonial enterprise; one should not be too surprised when democratic tyranny proceeds along these racial

[117] *JA*, 199-201.
[118] Ibid., 200-1.

lines. This seems to be one of those tragic axioms of the human condition which we might not like but must learn to accept.

In his notebooks Tocqueville abbreviates his encounters with the Iroquois in a series of staccato-like entries from which he later develops his broader narrative in *Fortnight in the Wilds* and in *Democracy*, as follows:

> A crowd of savages in the streets (day of payment) new idea they suggest. Their ugliness. Their strange look. Their oily bronzed skin. . . . Scene of a drunken Indian . . . . Brutality of his fellow Indians . . . . Population brutalised by our wines and spirits. More horrible than the equally brutalised populations of Europe. Besides something of the wild beast. Contrast this with the moral and civilised population in the midst of which they are found.[119]

The point here is the contrast. Whether degraded through European contact or uncorrupted in his traditional natural state, there is always something of the wilderness in the Native which creates an insurmountable incongruence between the savage and the civilized state. After recording the preceding observations, Tocqueville proceeds through Buffalo admiring the pretty shops, the French goods and the refinement of European luxury he finds there.[120]

From Buffalo they set out on steamship to Detroit and from there on horseback to Saginaw. They had been advised to seek out a Mr. Williams along the way, who traded with the Chippewa living beyond the frontier.[121] Tocqueville receives from him what he describes as his "first favorable impression . . . about

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[119] Ibid., 132.

[120] Ibid.

[121] *DAHC*, 1326. *JA*, 136. Mr. Williams is never furthered identified in the manuscript.

the Indians since [his] arrival in America." Williams assures him that when he reaches Saginaw, the extreme limit of the north-western frontier, he will have less to fear from the Natives than from the settlers living there. In the light of Williams' positive assessment Tocqueville proceeds to Saginaw with the hopeful expectation of encountering Indians unaffected by the corrupting influence of European civilization. He informs the reader that the Indians still living beyond the limits of the American frontier will not disappoint as did the rag-tag beggars he saw in Oneida Castle.

Tocqueville's genuine rapture at the picaresque beauty of the unexploited landscape he traverses on the way to Saginaw is immediately apparent through his romantic prose. In these wilds he discovers

> a tranquil admiration, a mild melancholy, a vague disgust with civilized life; a sort of wild instinct that makes you think with pain that soon . . . the European will have cut the trees that are reflected in the pure waters of the lake and forced the animals that populate its shores to withdraw.[122]

And as if precisely on cue, while advancing deeper into this unspoiled solitude with the pine forests rising around him to an immense height, he experiences his first wild Indian. Like some ghost of the forest he appears as if out of nowhere. The two travelers turn to admire the beauty of the forest they were just leaving behind and were surprised to discover the presence of an Indian "near the hindquarters of [their] horses . . . who seemed to follow [them] step by step."[123]

[122] *DAHC*, 1327.
[123] Ibid.

Tocqueville's first response is fear of an attack. He immediately assesses the terrain and notes that if this were in fact an ambush he and Beaumont would have been ill suited to launch an effective defence. Perhaps sensing the Europeans' trepidation at his sudden appearance, this Native of the forest returns a reassuring smile, affording Tocqueville a moment to observe his physiognomy. The first thing he notices is the "savage fire" gleaming within "his perfectly black eyes" that one still finds "animating the look of the half-breed and is lost only with the second or third generation of white blood."[124] Unlike the emaciated figures he first encountered, this man is "admirably proportioned" and follows them through the forest "with the agility of a wild animal." Running their horses at full speed the Indian easily keeps pace "leaping over bushes and coming back down to earth noiselessly."[125] In time they happen upon a European settler who informs him that the man following them is a Chippewa, probably returning from Canada. This European, like many other settlers he has met on the American frontier, is charmed by the "liberty of the wilderness" but is still attached to the religion, principles, and ideas of Europe. His life is a mixture of his "love of savage life" with the pride of his European superiority. But even though he prefers Indian company to that of his compatriots, he will never consider them to be his equals.[126]

[124] Ibid., 1328.
[125] Ibid., 1329.
[126] Ibid., 1330.

Likewise, Tocqueville, even after his encounter with the Ojibwe and the Métis he meets in Saginaw and later in Michilimachinac, seems to maintain a measure of the same revulsion he felt at the first appearance of the Iroquois in Buffalo. In a letter from America to his sister, he writes:

> Do you know what Atala or someone like her is? Atala is an Indian woman of very dark *café au lait* colour, . . . She usually has a large, almost aquiline nose, a wide mouth equipped with gleaming teeth and two large black eyes that in daylight are quite similar to those of a cat at night. . . . The style of the woods is to walk pigeon-toed. I don't know if it is more unnatural to walk with the feet pointed outward; but our European eyes get used to this kind of beauty with difficulty. Do you imagine that to achieve this effect the Indian woman binds her feet from childhood, so that at twenty years of age, the two tips of her feet face each other while walking. . . . All I know is I would not want to take the place of Chactas near her for all the gold in the world.[127]

Tocqueville's Encounters with Métis.

On the way to Saginaw, while being shadowed by the Chippewa through the woods, he soon runs into a French-Canadian frontiersman who he describes as a European turned half-savage: he lives in a "hut in the branches! He lives by hunting. He speaks to the Indian in his own language."[128] He too speaks well of the Indians "whose nature and way of life he seems to love."[129] After two days and a night in woods, they reach the Saginaw River where they encounter a

[127] Letter to vicomtesse Hippolyte de Tocqueville written from Albany on September 7, 1831. Quoted in Ibid., 1304-5 editor's fn. b. His statement about Indian foot binding is absurd. Beaumont shares his disdain, writing that Indian women are "frightful and repulsive," Ibid.

[128] *JA*, 137.

[129] Ibid.

second French frontiersman but this time he has not "turned" half-savage, he is half-savage, a "mixture of French and Indian blood."[130] The next day, Tocqueville visits the home of another French-Canadian living with his Indian wife and mixed-blood children and spends the next few days in the company of the few Métis households who have settled in the area. Tocqueville enjoys their hunts along the Saginaw where he also meets the occasional group of Ojibwe that inhabit the region. He expresses admiration for the Métis ability to adapt to frontier life, but always with a hint of tragic resignation:

> Extraordinary race; mixture of the savage and the civilised man; does not know any language well; speaks English, French and Indian. Has a taste for the wilds, but is still attached to the towns. A common case, they say, among the French.[131]

It is difficult to know how Tocqueville was able to determine how well the Métis were able to speak "Indian," we will just have to take him at his word. Nevertheless, the propensity of French-Canadian settlers to adopt, even to the point of preferring a savage lifestyle locates, for Tocqueville, a distinctive point of departure from their Anglo-European counterparts.

When the Frenchman brings civilization to the New World, Tocqueville says, he carries within him a natural affinity for the romance of the wild life. By intermingling and intermarrying with Indigenous people, the Frenchman gains the natural liberty of his innate savagism, but in the exchange, he loses the force of

[130] Ibid., 140.
[131] Ibid., 141.

his cultural superiority. The English, on the other hand, "are a nation of conquerors who submit to leading a savage life without ever letting themselves be carried away by its sweet pleasures," [132] The English "love civilization and enlightenment only when they are useful for well-being."[133] Their only concern is the "acquisition of wealth" and once they have destroyed everything before them on their march to the Pacific, they will turn around, retrace their steps and begin to destroy again all of the societies that formed in the wake behind them.[134]

The English are generally repulsed by the Indian and his lifestyle. By the 1830's their usefulness as a military ally against the French had run its course and the Indians were becoming more of an inconvenience. It was from this point on that Indian/European relations began to change dramatically for the worse on both sides of the border. Having always maintained a policy of social and cultural separation, Anglo-European engagements with Native Americans have continually been conducted from a platform of European spiritual and political superiority. That they are "a restless, calculating, adventurous race which sets coldly about deeds that can only be explained by the fire of passion, and which trades in everything, not excluding even morality and religion,"[135] could hardly bode well for the future of whoever found themselves in their way. Where the French were primarily interested in maintaining a lucrative trading frontier in the

[132] *DAHC*, 1318
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] *JA*, 340.

New World, the English wanted to own everything from the start: The American "desire for well-being has become a restless and ardent passion that grows as it is being satisfied."[136] Ironically Tocqueville's eloquent characterization of Anglo-European rapacity is reminiscent of the Ojibway myth of the Windigo, a spirit that forages from village to village on human flesh, but just gets larger the more it eats, and the larger it gets, the more its appetite increases. It is a story of both unrelenting and inordinate consumption. Tocqueville's thesis on the certain destruction of Indigenous people, is at once an exposé of the incapacity of any form of aristocracy to resist the immensity of the democratic movement that has taken up residence on the American frontier, as well as a critique of American rapacity. The futility of Indigenous resistance, although a reflection of their inherent savagism, is always tempered by Tocqueville's baneful recognition that American expansionism tyrannizes on two fronts: in its insatiable appetite for immediate satisfaction and material gratification, and in its transformation, exploitation, and subsequent destruction of all of the land and all of its living resources. When he postulates that the only hope for Indigenous people is to take up the plow, he reminds the reader that even if they do, "the misfortune of the Indians is to enter into contact with the most civilized, and I will add the most greedy people of the globe."[137]

[136] *DAHC*, 460.
[137] Ibid., 535-6.

From Saginaw, satisfied that they had fulfilled their objective of discovering Indigenous people still living in an authentic state, Tocqueville and Beaumont proceeded on their way back toward civilization to rejoin their journey through the United States. We recall that their mandate was to study American penitentiaries, which permitted them to go as far west as Auburn, to observe an important penitentiary there.[138] Tocqueville and Beaumont's excursions to Frenchman's Island on Lake Oneida and from there to Saginaw Bay were entirely to satisfy their personal curiosities. On the way back through Detroit they are met with the news that the Steamship *Superior* had just arrived on its way through to Green Bay, Wisconsin. Taking advantage of this fortuitous occurrence, the two adventurers decide to change their plans and venture even further into the extreme limits of the American frontier, where they experience scenes of the starkest juxtaposition between civilization and savagism as well as places where they discover "the mixture of all sorts of blood. The most numerous the French Canadians, *bois-brulés* or half-caste. Every gradation from European to savage."[139]

On board he meets Father Mullon, a Catholic priest, who runs a recently established mission at Arbre Croche. Tocqueville interviews him concerning the Indians in his parish. His line of inquiry is indictive of his overall thesis: What

[138] Auburn penitentiary was unique for its use of enforced silence and solitary confinement as a means of reform.

[139] *JA*, 145.

form of public authority do they have? To which he is told, they have hereditary chiefs. He asks about their reputation for natural eloquence. Father Mullen admires them for their oratory conciseness and profundity, they deliberate seriously, never interrupting another when speaking. Are they ferocious warriors? Yes, they burn and torture their prisoners and scalp the dead and wounded; "however, [he interjects] they are gentle, honest people when their passions are not roused by war." Finally, his interest in their religion extends only so far as to ask whether one still finds traces of Jesuit influence among them and whether they make good Christians, reflecting the narrowness of his conception of Indigenous, in this case, Ojibway spirituality. Father Mullon answers with a resounding yes and reminds Tocqueville, "You saw how eagerly the Indian population of Sault St. Marie came to look for me when they heard there was a priest on board." For Tocqueville, it is always a question of national pride that the Indians are fond of the Jesuits. This is an indication that the French have always treated the Indians with dignity and justice, and with lasting effect.

That evening, he happens upon a bivouac of French-Canadians and again his inquiries concern Natives, stating that he only records "things which fitted in with all impressions I had formed before:" In summary: they are disappearing; they were better before contact; they make good Christians; they never cultivate the land; they have no laws or religion; their origins are lost in the mists of time; their movement is constantly westward in pursuit of game fleeing from American expansion; and finally:

> Have the Indians not got the idea that sooner or later their race will be annihilated by ours? [Answer]: They are incredibly careless of the future. Those who are half destroyed and those on whose tracks we are pressing, see the Europeans advancing to the west with despair, but there is no time left for resistance.[140]

A few days later he interviews Major Lamard, "a well-educated man of good sense," who confirms his view that Indians are impossible to civilize because of the inflexibility of their nature. As evidence he relates a story which Tocqueville repeats in *Democracy* about the son of a Chief who was sent to a New England college, became a successful student "and had taken the full external appearance of a civilized man."[141] But when war broke out in 1812, against the express orders of his American commander, he took to scalping his enemies on the battlefield, proving that despite his successful education and his outward civilized appearance, in his heart he was still, and will always remain a savage. This individual is representative of many young Indigenous people living during this period of social upheaval and political transition. Recognizing that if they were going to preserve their cultural identity and their political autonomy in the midst of Anglo-European expansion, it had become necessary to acquire a European education.

On board the steamship Tocqueville also meets John Tanner, who was kidnapped by the Shawnee from his father's newly acquired homestead near the juncture of the Ohio and the Big Miami rivers on the edge of Shawnee territory.

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[140] Ibid., 36, 146-7.
[141] *DAHC,* 520 fn. 1.

On the day of his capture his father, a former Virginian clergyman, was guarding against the possibility of a Shawnee assault while his slaves were busy harvesting corn in the front fields. Young John Tanner snuck out of the house and was kidnapped from the rear yard. After suffering considerable abuse and unspeakable privations at the hands of his Shawnee captures, he was eventually sold to Netnokwa, a lead woman of the Ottawa and her Ojibwe husband. Here he was treated well. Growing up in the ways of the Ojibwe he eventually lost his nascent language but obtained a reputation among his peers as a gifted and reliable hunter, sometimes engaging in the Ojibwe practice of dream hunting for guidance when the game was scarce. His memoirs recount his successful use of this practice on at least three occasions. Despite his adoption of what Tocqueville would consider Indian superstition, Tanner, like other Ojibwe, was often skeptical of Indian revitalization movements led by self-proclaimed prophets of divine revelation. One could say that outwardly Tanner retained the European aspect of his birth but inwardly he was very much an Ojibwe. Speaking only their language he married an Ojibwe woman, raised his children among the Ojibwe and adopted their traditions, stories and spiritual orientation. When Tocqueville met him onboard the *Superior* Tanner had relearned to speak English and was working as a translator for Henry Schoolcraft in the region around Michilimackinac. He does not recount their conversation, or if they had one (for he never mentions him in

his notebooks) but only remarks that "he appeared to me to still resemble a savage much more than a civilized man."[142]

Later, Tanner's *Memoirs* would become an important source text for Tocqueville's *Democracy*, in particular his depictions of the "prejudices, passions, vices and above all the miseries of those among whom he lived." It is from Tanner's *Memoirs* that Tocqueville learns that "Living within the liberty of the woods, the Indian of North America was miserable, but he felt inferior to no one."[143] One notes Tocqueville's customary identification of Indian authenticity with his aristocratic pride. However, where Tocqueville speaks of having only a brief encounter with Tanner onboard a Steamship on the way to Lake Superior, Beaumont gives an elaborate account of an extensive conversation they both had with him while descending down the Mississippi in a riverboat. In Beaumont's narrative, Tanner had come aboard acting as the interpreter for the Indian Agent overseeing the Choctaw removal they witnessed in December 1831.[144] They were so enthralled at having the good fortune of Tanner's sudden appearance that they proposed to change their plans yet again, and join these Choctaws along with Tanner on their "march of tears" to their new territory west of the Mississippi where, as Beaumont writes,

[142] Ibid., 536.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 537.

> I felt a burst of joy and enthusiasm thinking that I was going to see the beautiful forests dreamed of in my imagination, the vast prairies described by Cooper, and the profound solitudes unknown in the Old World.[145]

As they descended the Mississippi together, Beaumont's recorded conversation with Tanner confirms Tocqueville's analysis of Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal procedure point by point. In *Marie,* Tanner is represented by the character Nelson, who provides a long soliloquy on the disappearance of the Indian. Given that both Tocqueville and Beaumont rely quite extensively on Tanner's personal account of his captivity among the Indians in their representations of Indigeneity, it his hard to imagine how their recollections of meeting him could be so divergent. It leaves one to wonder whether they met him at all. Be that as it may, the miseries and privations Tanner experienced as a captive of the Shawnee and later as an Ojibwe tribesman working through a difficult period in their history, Tocqueville simply extrapolates as an image of the miseries and privations experienced by Indigenous peoples always and everywhere.

Tocqueville's Encounters with the Southern Tribes.

Tocqueville presents his encounter with the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians as the most convincing evidence in support of his conviction that North American Indians, not fit for civilization, will inevitably meet their ultimate demise. He begins this account in *Democracy* with the reiteration of the first lines

[145] Ibid.,

he writes about Indigenous people from his notebooks on July 4, 1831, two weeks before his first encounter with the Iroquois in New York. Shortly before his departure back to France, Tocqueville personally witnessed the acceleration of government land seizures with the implementation of President Jackson's Indian Removal Act, and the aggravated misery this caused for the southern tribes. After a week stranded near Memphis Tennessee because of the frozen Mississippi he ended up sharing a riverboat with a troop of Choctaws who were attempting to cross over to the western shore where "they flattered themselves they would find the refuge that the American government promised them."[146] The Choctaws moved in silence, carrying their miseries with them, while their howling dogs dashed into the icy waters of the Mississippi swimming behind. In the week leading up to this event Tocqueville spent most of his time bird hunting, as was his customary pastime wherever he went.[147] On one occasion he happens upon an unlikely trio in the solitude of the woods near the territory occupied by the Creek nation. While he was resting at the edge of a spring near a pioneer's cabin, a Creek woman appeared, holding the hand of a young white girl of about five or six, followed by a "Negro woman." Tocqueville admires the natural and filial affections displayed between the unmarried Creek maiden, a white child (probably the daughter of the pioneer who lived nearby), and a slave woman.

[146] *DA,* 311.

[147] Writing home to his mother about the events of the week he has much more to say about his overall boredom, the pretty birds he kills unknown in France, and the solitudes around the Mississippi, than he does about Choctaw miseries.

After having "contemplated this spectacle in silence" Tocqueville comes to the realization that where nature strives to bring humans together, it is our "prejudices and laws" that keep us apart. This curious encounter becomes an anecdotal metaphor both for the nature of democracy and for the confirmation of his Indian thesis. The white girl is a symbol of America's nascent democracy, the slave woman in her European rags represents the extreme limits of democratic equality in its resultant dehumanization by despotism, and the Creek maiden with her "free, proud, and almost ferocious air" of superiority storming off brusquely out of irritation at Tocqueville's intrusion, has all the colours of "the pretended nobility of [her] origin:"[148] She is a symbol of Europe's fleeting aristocracy. This is an image of democratic continuity, which if it is to survive must combine the best parts of savage virtue, in particular its aristocratic pride, with the slavish desire for civilization, resulting in the preservation of both liberty and human dignity.[149] Tocqueville's literary use of this idyllic scene is consistent with his objective to educate or prepare the way for democracy.

But even if the Creek woman desires civilization, she will be unsuccessful, and not just because of American tyranny. Tocqueville's pessimism concerning the fate of Indigenous people is always informed by his disdain for America's excessive commercialism and its racism; he does not think America will ever be free of these evils. However, his thesis on the inevitability of Indigenous demise is

[148] *DA,*305.
[149] Harvey Mansfield, *Tocqueville: A Very Short Introduction*, 44.

the result of direct and indirect American influences, working in consonance with the social and political deficiencies inherent to their persistent savagism. Since all Indians are nomadic hunter/warriors, Tocqueville concludes that the progress which the five civilized tribes have made toward adopting a European lifestyle, while it may be evidence for their natural ingenuity, does not represent evidence for their success at civilization.[150] The successful assimilation of the Cherokee and the Creek were the exception that proved the rule, until Jackson's Indian Removal Act proved them wrong. And even then, whatever progress they were able to make along the path to civilization was more the result of European intermingling, than of Native ingenuity. Tocqueville explicitly claims that

> What singularly favored the rapid development of European habits among these Indians was the presence of half-breeds. . . . Wherever half-breeds have multiplied, savages are seen to modify little by little their social state and change their mores.[151]

In light of their singular importance for the colonial process of cultural assimilation, Tocqueville laments that "unfortunately half-breeds have been fewer and have exercised a smaller influence in North America than anywhere else."[152]

When he encountered the trio in the woods, Tocqueville assumed that the little white girl was the daughter of the pioneer whom he hasn't met, and he is probably right, but she may very well have been the daughter of the Creek woman. He presumes that the slave woman is the servant of the white girl which

[150] *DAHC*, 535.
[151] Ibid., 533-4.
[152] Ibid., 534, fn. 17.

would make her the property of her pioneer father. This is a reasonable assumption but not necessarily the case. Tocqueville is aware that he is near Creek territory but doesn't inform us that the Creek nation, along with the other four nations of their confederacy at the time (except the Seminoles) were active in the slave trade. The Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Creeks were traditionally subsistence farmers who at this period in their history had adopted the use of slave labor to help cultivate the soil.[153] In 1830 it is estimated that the Creek nation owned approximately five hundred African-American slaves. They also allowed freedmen and escaped slaves from white plantations to find refuge and to live among them. Both slaves and freedmen were generally treated better than on white plantations, often labouring alongside their Indian masters in the fields. The Creek woman he encountered in the woods was probably the daughter of a Creek farmer, with whom his pioneer neighbour must have had some association: why else would the pioneer's five years old daughter be so at ease in the arms of a woman adorned in such "barbarous luxury" and who carried herself with such a "ferocious air"? This seems a more likely scenario than "nature . . .

[153] By the 1830s more than three thousand African-Americans, mostly slaves, lived among the tribes. American Indians brought their slaves to the west in the 1830s and 1840s when the federal government removed the nations from the southern states. The Cherokee, with more than fifteen hundred, had the largest number. Slave populations removed with the other nations ranged from approximately three hundred in the Creek Nation to more than twelve hundred in the Chickasaw Nation. When the Civil War erupted in 1861, more than eight thousand African Americans were enslaved in Indian Territory. They comprised 14 percent of the population. Slavery continued in the territory through the Civil War, after which the five nations legally abolished the practice. http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=SL003

striving to bring them together." If this scene in fact "rendered more striking still the immense space that prejudices and laws had put between them," it is more a question of Tocqueville's imagination than it is of the political realities that this scene suggests.

When the Indian, for example the Cherokee, attempts to adopt a more European lifestyle, he is said to be "superior to his savage father." Nevertheless, he is still a savage and "still very inferior to the whites."[154] Tocqueville reasons that although Indians possess enough natural intelligence to allow them to adopt European agriculture, they have just recently been taught to farm, and therefore do not have sufficient experience to enable equal competition with European settlers. In addition to their lack of experience, the Indians are often the victims of material force: "Sometimes the Anglo-Americans settle on one part of the[ir] territory, as if land was lacking elsewhere," and when Congress attempts to intervene and expel the settlers according to federal treaty obligations, the settlers in response "carry away the livestock, burn the houses, cut down the fruit trees of the natives or use violence against their persons."[155] Tocqueville comes closest to acknowledging the pre-European presence of an Indigenous agricultural tradition when he states that "the Cherokees and the Creeks were settled on the soil they inhabited before the arrival of the Europeans." However, he immediately qualifies this statement with the assertion that these men were "barely out of the forests."

[154] *DAHC*, 540.
[155] Ibid., 540, fn. 20.

The inherent "misery" of their nomadic lives had only recently "pushed these unfortunate Indians toward civilization," and by the time American oppression "drives them . . . back toward barbarism . . . to resume the habit of savage life," the fields they leave behind are still only "half-cleared."[156]

In the final analysis, Europeans who chose to live in the wilderness alongside the Indians can become "half-savage" by association, but they will disappear along with their love of the savage life. Indians, on the other hand, who choose to live alongside the Americans and who attempt to adopt a more European lifestyle, do not become "half-civilized" until they miscegenate. This is a problem. According to Tocqueville, whatever success the Cherokee were able to achieve in their attempt at civilization would not have been possible without the intervention of the "half-breed [who] forms the natural link between civilization and barbarism."[157] The effective half-breed is always the product of the union between a European male with an Indigenous female. He assumes that, given the dominant role of the male in European society, this will ensure the cultural assimilation of their offspring. Not only does this assumption fail to recognize the significant political and cultural role that women fulfil in many Indigenous societies, it only provides for the survival of Native women and their half-white offspring. This also leaves Indigenous nations no other alternative than complete, that is, both cultural and racial assimilation. For as he says, "Indians in the United

[156] Ibid., 541.
[157] *DA,* 316.

States who cannot adapt themselves to civilization, will disappear . . . [and they] can only civilize themselves with help of half-castes."[158]

The historical/political relation between race and culture is best expressed by the Greek term *ethikos*, and its cognates. Whereas this term signifies an intrinsic correlation between race and culture, it does not exclude the possibility of cultural translation without racial integration. In contrast, Tocqueville reasons that cultural translation is impossible, and that cultural assimilation, that is, cultural succession, the civilizing of the Indian, cannot take place without miscegenation. One notes that this is a one-way proposition, the goal of which in the end is to make the Indian both culturally and racially European. But this is highly impractical as he predicts it will take many years to extinguish "the savage fire that still animates the look of the half-breed and is lost only with the second or third generation of white blood."[159]

Conclusion

Whether or not Tocqueville is a racist I will leave to the reader to decide. During his tenure in the French Assembly he was an outspoken critic of slavery and its dehumanizing effects, constantly arguing on the side of liberty and human dignity. In his correspondence with Arthur de Gobineau, a noted intellectual and French diplomat, Tocqueville berates his racialist theories as "a sort of fatalism . .

[158] *JA*, 178.

[159] *DAHC*, 1328. The Canadian Charter of Rights, Section 6.1 (a-c) seems to arrive at the same conclusion.

. [a] close relative of the purest materialism," which if accepted by the masses would result in "a vast limitation, if not a complete abolition, of human liberty."[160] If Tocqueville is not a racist, he is a liberal imperialist. He is an Eurocentric proponent of the superiority of Christian civilization, especially as it pertains to the advancement of a dignified egalitarian democracy. Like many liberal theorists of his era he is able to paradoxically espouse the principles of universal liberty, while at the same time advocate for the advancement of European colonialism. Although a lifelong critic of bourgeois mediocrity, Tocqueville affirms European assumptions about the disappearance of Indigenous culture in the face of Occidental enlightenment and Christian supersession.

Tocqueville's narrative on the development of American democracy represents Indigenous peoples as existing in either of two extremes: On the one hand, they are history's nascent children living like islands of an indigenous past, naturally noble but too politically naïve to resist the sophistication of colonial expansion; on the other, they are reminiscent of Cooper's stealthy and beastlike Iroquois who have become degraded through the influence of American decadence. In the first characterization they have no recourse other than to retreat into a disappearing wilderness; in the second, they will inevitably meet their demise at the hands of exposure to the vagaries of American democracy. The

[160] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The European Revolution and Correspondence with Gobineau*, John Lukacs ed. and trans., (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1959), 227.

result is the same. Whether their destruction be through the duplicitous strategy of judicial tyranny, or the less humane but more direct strategy of material violence, it is an historical inevitability impossible to resist.

Aside from the differences between American and Canadian relations with Indigenous peoples, an important commonality is that many of their conflicts, along with some of the harshest treatment they have experienced, has been the result of land-hungry European settlers working in consonance with the material support they received, often surreptitiously from the American Congress or the British Crown. The one thing that British Loyalists and American Federalists could always agree on is that, the stability and prosperity of their respective colonies depended upon the availability of an expanding land base to supply the vast resources necessary for modern industrialization, and to satisfy the demands of an increasingly restless democratic economy. Inasmuch as Indigenous people were an impediment to the movement of American expansion, their removal or elimination, as Tocqueville indicates, was easily determined in the name of civilizational progress.

Concerning the influence of institutions on the destiny of men Tocqueville writes that in spite of their importance,

> I am quite convinced that political societies are not what their laws make them, but what sentiments, beliefs, ideas, habits of the heart, and the spirit of the men who form them, prepare them in advance to be, as well as what nature and education have made them.[161]

[161] *Selected Letters on Politics and Society,* 294.

Institutions are only as good as the mores and the opinions that nourish them. Tocqueville claims that Indigenous people are governed only by opinions and mores, he says this by way of demonstrating their savagism; however, by his own analysis these are the very substance of the democratic regime. Whether or not they are governed by a codification of law, in the European sense, is a moot point when governance is a question of popular sovereignty. Ironically, the principle which Tocqueville says determines the nature of democracy, has also led to the continuity of Indigenous culture and the recognition of their sovereignty to this very day—the preservation and dissemination of their stories and traditions, their opinions and mores. Perhaps the most important element of the preservation of Indigenous cultural traditions relates to the legitimacy of their sovereignty over the few remaining territories they control. Tocqueville simply claims that since Indians do not farm, they have no personal interest in the land they inhabit, making them easier to displace. He reasons that territorial claims, because they are not connected to individual interests are too broad to elicit defense; It's easier for them just to move further into a seemingly endless wilderness. According to Tocqueville, when Europeans arrived in North America it

> was still, properly speaking, a vacant continent, a deserted land, that awaited inhabitants. . . . It is as if God had held it in reserve and it had only just emerged from the waters of the flood" [to receive] "thirteen million civilized Europeans . . . spreading tranquilly across fertile wilderness. . . . [on their] triumphant march of civilization. [162]

[162] Ibid. 456-7.

Yet despite Tocqueville's theoretical acumen and his reputation as a prescient thinker, Indigenous peoples are still here. The very fact that the Iroquois Confederacy, for example, have managed to preserve their traditions and their political autonomy in the midst of one of the most populated regions in Canada is a testimony both to their cultural integrity and to their political continuity.

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