

PRINCE MAXIMILIAN'S AMERICA:
The Narrated Landscapes of a German Explorer and Naturalist

by

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Abstract

Prince Maximilian of Wied, a German explorer and naturalist, came to the United States in 1832 to study its natural history and indigenous population. Upon his return to Germany in 1834 Maximilian began the analysis of his North American experience which culminated in the two-volume *Reise in das Innere Nordamerika* (1839-41). Through the years numerous publications have celebrated aspects of Prince Maximilian's travel accounts and have praised his "meticulous observations" which were said to be characterized by "unreserved objectivity." However, this dissertation will demonstrate that the Maximilian report is much more than a simple arrangement of factual information. Instead, like almost all writing, his narrated landscapes present an interpolation of a variety of competing discourses.

The foundation of his narrative are what I call the Linnaean landscapes, just as the Enlightenment was the basis for Maximilian's *Weltanschauung*. However, both the active intervention of the Prince as an editor (as a response to sociopolitical pressures in his strategic landscapes) and his more unconscious negotiation of America due to a variety of concealed ideologies (as displayed in his ideological landscapes) had a significant influence on the final product that was presented to European

audiences. My deconstruction of Prince Maximilian's America reveals the complexity of the narrator and his creation alike.

Dedication

To Karen and our beautiful son Jonathan:

You are my family.

I love you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The quest for Self through a search for the Other depends on and reveals an image of the Self, an image of the Other, and, most important, a passage between them -- the "wanting to know," which constitutes travel and finally becomes the narrative.¹

Each year, when I was a child in Neuwied (Germany), my older brother and I would spend endless autumn hours running through the park of the castle of the Prince of Wied,² which is open to the public. Usually we were searching for chestnuts, which we could sell to the manager of the Wied estate, who, in turn, would use them to feed the deer in the Prince's forests during the winter. Sometimes we managed to save our earnings from this venture for later, but, more often than not, we invested our money in marzipan and other desirable things at a nearby market.

When my brother and I ran around the castle grounds in the early 1970s, Prince Maximilian's travels and his scientific accomplishments were largely unknown. Perhaps this man was not a folk hero in his and my

¹ Susan L. Blake, "Travel and Literature: The Liberian Narratives of Esther Warner and Graham Greene." *Research in African Literature* 22 (1991): 191-204, quotation on page 192.

² Wied is pronounced "veed" in the German language.

hometown because much of his magnificent collection of flora and fauna had been sold to the American Museum of Natural History in 1869, only two years after his death. In 1959, the last of his treasures, personal diaries plus the paintings of Karl Bodmer (the famous Swiss artist who had accompanied the Prince on his travels to North America) were sold to the New York art dealer W. Knoedler & Company. At any rate, when I returned from the United States to Germany in the early summer of 1993, I, like many other Neuwied residents, only had a vague idea about the significance of Prince Maximilian's opus.

In that particular summer an exhibit took place in the old Mennonite church in Neuwied. Its theme, "Indians--The Journey of Prince Maximilian of Wied and the Painter Karl Bodmer to North America," instantly aroused my curiosity. I had heard the name Prince Maximilian before, and had even seen reproductions of Karl Bodmer's paintings during my studies at the University of Kansas. But until that day no connection existed between the painter and the explorer for me. What I saw at this exhibit and learned in the following months amazed me completely. A person who had lived and worked in Neuwied in the last century had truly excelled as a naturalist and explorer. His works were said to be surpassed only by the likes of Charles Darwin, Alexander von Humboldt, Meriwether Lewis, and William Clark. Whether it

was in the field of anthropology, geology, botany, or zoology, Prince Maximilian was a well-trained scientific observer who left an enormous legacy when he died in 1867.

Although some of Maximilian's achievements are fairly well known in the United States, they have only slowly been recognized in Germany. In the early 1950s Dr. Josef Röder (1914-1975), director of the state archive in Koblenz, literally discovered Maximilian's inheritance--diaries, drawings, lithographic plates of Bodmer's paintings, and an extensive correspondence--in the castle of Neuwied. Yet it took another three decades from this discovery to the final acknowledgment of the entire opus. In the 1980s and early 1990s several exhibits throughout Germany honored individual aspects of Maximilian's work, but only in 1995 did the first comprehensive presentation of his accomplishments take place in the museum of Hachenburg ("Landschaftsmuseum Westerwald").³

Prince Maximilian's fame came primarily from his expeditions to Brazil and North America. One measure of his legacy can be found in the traces he left in the nomenclature of plants and animals.⁴ A Jurassic saurian, whose

³ Hermann Josef Roth, *Westerwald und Amerika - Prinz Maximilian zu Wied: Jäger, Forscher, Reisender* (Montabaur: Verlag der Museen des Westerwaldkreises, 1995a).

⁴ See also Appendix A.

skeleton was found in the Big Bend region of the Missouri,⁵ is named *Mosasaurus maximiliani*. A Brazilian ocelot that he was the first to describe is called *Leopardus wiedi*. His contributions to the field of botany have been honored with a genus of tropical orchids (*Neuwiedia*) and a species of Midwestern sunflowers (*Helianthus maximiliani*). His achievements as an ornithologist are immortalized with "Wied's Crested Flycatcher" (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*), "Maximilian's Jay" (*Gymnorhinis cyanocephalus*), and "Maximilian's Parrot" (*Pionus maximiliani*).⁶

Prince Maximilian's most important publications were *Journey to Brazil in the Years 1815 to 1817* (1820-21) and *Journey to the Interior of North America* (1839-41).⁷ The reports herein of the languages, traditions, and religious beliefs of indigenous peoples in southeastern Brazil (e.g. the Botocudo) and the Great Plains in the United States (e.g. the Mandan) are especially well known and remain valuable primary documents for anthropologists and other scholars. Today, major pieces of Maximilian's

⁵ At Maximilian's time the Big Bend region was a large meander of the Missouri River in central South Dakota, in an area located between Fort Pierre and Fort Lookout, today's Lower Brule and Crow Creek Indian Reservations. However, the channel of the Missouri River has changed quite a bit since then, and only the name "Big Bend Dam" gives testimony to this formerly dominating riverine feature.

⁶ Roth, 1995a.

⁷ The German title for Maximilian's publication "Reise in das Innere Nord-America" is commonly translated as *Travels in the Interior of North America*. The translation *Journey to the Interior of North America* is more accurate, however, and will accordingly be used in this study.

collection and lifework can be found in the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, the Museum of Natural History in Berlin (Germany), and the Linden Museum in Stuttgart (Germany).

Numerous publications have celebrated aspects of Prince Maximilian's opus.⁸ Of these the majority concentrate on his journey to North America. The first English translation of Maximilian's travel accounts appeared in the United Kingdom in 1843,⁹ and was reprinted and edited in 1905-06 in the United States.¹⁰ Some publications portrayed aspects of Maximilian's encounters with the indigenous population on the Plains,¹¹ while others analyzed the Nebraskan portion of his travels,¹² or described his journey through Montana.¹³ A short but concise biography of the man also appeared fairly

⁸ For an evaluation of these publications see especially Paul Schach, "Maximilian, Prince of Wied (1782-1867): Reconsidered." *Great Plains Quarterly* 14 (1994): 5-20.

⁹ Evans H. Lloyd, *Travels in the Interior of North America* (London: Ackermann & Co., 1843).

¹⁰ Reuben Gold Thwaites, *Travels in the Interior of North America*, Early Western Travels 1748-1846, vols. 22-25 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1905-06).

¹¹ Bernard De Voto, *Across the Wide Missouri* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964); Marshall Sprague, *A Gallery of Dudes* (Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1966); David Thomas and Karin Ronnefeldt, *People of the First Man. Life Among the Plains Indians in Their Final Days of Glory* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976); Russel Freedman, *An Indian Winter - Paintings and Drawings by Karl Bodmer* (New York: Holiday House, 1992).

¹² William J. Orr and Joseph C. Porter, "A Journey Through the Nebraska Region in 1833 and 1834: From the Diaries of Prince Maximilian of Wied." *Nebraska History*, 64 (1983): 325-453.

¹³ Joseph C. Porter, "Marvelous Figures, Astonished Travelers." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 41 (1991): 36-53.

recently, which corrected many errors in earlier publications.¹⁴ The most impressive volumes, however, have been published by the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska. *Views of a Vanishing Frontier*,¹⁵ *Karl Bodmer's America*,¹⁶ and, most recently, *Karl Bodmer's Eastern Views*¹⁷ eloquently combine reprinted sections of Maximilian's travel accounts with Bodmer's paintings. This productivity of the museum is not surprising, because Maximilian's original diaries, most of Bodmer's artwork, and an important portion of Maximilian's correspondence have been in its care since 1962. Consequently, the Joslyn Art Museum through its "Center for Western Studies" has become an important source of information for researchers.

Because of the slow acknowledgment of Maximilian's lifework in Germany, the publications in his home country are less numerous than in the United States. A postmortem note and first biography of the Prince appeared in 1867.¹⁸ In 1954, unpublished manuscripts from his Brazilian expedition

¹⁴ Schach, 1994.

¹⁵ John C. Ewers et al., *Views of a Vanishing Frontier* (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1984).

¹⁶ David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher (eds.), *Karl Bodmer's America* (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1984).

¹⁷ Marsha V. Gallagher and John F. Sears, *Karl Bodmer's Eastern Views - A Journey in North America* (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1996).

¹⁸ Philipp Wirtgen, *Zum Andenken an Prinz Maximilian zu Wied, sein Leben und wissenschaftliche Thätigkeit* (Leipzig: Verlag der J. H. Heuser'schen Buchhandlung, 1867).

were presented for the first time,¹⁹ and, more recently, scholars have analyzed his Brazilian travel accounts, drawings, and related correspondence.²⁰ In addition, several publications focused on Maximilian's journey through North America, paying special attention to his ethnological observations.²¹ An important analysis of Maximilian's scientific library also exists, which provides insight into the interests and education of the man.²² Finally, in recent years, several publications began to provide a more comprehensive account of Maximilian's lifework.²³

Reviewing the available publications in the United States and Germany, one has to wonder why so much attention has been paid to Maximilian's travels through North America in comparison to the rather limited interest shown in his Brazilian venture. From an ethnological point of view

¹⁹ Josef Röder and Hermann Trimborn, *Maximilian Prinz zu Wied. Unveröffentlichte Bilder und Handschriften zur Völkerkunde Brasiliens* (Bonn: Dümmler Verlag, 1954).

²⁰ Renate Löschner and Birgit Kirschstein-Gamber (eds.), *Nachlaß des Prinzen Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied*, Brasilien-Bibliothek der Robert Bosch GmbH., Vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988).

²¹ Hellmuth Weißenborn, *Prinz Max zu Wied - Unter den Rothäuten* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1924); Walter Hansen, *Die Reise des Prinzen Wied zu den Indianern Pfaffenhofen-Ilm*: Ludwig, 1977); Axel Schulze-Thulin (ed.), *Indianer der Prärien und Plains. Reisen und Sammlungen des Herzogs Paul Wilhelm von Württemberg (1822-24) und des Prinzen Maximilian zu Wied (1832-34) im Linden-Museum Stuttgart* (Stuttgart: Linden-Museum, 1987); Landesmuseum Koblenz, *Prärie- und Plainsindianer - Die Reise in das innere Nord-Amerika von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied und Karl Bodmer* (Mainz: Hermann Schmidt, 1993).

²² Siegfried Schmidt, *Die Büchersammlung des Prinzen Maximilian zu Wied* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1985). See Appendix B for more information on Maximilian's library.

²³ Hermann Josef Roth (ed.), *Maximilian Prinz zu Wied: Jäger, Reisender, Naturforscher*, Fauna und Flora in Rheinlandpfalz, Beiheft 17 (Landau: Gesellschaft für Naturschutz und Ornithologie Rheinland-Pfalz e.V., 1995b).

both are equally important, but in terms of botanical and zoological discoveries, the Brazilian expedition clearly excels.²⁴ In the United States this bias can be explained by a combination of national interests and the convenience of the available resources at the Joslyn Art Museum. In Germany, however, one should expect a different situation, in part because the Brazilian Library of the Robert Bosch Company in Stuttgart houses Maximilian's diaries, paintings, and much of his correspondence from that expedition.

The relative popularity of the North American travel accounts in Germany is likely related to the discovery and the changing image of the North American Indian in Europe. Since the late Renaissance "a discourse of noble savagery" began to fascinate European intellectuals.²⁵ By the end of the eighteenth century, with the beginning of the Romantic Period, this vision became more dominant. The travel reports of James Cook's voyage in 1768, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* in 1835, and many other publications captured the European mind with their depictions of indigenous peoples.²⁶ In Germany, the Romantic interest in the *noble savage* was

²⁴ See especially Roth, 1995b.

²⁵ Harry Liebersohn, "Discovering Indigenous Nobility: Tocqueville, Chamisso, and the Romantic Travel Writing." *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994): 746-766.

²⁶ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "White Conceptions of Indians." *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), vol. 4, 522-547.

reinforced and informed by travel writings of Duke Paul Wilhelm of Württemberg, Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Prince Maximilian, and others. Moreover, by the end of the nineteenth century, Buffalo Bill's traveling Western shows throughout Europe and Western novels written by the German author Karl May (*Old Surehand*, *Winnetou*, etc.) reinforced the perception of a "typical Indian." Consequently, the Plains Indian evolved into the epitome of the *noble savage* (the "Indianer"), which found its most curious outgrowth in the "Indian Hobbyist Movement" of the twentieth century.²⁷ This development essentially expelled the indigenous nobility of Brazil, the Pacific, and other areas from the German mind, explaining today's focus on Maximilian's ethnological descriptions of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and other Plains Indians.

The strong interest in Maximilian's journey through North America is also intertwined with the quality and popularity of Karl Bodmer's paintings. For his expedition to Brazil Maximilian did not hire a professional artist, but instead made the sketches and drawings himself. Although the resultant illustrations of the Brazilian "Mata Atlantica" and its indigenous population are accurate, his paintings lacked the aesthetic appeal and mastery of a trained

²⁷ Colin F. Taylor, "The Indian Hobbyist Movement in Europe." *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), vol. 4, 562-569.

artist like Bodmer. Thus, it is not surprising that his South American venture, despite its scientific importance, has not received as much attention as his journey to North America.

Although Bodmer's popularity has helped to draw attention to the Maximilian expedition in some ways, the visual dominance of his paintings has led to a neglect of the Prince himself, and especially his narrated landscapes. Typical is what happens in *Karl Bodmer's America* (1984). In this book's introduction the noted historian William H. Goetzmann described Maximilian by saying that "[l]ike Humboldt and Goethe, intellectually Maximilian lived in two worlds at once, that of the classical, descriptive, and mathematical, and that which perceived growing, teeming, variegated, and vivid life all around him."²⁸ The book, however, abruptly drops the issue there to concentrate on Bodmer, and nowhere else is the important question developed of how these two different and conflicting worlds are reflected in Maximilian's narrative. Whereas Bodmer's illustrations have been analyzed by scores of art historians, the accompanying narrated landscapes of Maximilian have been harvested only for their factual information.

I am concerned that Prince Maximilian's travel accounts have not been

²⁸ William H. Goetzmann, "Introduction: The Man who Stopped to Paint America," in *Karl Bodmer's America*, David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher (eds.) (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1984), 1-23, quotation on page 6.

analyzed in more depth. In the majority of publications his diaries are simply reprinted and conveniently used as a framework for the Bodmer paintings.²⁹

Of the others, some studies devote attention to his scientific accomplishments,³⁰ one analyzes his “tourist agenda” in the eastern part of the United States,³¹ and one concentrates on his curriculum vitae.³² But none of them have ever questioned his “objectivity” or the layers of meaning in his narrative.

This is the task I set for myself in this dissertation--to understand America as seen through Maximilian’s eyes. To achieve this goal, I need to deconstruct and critically analyze his narrated landscapes by putting the words he wrote into a larger context. This requires an intimate understanding of the Prince, his upbringing and education, and the cultural and ideological environment in Germany. It also requires a deep knowledge of America in the 1830s, a time and place he depicts so vividly in his travel accounts. “Every travel account has [a] heteroglossic dimension; its knowledge comes not just

²⁹ E.g. Ewers et al., 1984; Hunt and Gallagher, 1984.

³⁰ E.g. Bernhard Zepernick, “Botanische Ergebnisse der Amerikareisen des Prinzen Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied.” In: *Maximilian Prinz zu Wied: Jäger, Reisender, Naturforscher, Fauna und Flora in Rheinlandpfalz*, Beiheft 17, Hermann Josef Roth (ed.) (Landau: Gesellschaft für Naturschutz und Ornithologie Rheinland-Pfalz e.V., 1995), 229-246.

³¹ John F. Sears, “Karl Bodmer’s Eastern Views.” In: *Karl Bodmer’s Eastern Views - A Journey in North America*, Marsha V. Gallagher and John F. Sears (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1996), 39-62.

³² Schach, 1994.

out of a traveler's sensibility and power of observations, but out of interaction and experience usually directed and managed by 'travelees,' who are working from their own understanding of their world"³³ Consequently, the major objective of this study is to look at the multifaceted dimension of Maximilian's narrative, and to unveil its hidden layers of meaning. The main hypothesis is that Prince Maximilian's travel accounts, specifically his *Journey to the Interior of North America*, are not just reports on what he saw, like a camera moving through the American landscape, but instead a narrative that reverberates with assumptions, expectations, and disappointments. A careful reading and interpretation reveals a picture of a different kind of America--that of Prince Maximilian.

Deconstructing Narrated Landscapes

The problem of written history evolves into a problem of reading history. . . . [We] need to be experts in reading thought (ideology) and its absence (strategic silence) instead of just reading letters and words representing conceptual categorizations embedded in master teleologies. Ideology reverberates between the lines and explodes among words.³⁴

³³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1991), quotation on pages 135-136.

³⁴ Lydia Fossa, *The Discourse of History in Andean America: Europeans Writing for Europeans* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Unpublished Dissertation, 1996), quotation on page 19.

Whenever I encounter descriptions or representations of landscapes, I have to realize that these “texts” (maps, travel accounts, paintings, etc.) include a cultural, political, or ideological perspective, no matter how scientific or objective these materials claim to be. Indeed, the landscapes themselves are formed by human activity and contain several layers of meaning. Depending on the sensitivity and bias of the observer, these layers may be ignored, emphasized or distorted. Thus, before I try to interpret Maximilian’s travel accounts, I need to realize that cultural landscapes are constructed and continually change. Only then can I attempt to decode a narrative and thereby contribute to an understanding of the multilayered American scene.³⁵

Following this argument, the first challenge arises for a successful analysis of Maximilian’s travel accounts. I need to gain an understanding of the America he encountered, so that I have a historical baseline for his narrative. In other words, I need to know what America was like in the 1830s, and what a visitor like Prince Maximilian could see, and judge upon, in terms of its cultural landscape. This step requires a careful reading of historical

³⁵ See especially James S. Duncan and David Ley, *Place / Culture / Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Peter Jackson, *Maps of Meaning* (London: Unwin, 1988); Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan (eds.), *Writing Worlds - Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

sources that describe the political and cultural matrix of the time period.³⁶ The reading needs to be careful, because these sources themselves are all biased interpretations of the past, and not simply mirrors. But once a basic historical baseline is established, and with at least the beginning of a sense of what America was like in the 1830s, I can approach Maximilian's narrative.

The next challenge lies in the comparison of Maximilian's travel accounts with the historical baseline. This requires an interpretation of his remarks in regard to specific situations and their meaning in the historical context, but also the identification of blank spaces within his text. These moments of "strategic silence," when he does not touch upon a certain subject, say as much about him and his image of America as do the statements he did choose to write down about the American society and the cultural landscape he encountered. These omitted events should become apparent through a comparison of his observations with other historical

³⁶ E.g. Thomas C. Cochrane, *Frontiers of Change: Early Industrialization in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); John A. Jakle, *Images of the Ohio Valley. A Historical Geography of Travel, 1740 to 1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America - A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), vol. 2; Edward Pessen (ed.), *The many-faceted Jacksonian era. New Interpretations* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977); Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution: 1815 - 1860. The Economic History of the United States* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951), vol. 4; Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962); David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

sources.

No matter how objective travelers claim to be, their observations are informed by their cultural background, individual agenda, and aspects such as age, class, gender, and ethnicity. Consequently, when Maximilian wrote about the American landscape, he also wrote about himself and his ideology. Several authors have shown that texts, such as travel accounts, are not just “mirrors that we hold up to the world, reflecting its shapes and structures immediately and without distortion. They are, instead, creatures of our own making, though their making is not entirely of our own choosing.”³⁷ When these scholars analyzed the travel writings of individuals such as “Mary Kingsley” and “Mr. Barrow,” both of whom journeyed into the African continent in the nineteenth century, they noticed that these early travelers homogenized indigenous peoples into a collective “other” or “they.” Apparently, this homogenization of the indigenous presence in the description of their landscapes was used to legitimize certain actions, such as the process of European expansion. In the ideological framework of the colonial mind, the narrated landscapes of “Mary Kingsley” and “Mr. Barrow” essentially

³⁷ Derek Gregory and Rex Walford, *Horizons in Human Geography* (Totowa: Barnes & Noble Books, 1989), quotation on page 2; Mary Louise Pratt, “Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen.” *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (1985): 119-143; Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism - Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994).

constructed and reconfirmed for their readers the inferiority of the “Dark Continent,” while simultaneously reinforcing the superiority of Western Europeans, and thus their moral right to colonization.

Similar to the travel writings of “Mary Kingsley” and “Mr. Barrow,” but in a different context, a critical analysis of Maximilian’s travel accounts will reveal that he is not only an observer but also a creator of the American landscape. If, in fact, “selectivity and subjectivity permeate the writing of historical narratives from the selection of facts to the combining of those facts into a story,”³⁸ then this “selectivity” and “subjectivity” should be displayed in Maximilian’s travel accounts. From his use of a particular language to describe the America he encountered, to the moments of “strategic silence,” Maximilian’s narrated landscape is full of meaning. “Travel writing is one of the most polyphonous of genres. It richly illustrates the fact that, in practice, ideology works through proliferation as well as containment of meaning.”³⁹ The following study identifies and analyzes these moments of proliferation and containment in the Prince’s narrative.

Deconstructing the Maximilian travel accounts is a challenging and overdue endeavor. It is surprising, in fact, that no studies have yet paid

³⁸ David Wishart, “The Selectivity of Historical Representation.” *Journal of Historical Geography*, 23 (1997): 111-118, quotation on page 111.

³⁹ Pratt, 1991, quotation on page 141.

attention to his narrated landscapes despite the plethora of other literature that exists on his North American venture. Although numerous scholars obviously realized the complexity of Maximilian's character,⁴⁰ they hesitated to explore the layers of meaning found in his narrative. It seems as if Karl Bodmer's paintings have blinded us, and too quickly we have retreated onto the safe grounds of Maximilian's "objectivity," while harvesting his travel accounts for the desired factual information. The purpose of this study is to close this gap, and to look beyond the façade of Maximilian's narrative.

In order to reach this goal it first is important to analyze Maximilian's remarkable career. Who was he? How was he brought up and educated? What events influenced his scientific pursuit and the way he saw the world around him? This biographical study also looks briefly at the development of the sciences in Germany at his time. Only with an understanding of Maximilian's curriculum vitae, the cultural and political framework of Germany in the early nineteenth century, and the influence of exceptional individuals such as Alexander von Humboldt and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach on the Prince, can I attempt to understand the ideological discourses of his narrative.

The next step is the analysis of his travel reports. Although many others have journeyed through the New Continent in the late eighteenth and

⁴⁰ E.g. Goetzmann, 1984; Porter, 1991; Schach, 1994; Gallagher and Sears, 1996.

early nineteenth centuries,⁴¹ Prince Maximilian's diaries are especially valuable because of his extensive observations. His objective was neither to find, say, the shortest route to the Pacific, nor to discover new resources for a developing nation. Rather, he was interested in the scientific study of the natural history and the indigenous population of North America. Because Maximilian followed his own agenda, his descriptions, which range from the rapidly urbanizing eastern seaboard to the open prairies of the northern Plains Indians, not only offer us an unique opportunity to experience the state of development of North America in the 1830s, but also provide a chance to look at his personality in a variety of often taxing situations.

From the day that Prince Maximilian and his companions left Europe, until their return to their home country, he meticulously recorded what he saw, heard, smelled and tasted. These recordings of the peoples, landscapes, and cultures he encountered offer an intriguing and personal insight into North America. His observations range from general descriptions of land use to varieties in the local popular culture (fashion, eating habits, etc.); from the "misbehavior" of backwoodsmen to the appearance of cholera; and from descriptions of vegetation change, fauna, and geologic formations to his

⁴¹ See especially John Francis McDermott, *Travelers on the Western Frontier* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970.)

famous anthropological observations of the Plains Indians. All of these aspects create a fascinating mosaic, one that deserves to be explored in its full historical and geographical context.

Maximilian's travel accounts offer not only an intriguing profile of the North American continent in the 1830s, but also an insight into the personality of a man who deserves to be better known. The deconstruction of Prince Maximilian's narrative will enrich both the understanding of the traveler as well as the time period and place he encountered. But no matter how carefully I read the available historical sources, can I ever reach a complete and unbiased understanding of the real Prince Maximilian and his America? Of course not. Although the objective of this research is to unveil hidden truths within Maximilian's narrative, I also realize that all historical representations, as well as their analyses, are "more or less equal to a simple pictograph, the barest of line drawings on a hide painting of the nineteenth century--or on the wall of an ancient cave."⁴² Maximilian's diaries are just one such line drawing on the wall of a German castle, but I am convinced that it is worthwhile to analyze the artist and his work.

⁴² N. Scott Momaday, quoted in David Wishart, "The Selectivity of Historical Representation." *Journal of Historical Geography*, 23 (1997): 111-118, quotation on page 117.

Research Strategy

To be able to identify individual aspects of Prince Maximilian's America, my research employs the following approach. First, I examine the narrator himself in order to understand the ideological matrix of his narrated landscapes. Chapter Two uses a wide variety of sources to illuminate Maximilian's intellectual growth. This biographical analysis takes a closer look at his upbringing in the Principality of Wied-Neuwied, examines his career as a naturalist, and studies his relationship with peers, friends, and family as Europe experienced the aftermath of the French Revolution.

Although in the framework of this research such a biographical analysis can by no means be complete, it should create an important basis for understanding Maximilian's narrative. Available sources range from an extensive correspondence with family members⁴³ and fellow naturalists⁴⁴ to his own publications and standard scholarly research. Between 1809 and 1860, for example, Maximilian wrote more than four hundred letters to the

⁴³ Maximilian's correspondence with his family members, especially his mother Louise and his brothers August and Carl, is widely scattered throughout the Brazilian Library of the Robert Bosch Company in Stuttgart (Germany), the archives of the castle of Neuwied (Germany), and the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska.

⁴⁴ I.e. Rudolf Schinz and Richard Harlan.

Swiss zoologist Rudolf Schinz.⁴⁵ This long-lasting friendship with Schinz opens a unique window into the world of the Prince.

Maximilian's own publications in connection with his travels to both South and North America also span a period of almost a half century (1817-1865). Aside from his well-known travel accounts, Maximilian published more than thirty papers during his lifetime, which appeared in periodicals such as *Isis*, *Academia Caesarea Leopoldina Nova Acta*, *Wiegmann Archiv*, *Journal für Ornithologie*, and *Verhandlung der Naturhistorischen Vereinigung*.⁴⁶ A thorough analysis of these publications should shed considerable light on the Prince's intellect.

Finally, there is a vast literature that explores differing aspects of his

⁴⁵ The complete Schinz correspondence is housed at the Central Library in Zurich, Switzerland, and is available on microfilm.

⁴⁶ Some of the most important publications are:
Maximilian Prinz zu Wied, "Naturhistorische Reise in Brasilien." *Isis*, 1 (1817): 937-952.
_____, "Kurze Nachricht über den Gang meiner Reise in Brasilien zwischen dem 13. und 23. Grad südlicher Breite." *Isis*, 2 (1817): 1513-1520.
_____, *Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* (Frankfurt: Brönner, 1820-21), vol. 1-2.
_____, *Reise in das innere Nordamerika in den Jahren 1832-1834* (Koblenz: Hölscher, 1839-41), Zwei Bde., 1 Vignettenbd., 1 Atlas.
_____, "Einige Bemerkungen über George Catlins Werk: Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North-American Indians." *Isis* (1842): 726-741.
_____, "Über den Papagei von Nord-Amerika, *Psittacus (Conurus) Carolinensis*." *Journal für Ornithologie* (1857), 97-105.
_____, *Verzeichnis der auf seiner Reise in Nord Amerika beobachteten Säugethiere* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1862).
_____, "Über die amerikanischen Urnationen." *Verhandlung der naturhistorischen Vereinigung* (1863), 54-56.
_____, *Verzeichnis der Reptilien, welche auf einer Reise im nördlichen Amerika beobachtet wurden* (Dresden: Blochmann, 1865).

life work.⁴⁷ Despite their shortcomings these works help establish a solid biographical baseline for an interpretation of the travel accounts. Schmidt's publication from 1985, for instance, gives us an inventory of Maximilian's library.⁴⁸ With such insight into his study materials I also gain a better understanding of the Prince's expectations and preconceived notions in regard to North America.

Once the basic background sources are analyzed and a biographical framework is established, the focus can shift to the deconstruction of the narrative. The major objective of Chapter Three is to carefully trace Maximilian's journey through North America and expose the multifaceted dimension of his travel accounts.⁴⁹ This analysis not only draws a profile of the continent in the 1830s, as seen through the Prince's eyes, but it also displays the hidden layers of meaning in his narrative, which I call the Linnaean, strategic, and ideological landscapes.

⁴⁷ See literature review above.

⁴⁸ See Appendix B for more information on Maximilian's library.

⁴⁹ The travel accounts were first published in Germany in 1839-41, and translated into English by Lloyd in 1843. Unfortunately, this translation omitted much of Maximilian's linguistic and botanical observations. A second English translation appeared in 1906 and was edited by Reuben Thwaites as part of his *Early Western Travels* (vols. 22-25). Thwaites based his version on Lloyd's earlier work, but filled in the missing information from Maximilian's own published travel accounts. There also is a French translation, which was published in 1840-43. In addition, several reprints of the German version exist, some of which are still available today. For my analysis I will use the original German version from 1839-41.

In Chapter Four I then discuss these three concepts in more depth. The Linnaean landscapes of Maximilian's travel accounts resemble parts of the narrative in which the Prince, as a member of the European scientific Reconnaissance, adhered to "fact" as strictly as possible. Here he almost mechanically described the physical characteristics of flora and fauna, of the Indigenous population, and, to a lesser degree, of the African-American and European-American populations. This layer commonly lacks emotion and opinion, and includes everything that Maximilian considered noteworthy (This noteworthiness is, of course, also somewhat subjective!).

The strategic landscapes of Maximilian's narrative display the Prince as an editor and censor of information he gathered during his North American travels. Here he made decisions about what he wanted to report to his country fellowmen and the European scientific community, and what he considered either irrelevant, inappropriate, or socially and politically too sensitive. This is the layer of Maximilian's narrative which is directly influenced by his intellectual matrix and cultural background, and where he consciously emphasized or contained aspects of the American environment.

The ideological landscapes of Maximilian's travel accounts are, by nature, somewhat more subtle in their appearance. This is the part of the narrative that neither mechanically described nor consciously edited the

information available. Here the narrator gives away clues to his intellectual and cultural background in an unguarded fashion. Although statements he here made were not specifically aiming at a particular group or edited for a prospective audience, a careful analysis of these landscapes can give us an additional insight into the Prince's character and his time period.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I summarize the findings of the previous chapters with a short synopsis of Prince Maximilian's America and a concluding discussion of the multifaceted aspects of his travel accounts. In addition, I make some cautionary remarks to *my* interpretation of the Maximilian travel accounts, before I close this dissertation.

Chapter 2

Biographical Analysis of Prince Maximilian

[Great uncle Maximilian] was already sixty [years old] when I got to know him I never saw him except in perfect health both physically and mentally, without teeth, [and] some of his strands of hair combed to the front. His legs were crooked, which, [however], never hindered him to walk most rapidly. [He had] small, sparkling eyes, a high forehead, [and] a head shaped like a true naturalist, like old professor Owen. He was full of high spirits and jovial, always giving people nicknames, but very kind and eloquent, and exceedingly unassuming.¹

Before the deconstruction of any narrative can begin, one needs to understand the narrator. Although the objective of this study is not to write a complete biography on Prince Maximilian, it should at least provide a clear sense of his personality and the events that shaped him. Only in the light of such a biographical and historical analysis will it be possible to identify and interpret moments of quiescence and proliferation in his travel accounts. And only then will it become clear that Maximilian acted both as an observer and creator of the American landscape. His narrative is not simply a factual report, but a document shaped and informed by his upbringing and ideology and the accepted views of his time period.

¹ Carmen Sylva, "Mein Großonkel Maximilian." *Velhagen & Klasing's Monatshefte* (1912/13): 245-250, quotation on page 245. Carmen Sylva was also known as Queen Elizabeth of Romania. This excerpt is from her memoirs. If not noted otherwise, translations of German sources are by the author.

A Life Narrative of Prince Maximilian

Maximilian Alexander Philipp was born the eighth of eleven children on September 23, 1782. Such a family may appear unusually large to us, but families of this size were common at the time, for wars and disease took a high toll on everyone, even the European royalty, and many births were needed to ensure that some children made it to adulthood.² Maximilian's parents were Friedrich Carl Count of Wied-Neuwied (1741-1809) and Louise Wilhelmine Countess of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleburg (1747-1823). Three of his siblings already passed away as infants. Antoinette Charlotte Victoria died on October 26, 1777, only fifteen days after she turned one. Ludwig Georg Carl passed away on November 14, 1781, just a few weeks before his first birthday. And yet another brother, who is mentioned only as "a son" in family records, was stillborn on April 24, 1786.³ Moreover, Maria Caroline Christiana, the oldest sister of Maximilian, fell victim to disease at the early age of thirty- one.

Of the remaining seven siblings three died while serving in the army. Both Clemens Carl Friedrich and Christian Friedrich passed away in 1800, while Heinrich Victor was fatally wounded in 1812 when he fought against

² E.g. Maria Theresa, the Empress of Austria, gave birth to sixteen children, and Louise, the Queen of Prussia, had thirteen.

³ This unnamed brother of Prince Maximilian is not accounted for in many publications, leading to the common confusion of ten versus eleven children.

Napoleon in the peninsular campaign under the Duke of Wellington. In the end, only four out of eleven children were fortunate enough to reach an old age. Besides Maximilian, these were Louise Philippine Charlotte (1773-1864), Johann August Carl (1779-1855),⁴ and Carl Emil Friedrich Heinrich (1785-1864).⁵

Maximilian spent much of his childhood with his brothers and sisters in the baroque castle of Neuwied and in the nearby summer residence at Monrepos. The city of Neuwied (Figure 1), which is located on the Rhine about ten miles north of Koblenz, had been founded in 1653 by Friedrich III Count of Wied-Neuwied (1618-1698).⁶ Under Count Friedrich's leadership Neuwied soon became known as a place of refuge for victims of the political and religious disorder of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Among the early religious refugees were Mennonites, Moravian Brethren (*Herrnhuter*), Jews, and members of a Lutheran group called the Church of the True Inspiration

⁴ Johann August Carl, as the eldest surviving son, became reigning head of the principality in 1802 after his father resigned. Freedom from such duty gave Maximilian the necessary time to follow the path of a naturalist.

⁵ Information on the Wied family tree was provided by Mr. Anhäuser from the archives of the Abbey Rommersdorf in Neuwied. In the remainder of this text I will refer to Maximilian's siblings by their accepted first names: Louise, August, and Carl.

⁶ There were actually two related principalities (formerly dukedoms) "of Wied." The lower one was called "Wied-Neuwied," whereas the upper one was recognized as "Wied-Runkel." In 1824 the principality of Wied-Runkel ceased to exist with the death of its last heir. Consequently, the related principality of Wied-Neuwied inherited the lands of the upper principality, and a hyphenation of the name became unnecessary (Herman Josef Roth, *Westerwald und Amerika - Prinz Maximilian zu Wied: Jäger, Forscher, Reisender* (Montabaur: Verlag der Museen des Westerwaldkreises, 1995a)).



Figure 1: The City of Neuwied in 1784 (engraving by C. F. Tröger and F. Leizelt). In the same year the countship of Wied was elevated to a principality. The castle of Neuwied can be found in the upper right corner.

(*Inspirierten*).⁷ Political refugees from the French Revolution added to this mixture, so that Neuwied was quite a cosmopolitan place by the end of the eighteenth century. Growing up in a community of diverse nationalities, languages, and religious beliefs, the young Prince had the chance to develop a certain cultural sophistication that enabled him to confront other cultures and indigenous peoples with the degree of tolerance and openness necessary to

⁷ Perhaps motivated by Maximilian's travel accounts, the *Inspirierten* emigrated to America in 1846. Their descendants now live in Amana, Iowa (Rheinischer Verein für Denkmalpflege und Landschaftsschutz (RVDL), *Neuwied - Schloss und Stadtkern*, Rheinische Kunststätten, Vol. 310 (Köln: Neusser Druckerei und Verlag GmbH, 1986)).

gain their confidence, and, at times, even their friendship.⁸

Maximilian's childhood was perhaps most influenced by two events: the deteriorating relationship of his father Friedrich Carl and his mother Louise Wilhelmine, and the French Revolution. The marriage of his parents had been in serious crisis since the mid 1780s, shortly after his birth. Consequently, the Prince and his siblings did not see much of their father, while the mother became their lone parent and point of reference. In addition to his marital problems, Maximilian's father also was at odds with his own father, the reigning Prince Alexander (1706-1791), over the ways to govern and manage the principality. After numerous affairs, a temporary disinheritance, a tumultuous period of eleven years as ruler of the principality, and efforts by his wife and cousins to declare him insane, Maximilian's father finally resigned his title in 1802. In that same year he accepted a divorce from his wife and retired to Freiburg an embittered man, where he died seven years later.⁹ Thus, it is perhaps not too surprising that in all the available correspondence and in his diaries, Prince Maximilian never even mentioned his father.

The aftershocks of the French Revolution also had a significant effect on the principality and, thus, on Maximilian. On the side of Prussia, Neuwied

⁸ Roth, 1995a; Paul Schach, Maximilian, "Prince of Wied (1782-1876): Reconsidered." *Great Plains Quarterly* 14 (1994): 5-20.

⁹ Renate Schlemper-Rheinsberg, "Friedrich Carl Fürst zu Wied (1741-1809)." *Heimat-Jahrbuch 1980* (Neuwied: Landkreis Neuwied, 1980), 64-67.

participated in the Coalition Wars in Europe, a series of conflicts that essentially tried to stop the expansion of the French Republic and its revolutionary ideas. In the years 1795-97 the city of Neuwied itself turned into a battlefield as French troops time and again besieged the principality.¹⁰ Life for the young Prince and his siblings was very dangerous during these times, and Maximilian's mother was forced to flee with her children to the dukedom of Saxe-Meiningen, which was located about 130 miles east of the principality.

Louise Wilhelmine not only effectively sheltered her sons and daughters from the political turmoil in Europe, but she also had considerable influence on their education. She was herself a highly intelligent woman and greatly interested in the arts and sciences, and she strongly supported the intellectual growth of each of her children. The eldest surviving son, August, was prepared for his duties and responsibilities as the future reigning Prince of Neuwied. Both Louise and Carl went to Dresden to study at the Academy of Arts, while Maximilian was able to follow his calling as a naturalist.

The education of the young Maximilian was carefully supervised by a private tutor, Lieutenant Christian Friedrich Hoffmann, who had a sincere interest in natural science and archeology.¹¹ Consequently, Hoffmann

¹⁰ The Principality of Wied lost its imperial immediacy ("Reichsunmittelbarkeit") when the Holy Roman Empire ceased to exist in 1806. Initially, the principality became part of Nassau, but nine years later, in 1815, it was integrated into Prussia.

¹¹ Maximilian's mother sponsored Hoffmann's excavations of Roman ruins in the vicinity of Neuwied (Heddesdorf and Niederbieber) (Roth, 1995a).

emphasized these aspects in his instruction, providing an important basis for the Prince's later career. As a member of an aristocratic family it was also Maximilian's privilege to hunt in the Wied preserves in the forested region between the rivers Rhine, Sieg, Dill, and Lahn, known as the *Westerwald* (Figure 2). Already at a young age he became a passionate hunter, and during his excursions through the forests around Neuwied, Montabaur, Westerburg, and along the Lahn he learned much about the local flora and fauna.¹² His first trophy, a duck, which he shot at the age of six, was the beginning of a lifelong passion which, by the middle of the nineteenth century, had turned into a collection of more than sixteen hundred birds, four hundred mammals, four hundred amphibians and reptiles, and more than five hundred fish, plus many ethnological artifacts.¹³

In 1800, at the age of eighteen, Maximilian accepted an invitation from King Friedrich Wilhelm III to enter the Prussian army at the rank of a lieutenant. After two years of training in the royal guard he was promoted to the rank of captain. The battles at Jena and Auerstedt against Napoleon in 1806 proved to be disasters for the Prussian army, and, consequently, Maximilian and others were captured on October 28 near Prenzlau. Released

¹² Roth, 1995a.

¹³ This natural history collection had been open to the public in the castle of Neuwied since 1817 (Siegfried Schmidt, *Die Büchersammlung des Prinzen Maximilian zu Wied* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1985).



Figure 2: The region of the *Westerwald* (Hucke, 1991).

in an exchange of prisoners after a couple of days, he retired from the military to pursue scientific studies at home and at the University of Göttingen. In 1813, however, the Prince again returned to active military duty with the outbreak of the Wars of Liberation (1813-1815). He entered the Third Brandenburg Hussar Regiment as a major and later transferred to the cavalry. After about a dozen battles, and decorated with the Iron Cross, he entered Paris with the victorious allies on March 31, 1814.¹⁴

During his stay in Paris, Maximilian also took the opportunity to visit with

¹⁴ Roth, 1995a; Schach, 1994.

befriended scientists such as Georges Baron de Cuvier (1769-1832), the founder of paleontology and comparative anatomy, and the zoologist Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772-1844). He also met Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) for the first time there,¹⁵ as well as his companion, the botanist Aimé Bonpland (1773-1858). Alexander von Humboldt (the famous German naturalist) had been living in Paris since returning from his Latin America expedition in 1799-1804, and he seemed to have been an important influence and model for the Prince. As Karl Victor (1913-1973), a distant relative of Maximilian, wrote: "there is not the slightest doubt that [Maximilian's] paramount interest in the American continent derived from the influence of the older and famous scholar, who from that time was to remain his model, friend, and mentor."¹⁶

If Alexander von Humboldt was the most important individual in the Prince's intellectual life, certainly the most influential education institution was the University of Göttingen. Founded in 1737 by George II August, King of England and Elector of Hannover, this university was also known as the *Georgia Augusta* and was considered one of the finest institutions in Europe.

¹⁵ Considerable discussion exists as to when Maximilian first met with Alexander von Humboldt. However, in a letter to Rudolf Schinz from May 28, 1814, the Prince himself clearly stated that ". . . [Alexander von] Humboldt and [Aimé] Bonpland now also belong to the number of my acquaintances."

¹⁶ Karl Viktor, Prince of Wied, "Maximilian Prinz zu Wied, sein Leben und seine Reisen." In *Maximilian Prinz zu Wied--Unveröffentlichte Bilder und Handschriften zur Völkerkunde Brasiliens*, Josef Röder and Hermann Trimborn (Bonn: Dümmler Verlag, 1954), 13-25.

Among its distinguished scholars in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were the mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss and Christian Wilhelm Büttner, a pioneer in the field of anthropology. In 1811-12 Maximilian studied in Göttingen under Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, one of Büttner's brightest students, who had already been Alexander von Humboldt's teacher.

Blumenbach was one of the leading theorists of the Enlightenment on the development of the human race. His doctoral thesis *On the Natural Variety of Mankind*, which was published in 1775, had tried to determine whether the known human races were varieties of one species or several distinct species, deciding for the former.¹⁷ Blumenbach, as Büttner before him, used travel accounts extensively to support his lectures. His discourse on the variety of mankind must have left an important imprint on Maximilian, because the Prince repeatedly raised this subject in his later discussions of the indigenous peoples of Brazil and North America.¹⁸

The context of Maximilian at the *Georgia Augusta* is also important in that William Backhouse Astor, the second eldest son of the prominent American businessman, John Jacob Astor, studied there at about the same

¹⁷ Blumenbach assumed there were five races: American, Caucasian, Ethiopian, Malayan, and Mongolian.

¹⁸ Bernhard Gondorf, "Die Expedition von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied und Karl Bodmer in das innere Nordamerika." *Prärie- und Plainsindianer - Die Reise in das innere Nord-Amerika von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied und Karl Bodmer* (Mainz: Hermann Schmidt, 1993), 37-60; Roth, 1995.

time.¹⁹ Although we know little about the extent of their friendship, this university connection was most helpful for Maximilian's subsequent trip to the United States, because the boats he used on the Missouri River were owned by Astor's American Fur Company. Moreover, one of the several letters of introduction Maximilian carried with him when he traveled through North America was written by his former fellow student.

It can be assumed that Maximilian's interest in the natural history of the Americas, and specifically in their indigenous peoples, found its inspiration first in Blumenbach's lectures in 1811-12 and then in the personality of Alexander von Humboldt. Humboldt even encouraged him to realize his travel plans, especially to Brazil. Humboldt himself once had wanted to visit that country during his trip to the Americas in 1799-1804, but had not been able to receive a visa because the Portuguese government then jealously protected her colonies overseas. Just a few years later, though, in 1807, the situation changed dramatically when Napoleon's armies advanced in Europe, and the Portuguese royal family was forced to flee to Brazil. Literally overnight it became imperative to survey and map the enormous riches of this new royal home. Thus, naturalists such as Maximilian were now welcomed.²⁰ With the conclusion of the Peace of Paris in 1814 and Maximilian's subsequent leave of

¹⁹ Schach, 1994.

²⁰ Gondorf, 1993; Schach, 1994.

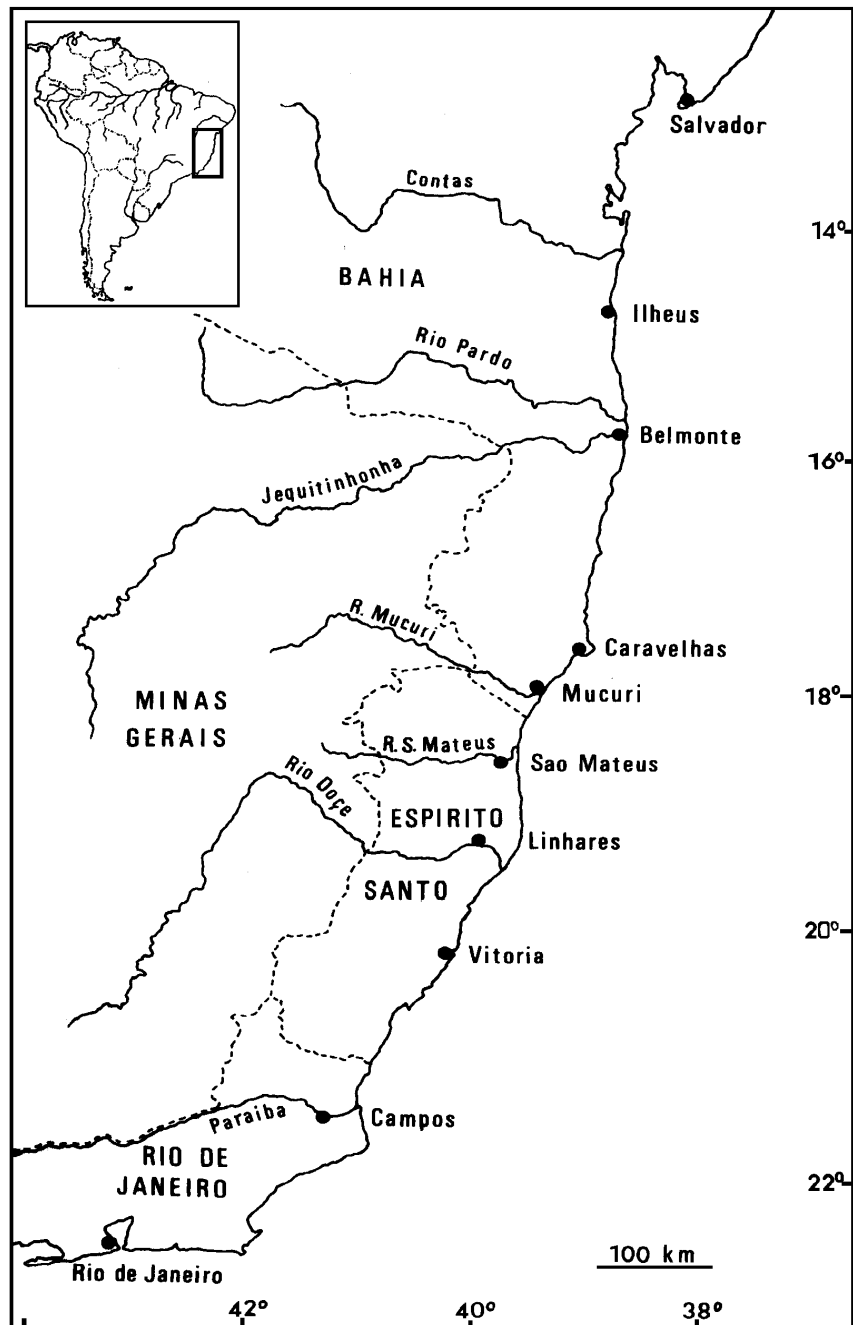
absence from the military, the way was free for him to prepare an expedition for the study of Brazilian natural history and indigenous peoples.²¹

Maximilian left Neuwied in early May 1815, taking with him the hunter and taxidermist David Dreidoppel and the gardener, Christian Simonis. They arrived via London in Rio de Janeiro on July 16, and were welcomed by the Russian consul, Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff (1774-1852), also a former student of Blumenbach. Through Langsdorff, Maximilian met two German naturalists already in the country, the ornithologist Georg Wilhelm Freyreiss (1781-1825) and the botanist Friedrich Sellow (1789-1831). They then joined the Prince on an extended journey through southeastern Brazil (Figure 3).²²

For nearly two years, from July 1815 until May 1817, Prince Maximilian and his companions traveled along the coastal sector of Brazil between Rio de Janeiro (23° S) and Salvador (13° S). One major goal of the expedition was to study the flora and fauna of this region extensively. With the help of Freyreiss and Sellow, Maximilian collected and described hundreds of plants,

²¹ Maximilian received permission for this expedition from Friedrich Wilhelm III, King of Prussia, in January, 1815, with the help of his brothers Carl and August, who attended the Congress at Vienna. When Napoleon fled from Elba to start his reign of “one hundred days,” Maximilian struggled with his conscience and almost called off the journey. However, his family persuaded him to continue travel preparations and, in May 1815, he finally left for Brazil (Schach, 1994).

²² For his travels Maximilian adopted the pseudonym Baron of Braunsberg, a name that referred to an old family line from the thirteenth century. His younger brother Heinrich Victor had earlier used this same name during the peninsular campaign against Napoleon in order to protect the family from possible repercussions. Maximilian continued to use this name during his travels to North America, either out of habit or, perhaps, simply to honor his fallen brother Victor.



---- Route of Travel in Southeastern Brazil

Figure 3: Maximilian's Expedition to Brazil in 1815-17 (Berger, 1995)

birds, and mammals, many of them for the first time. Examples include the plant genus *Goethea*, Maximilian's Parrot (*Pionus maximiliani*), and the Caatinga Mouse (*Wiedomys pyrrhorhinus*). Today his descriptions of the "Mata Atlantica" of southeastern Brazil are an important baseline contribution to the faunistic and floristic research of this region.²³

Although Maximilian focussed his efforts on zoology, and especially on ornithology, ethnological studies were another important aspect of his journey to southeastern Brazil. The Prince had chosen the region because it was relatively undisturbed by European civilization. Thus, he had the chance to study its indigenous cultures before they were significantly transformed by outside influence. In retrospect perhaps the most important contributions of this expedition are the recordings he made of the language and material culture of the Botocudos, and, to a lesser extent, of other indigenous groups including the Purí and Pataxo.²⁴

Upon returning to Neuwied, Maximilian devoted himself to the analysis

²³ Martin Berger, "Über Maximilian zu Wieds ornithologische Forschungen in Südost-Brasilien und die Änderungen der Avifauna der Mata Atlantica." In: *Maximilian Prinz zu Wied: Jäger, Reisender, Naturforscher*, Fauna und Flora in Rheinlandpfalz, Beiheft 17 (Landau: Gesellschaft für Naturschutz und Ornithologie Rheinland-Pfalz e.V., 1995), 281-312; Hans Engländer, "Die Säugetierausbeute der Ostbrasilien-Expedition des Prinzen Maximilian zu Wied." In: *Maximilian Prinz zu Wied: Jäger, Reisender, Naturforscher*, Fauna und Flora in Rheinlandpfalz, Beiheft 17 (Landau: Gesellschaft für Naturschutz und Ornithologie Rheinland-Pfalz e.V., 1995), 247-280; Bernhard Zepernick, "Botanische Ergebnisse der Amerikareisen des Prinzen Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied." In: *Maximilian Prinz zu Wied: Jäger, Reisender, Naturforscher*, Fauna und Flora in Rheinlandpfalz, Beiheft 17 (Landau: Gesellschaft für Naturschutz und Ornithologie Rheinland-Pfalz e.V., 1995), 229-246.

²⁴ Hans Läng, *Indianer waren meine Freunde - Leben und Werk Karl Bodmers (1809-1893)* (Zug: Knobel Art Collections, 1993); Roth, 1995a; Schach, 1994.

of his Brazilian artifacts. A preliminary report went to the journal *Isis* (Jena, Germany) in 1817. His most important publication, however, was the two-volume *Journey to Brazil in the Years 1815-1817* ("Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815-1817"), which appeared in Frankfurt (Main) in 1820-21. The text was accompanied by a volume of illustrations, most of which were done by the Prince himself.²⁵

In the late 1820s Maximilian began preparations for a second major expedition. Originally he played with the idea of exploring Labrador or the Kirgisian Steppe in Russia, but by 1830 he had decided to go to North America.²⁶ One stated purpose of his journey was to continue his zoological and botanical studies, but he also intended to compare the indigenous cultures of North America with those of southeastern Brazil in order to verify Blumenbach's thesis that the peoples of South and North America were, in fact, members of the same race.

Because of his experience in South America, and the realization of his own limited ability to portray landscapes or people, he decided to hire the Swiss painter Karl Bodmer (1809-1893) for this expedition. Bodmer had been working as a landscape artist in Koblenz near the estate of Neuwied since 1828, and this proximity must have brought the artist to the attention of the

²⁵ Roth, 1995a; Schach, 1994.

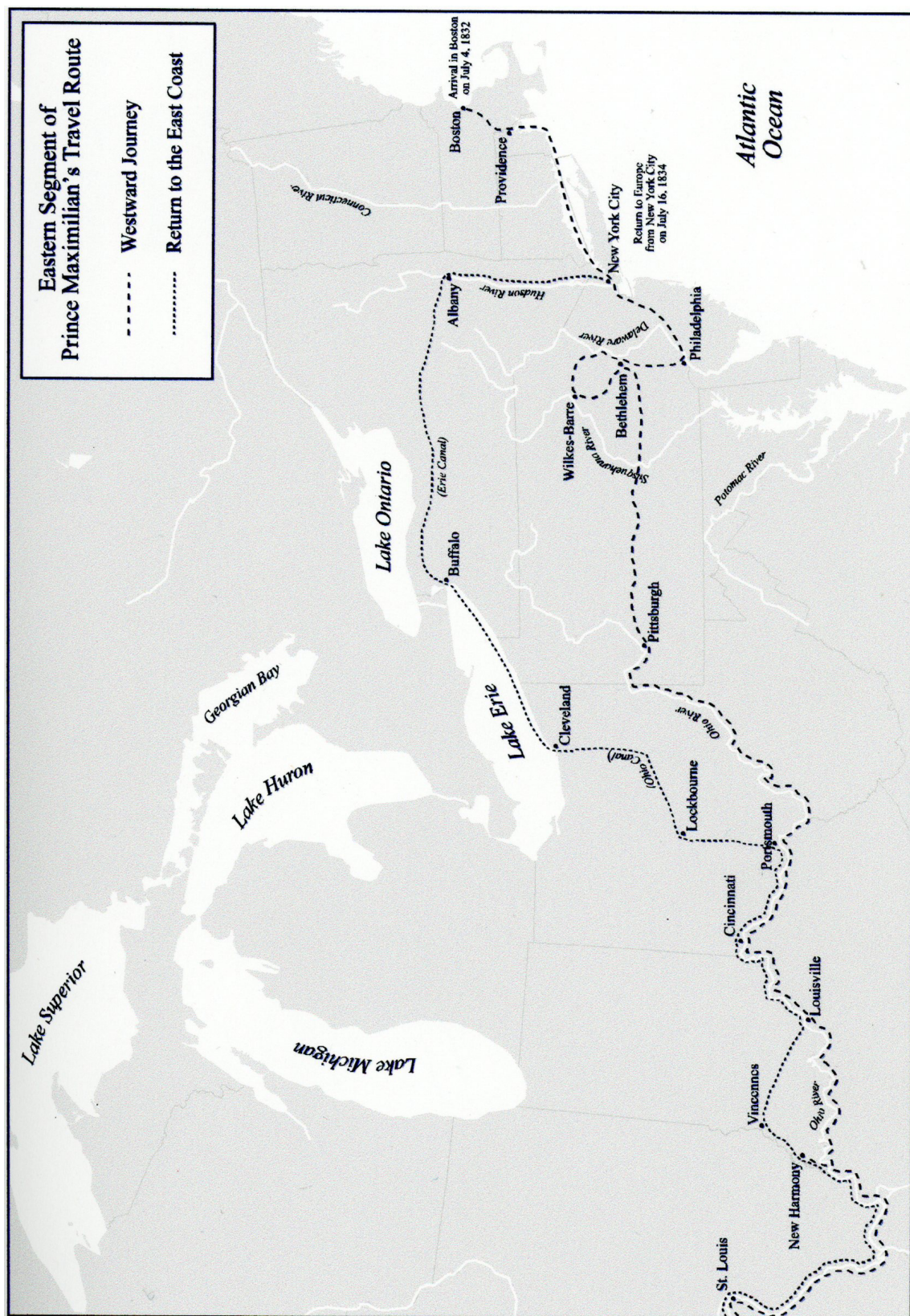
²⁶ Roth, 1995a; Schach, 1994.

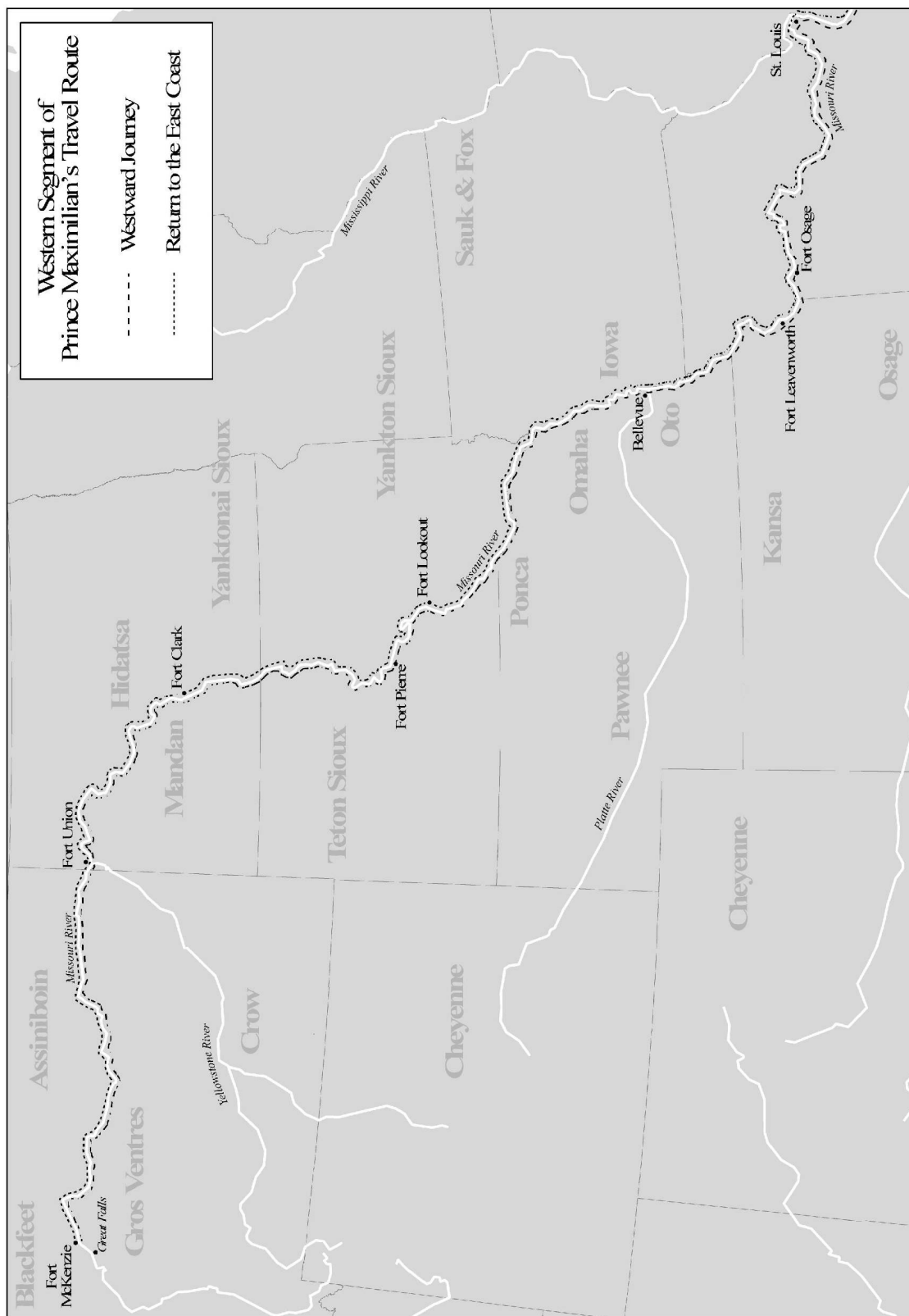
Prince. In May 1832, the two men boarded a ship in the Netherlands, accompanied by the experienced hunter and taxidermist, David Dreidoppel, who already had been on the Brazil expedition. They arrived in Boston on Independence Day, and traveled to New York, Philadelphia, and other eastern places before heading on to the interior of the continent (Figure 4a, Figure 4b, and Appendix C). On their journey, Prince Maximilian meticulously recorded changes in flora and fauna, methods of land use, and the manners and customs of the people they encountered.²⁷

Because of a serious illness resembling cholera, Maximilian was forced to stay the first winter (1832-33) in New Harmony, Indiana, where he enjoyed the company of the American naturalist Thomas Say and the French botanist Charles Alexandre Lesueur.²⁸ The five-month stay in Indiana also enabled him to complete the preparations for his ethnological studies among the Indians. Karl Bodmer stayed with the Prince and Dreidoppel in New Harmony initially, passing the time by making sketches and helping to collect natural history specimens. After two months, however, he decided to make a short trip to New Orleans to discover another part of the country while the Prince continued to recover. In the spring of 1833 the reunited party finally continued their journey

²⁷ David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher (eds.), *Karl Bodmer's America* (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1984); Roth, 1995a; Schach, 1994.

²⁸ This is the same Thomas Say who accompanied Major Stephen H. Long on his expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1819-20. More on Thomas Say and Charles Alexandre Lesueur in Chapter Three.





and Maximilian made arrangements in St. Louis to travel up the Missouri with boats belonging to the American Fur Company. After short stops in Forts Pierre, Clark and Union, they arrived at Fort McKenzie, the westernmost point of their expedition on August 19, 1833.²⁹

Originally Maximilian wanted to extend his studies farther upriver into the Rocky Mountains, but the hostility of the three Blackfoot tribes (Piegan, Blood, Siksika) at the time forced him to reconsider this plan. After about five weeks of fieldwork around Fort McKenzie, the group returned to Fort Clark (near present-day Bismarck) to stay for the winter of 1833-34. Here the Prince devoted his time to a thorough study of the Mandan and to a less complete analysis of the nearby Hidatsa (Figure 5) and Arikara. He mainly concentrated on recording their customs and culture, including one of the most important and elaborate ceremonies of the Mandan, the *O-kee-pa*.³⁰ At the same time, Karl Bodmer created some of his most famous paintings, including portraits of Mató-Topé (a Mandan chief) and Péhriska-Rúpha (a Hidatsa Indian).³¹

On April 18, 1834, after a long and hard winter, during which

²⁹ Hunt and Gallagher, 1984; Roth, 1995a; Schach, 1994.

³⁰ For a thorough description of the *O-kee-pa* see Colin F. Taylor, *Catlin's O-kee-pa* (Wyk: Verlag für Amerikanistik, 1996).

³¹ Hunt and Gallagher, 1984; Schach, 1994; Axel Schulze-Thulin, *Indianer der Prärien and Plains* (Stuttgart: Linden-Museum, 1987).



Figure 5: The travelers meet the Hidatsa Indians near Fort Clark (detail from a drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41). Maximilian, who stood only five feet and four inches tall, is depicted in the center of this drawing. To the right of him, in the foreground, is Bodmer himself. The person between them, in the background, is David Dreidoppel.

Maximilian suffered from scurvy,³² they began their journey back to the East Coast. The trip went via St. Louis (and the Cahokia Mounds), New Harmony, Vincennes, Cincinnati, Buffalo and the Niagara Falls, to New York City. On July 16, 1834, they left New York for Le Havre (France), where they docked on the 8th of August. With them they had more than four hundred of Bodmer's paintings, extensive field notes and journals on the physical and cultural

³² A common myth has it that Prince Maximilian was "sans teeth" when he came to North America. However he lost most of his teeth only at the end of his trip due to this scurvy incident (Sylvia, 1912-13).

landscapes of the United States, specimens of its flora and fauna, and artifacts from the indigenous peoples they encountered.³³

As soon as he returned to Neuwied, Maximilian began the analysis of his North American experience. In 1839-41 he published the two-volume *Journey to the Interior of North America* ("Reise in das Innere Nordamerika"), accompanied by an atlas of 33 vignettes, as well as 48 large engravings. This publication, containing not only Maximilian's thorough ethnological studies and his descriptions of the American landscapes, but also Karl Bodmer's illustrations, is the two men's most valuable contribution to posterity.

As recognition for his lifelong achievements Maximilian became an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Munich in 1820, a corresponding member of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia in 1834,³⁴ and a member of the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin in 1853. In addition, he was awarded the title of major general in the Royal Prussian army in 1840 by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and he received an honorary doctoral degree from the University of Jena in 1858.³⁵ Finally, just two years before his death, in 1865, Maximilian was honored to receive a personal visit by Crown-Princess Isabel of Brazil, daughter of Pedro II. On her honeymoon to

³³ Roth, 1995a; Schach, 1994.

³⁴ See Appendix D.

³⁵ Roth, 1995a; Schach, 1994.

Europe she came to Neuwied to meet the famous naturalist, who had traveled to her home country a half century before.³⁶

Maximilian Alexander Philipp, Prince of Wied, died on February 3, 1867. Today, a monument near the castle of Neuwied, which was erected in 1987, commemorates the achievements of his lifetime, and especially his North American expedition. The name “Maximilian” reappears regularly in the house of Wied, since it customarily names newborns after its ancestors. Thus, just recently, on August 10, 1999, the fresh voice of Prince Franz Alexander Friedrich Wilhelm Maximilian (or shortly Prince Maximilian), son of Prince Carl and Princess Isabella, was heard for the first time.

Education and Passions of a Naturalist and Explorer

Maximilian’s career as a naturalist began with a lifelong passion for hunting (Figure 6). In his time this was a privilege almost exclusively in the hands of the aristocracy. From the time of his first trophy at the age of six to his last recorded, but unsuccessful, hunting trip at the age of eighty-four,³⁷ cycles of the various hunting seasons influenced the Prince throughout his life. He used

³⁶ Bernd Willscheid, “Besuch der brasilianischen Kronprinzessin Isabel bei Maximilian zu Wied.” *Heimat-Jahrbuch 1999* (Neuwied: Landkreis Neuwied, 1999), 92-95.

³⁷ See Maximilian’s last entry in his hunting journal (Wied Archives, no signature).



Figure 6: The hunter Maximilian in old age (photo by R. Hillen, year unknown).

every opportunity, it seems, to take rifle and notebook in hand and explore the woods of the principality. On the tracks of deer, hare, and fox, and while searching the skies for buzzards and hawks, he became intimately acquainted with the local environment.

But for Maximilian hunting was not just a privilege. He took the activity seriously, and, like a steward, recorded the results of his excursions in two

volumes of what he called “The Hunter’s Green Book” (*Des Weidmanns Gruenes Buch*).³⁸ How passionately the Prince followed this pastime becomes clear when one looks at the careful design of these volumes. Information on the art of hunting, game populations, flora, and weather conditions are carefully arranged and organized. Individual chapters are illustrated with hunting scenes and anatomical descriptions of animals, while selections from German poets speak of Diana, the goddess of the hunt, and various other aspects of Maximilian’s beloved pastime.³⁹

Maximilian’s study of natural history and his extensive collections of plants and animals clearly grew out of this love for hunting. Initially under the supervision of his private tutor Christian Friedrich Hoffmann, and later as an autodidact, he methodically learned how to be a naturalist. If it had not been for the Napoleonic Wars he might have intensified his studies early on at the University of Göttingen.⁴⁰ But, in the end, he had only the year 1811-12 at the

³⁸ See especially Erhard Ueckermann, “Maximilian Prinz zu Wied (1782-1867) als Jäger im heimisch fürstlich wiedischen Gebiet,” *Zeitschrift für Jagdwissenschaft* 42 (1996): 226-238. These two volumes are private property of the Wied family and are housed at the castle of Neuwied.

³⁹ In 1831 Maximilian planned and created a thousand hectare game park in the Principality of Wied when it became clear that the changing social and political climate in Germany would make it increasingly difficult to continue hunting trips on land that was not owned by himself or his family. This game park became especially important after the Revolution of 1848 and was maintained until 1865 (Ueckermann, 1996).

⁴⁰ Some sources claim that Maximilian already studied at the University of Göttingen in 1800 (see Wied, 1954). However, according to Schmidt (1985), the matriculation register at Göttingen does not support such a statement.

Georgia Augusta, and thus had to gain much of his knowledge laboriously through independent reading and an extensive correspondence with fellow naturalists.⁴¹ As he lamented to one correspondent in 1820:

It is so difficult to determine all animals if one doesn't live in a large city with a good [scientific] library. Missing is also the necessary [direct] contact with other naturalists [at such institutions as the universities of Göttingen and Munich], which I can only painfully establish through infinite numbers of letters after many hours of writing. Often I am literally crushed from that.

. . .⁴²

Aside from his correspondence, Maximilian's private library was one of the most important assets in his education and ongoing research. Neuwied was far away from the major universities of Göttingen and Munich, and, although the University of Bonn was much nearer, it had only been established in the year 1818 and initially lacked the necessary resources. Therefore, if the Prince wanted to stay up-to-date in his fields of interest, he had to depend on his ability to buy, trade, and even borrow and copy the newest publications.⁴³ Throughout his correspondence with the Swiss zoologist Rudolf Schinz, a

⁴¹ See especially Roth (1995a).

⁴² Maximilian in a letter to Rudolf Schinz on February 24, 1820 (Zentralbibliothek Zürich (ZBZ): MS Car XV 175, Umschlag II). If not noted otherwise, translations of Maximilian's correspondence are by the author.

⁴³ It might sound strange that Maximilian, as a prince, had to trade or borrow books, but his appanage apparently was rather limited. He is known to have painstakingly copied Siebold's *Fauna japonica* and other highly desirable publications to avoid the expense of purchase (Roth, 1995a).

longtime friend and colleague, the issue of acquiring desirable volumes comes up repeatedly. Almost to his very last day Maximilian seized every opportunity to acquire books at auctions, in second-hand bookshops, during his travels, and via his correspondence.⁴⁴

A closer look at his book collection (which also included volumes in French, English, Portuguese, and Latin) provides insight into his major interests and degree of sophistication in regard to the developing branches of the sciences. At the time of his death Maximilian owned about thirty-two hundred volumes, which were carefully organized by subject and placed on their respective shelves. The majority focussed on descriptive zoology and on North American travel accounts. But one could also find volumes on geology, paleontology, descriptive botany, chemistry, meteorology, evolution theory, and various other fields. Together they speak to the solid foundation of Maximilian's education.

Maximilian's library is not only a mirror of the man and his interests, but also of the era in which he lived. Academic specialization as we know it today did not exist at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Then, what was simply called "natural sciences" dealt with aspects of physics, chemistry, and meteorology, while "natural history" included zoology, botany, anthropology,

⁴⁴ I list some of the most significant books of this collection in Appendix B (see also Schmidt, 1985).

and similar subjects. In addition, paleontological finds were still included in Linné's system of mineralogy (instead of botany or zoology), and thus were difficult to interpret. Only when Darwin's evolution theory became established, was it finally accepted that fossils could be included in a complex floristic and faunistic history. In any case, because of the lack of specialization, "scientists" like Maximilian and Alexander von Humboldt inevitably became polymaths.⁴⁵

The philosophical foundation of the Prince was strongly rooted in a system of thought known as the Enlightenment. This philosophy, the dominant one among European intellectuals of the time, emphasized reason as a means to decipher God's creation. Leaders of the Enlightenment included Isaac Newton and John Locke, and, according to the historian Joseph C. Porter, both men's ideas affected Maximilian directly. The Prince's "research strategies . . . were based upon both the Newtonian world machine, running according to law, and the empiricism of Locke which stressed the need for first discovering the external facts and then arranging them in an orderly fashion so that the structure of the natural law underlying them might be revealed."⁴⁶

Enlightenment-era naturalists also were enthralled with Linné's *Systema*

⁴⁵ Note that the term "scientist" was only coined in 1840 by the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Glasgow (United Kingdom). For a brief discussion of the development of sciences during Maximilian's time see Ronan (1982).

⁴⁶ Joseph C. Porter, "Marvelous Figures, Astonished Travelers." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 41 (1991): 36-53, quotation on page 39.

Naturae, for it gave them a powerful tool to map out the world's species according to carefully selected visible features.⁴⁷ But because this artificial arrangement of objects into taxonomies seemed to lack an understanding of the whole, the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant proposed that phenomena ought to be described in their natural setting in order to grasp their manifold character.⁴⁸ Kant's work apparently had a strong influence on Alexander von Humboldt, who, like no other, became a master of describing flora and fauna in their wider context, which eventually culminated in his last and most ambitious opus--*Cosmos* (1845-59). Maximilian, of course, as admirer and friend of Humboldt, picked up a similar approach. The Prince's strong reverence for Humboldt becomes clear when one reads the introduction to his Brazilian travel accounts:

I feel how daring it is to bring before the public these travel accounts of a part of South America after the marvelous accomplishments of the bright star on our scientific horizon -- our great compatriot, the excellent Alexander von Humboldt. However, I believe that my good and pure intentions, despite its lesser powers, are not worthless of observation; even though I can make little claim to present something complete, I hope that friends of natural history, regional studies, and ethnology may find some significant contributions to the broadening of their sciences.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ For further information on the Enlightenment see Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York: Norton, 1995) and Ulrich im Hof, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994).

⁴⁸ Malcolm Nicolson, "Alexander von Humboldt and the Geography of Vegetation." *Romanticism and the Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 169-185.

⁴⁹ Maximilian, Prince of Wied, *Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* (Frankfurt: Heinrich Ludwig Brönnner, 1820-21), Vol. 1, quotation on page 6.

The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and its mechanical mode of analyzing and dissecting the world into artificial categories was powerful and widely embraced. But it also provoked philosophical opposition. Some people saw practitioners of the Enlightenment as too far removed from the human condition. They wanted to inoculate scientific investigation (reason) with aesthetic sensitivity (feelings). With such an injection of "imagination," it was believed, one would be able to penetrate beyond the surface phenomenon and gain an understanding of the underlying unity of nature.⁵⁰ This countermovement is usually referred to as Romanticism.

In the sciences Romanticism found its expression in the *Naturphilosophie* of Lorenz Oken, Georg Büchner, and others. "Nature philosophers" essentially perceived nature as a holistic unit and a force that exercised a formative influence on mankind, both materially and spiritually. They also believed that "man's aesthetic sensitivities could, if suitably trained and applied, transcend the limitations of reason, penetrate beyond the surface phenomenon and, sensuously and intuitively, grasp the underlying unity of Nature."⁵¹ Thus, instead of starting with the part, a nature philosopher might begin with the whole.

⁵⁰ Nicolson, 1990; Colin A. Ronan, *Science: Its History and Development among the World's Cultures* (New York: Facts On File Publications, 1982).

⁵¹ Nicolson, 1990.

Finally, it is also important to understand that Maximilian experienced the climax of the pre-Darwian discussion of evolution. In 1814 he personally met with two important individuals in an ongoing ideological battle: Georges Baron de Cuvier (1769-1832) and Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772-1844). The heated arguments at the time were centered around the question of whether species were fixed entities or had the capacity to evolve. Cuvier strongly believed in the fixity of species. Saint-Hilaire, as a true follower of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829), argued instead that the inheritance of acquired characteristics not only was possible but that such inheritance ultimately led to the evolution of species. At the time, Cuvier won the battle and the followers of the evolution theory in France experienced a serious setback. In 1859, of course, the evolutionists would experience their ultimate triumph when Darwin published his groundbreaking work *The Origin of Species*.⁵²

In sum, Maximilian's career as a naturalist started with his lifelong passion to hunt. He used every opportunity at home and overseas to roam through the woods, equipped with a rifle and a notebook. In the early years his interest in natural history was encouraged by his mother and the private tutor Christian Friedrich Hoffman. Later, whenever Maximilian was free of military service and obligations at home, he pursued his scientific studies as an

⁵² Walter Hollitscher, *Die Natur im Weltbild der Wissenschaft* (Wien: Globus Verlag, 1960).

autodidact, enrolled briefly at the University of Göttingen, and maintained a regular correspondence with fellow naturalists to keep up with the developments in his fields of study. The most important influences in his scientific career were Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, the Enlightenment's leading theorist on comparative anthropology, and Alexander von Humboldt with his "cosmic" understanding of natural history.

The Prince clearly grew up at a time when cataclysm after cataclysm shook the political and philosophical foundations of the European societies. In the coming chapters it is important to keep these developments in mind when I analyze and deconstruct his published travel accounts. A careful and contextual analysis of Maximilian's America not only reveals the multifaceted dimension of his narrative, but also gains an important insight into the inner worlds of a narrator.

Chapter 3

Prince Maximilian's America

The years when [Karl] Bodmer [and Prince Maximilian] visited America, 1832-1834, were pivotal years in American history. It was the height of the energetic Jacksonian Era, and it was also the time that saw the rapid development of the back country frontier as far as the Mississippi River, which had already become the great artery of inland commerce Americans had not yet really begun the tremendous mass migration along the overland trail to Oregon and California. John Jacob Astor's giant fur trading combine was just then pushing up the Missouri River into the heart of Indian country¹

On Independence Day in 1832 the brig *Janus* arrived in Boston after forty-eight long and, at times, stormy days on the Atlantic Ocean. Its passengers included Prince Maximilian of Wied, the young painter Karl Bodmer, and the experienced hunter and taxidermist David Dreidoppel. With this trip Maximilian was fulfilling a dream he had first voiced some twenty years earlier in a letter to his friend and colleague Rudolf Schinz: "I am here in Göttingen to improve my proficiency [in natural history] and then perhaps, if my fate will allow it, make a journey to North America" ² The Prince, of course, had traveled

¹ William H. Goetzmann, "Introduction: The Man who Stopped to Paint America," in *Karl Bodmer's America*, David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher (eds.) (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1984), quotation on page 3. The last statement by Goetzmann is somewhat misleading. The American Fur Company had already taken control of much of the Missouri River by 1827, and in 1830-31 even got access to the highly prized furs of the Blackfoot country (see David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

² Maximilian in a letter from July 7, 1811, to Rudolf Schinz (Zentralbibliothek Zürich (ZBZ): Ms Car XV 174, Umschlag III).

before, most notably to Brazil in 1815-1817, following the advice of his mentor and friend Alexander von Humboldt. But finally, at the age of fifty, he was able to set foot on his long-imagined North American continent.

When the trio left North America again more than two years later, they took with them among other things hundreds of Karl Bodmer's paintings and thousands of pages filled with the Prince's notes on the physical and cultural environments they had encountered. Within the following years this visual and written testimony of their journey was molded together in the form of the now well-known *Journey to the Interior of North America* (1839-41).

If we are to believe the scholars who have poured over Maximilian's travel accounts, there should be no reason to question the objectivity and unambiguity of his narrated landscapes. He was, after all, "the best trained scientific observer"³ to visit the North American continent at the time. With his opus, it was said, Maximilian not only presented "meticulous written observations,"⁴ but these observations were also characterized by "unreserved objectivity."⁵ However, as this chapter will demonstrate, the Maximilian report is much more than a simple

³ Mildred Goosman, "Introduction," in *People of the First Man: Life Among the Plains Indians in their Final Days of Glory*, David Thomas and Karin Ronnefeldt (eds.) (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976), 10-13, quotation on page 10.

⁴ Walter Scott, Jr., in *Karl Bodmer's Eastern Views*, Marsha V. Gallagher and John F. Sears (eds.) (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1996), quotation on page 1.

⁵ Paul Schach, "Maximilian, Prince of Wied (1782-1867): Reconsidered." *Great Plains Quarterly* 14 (1994): 5-20, quotation on page 7.

arrangement of factual information. Instead, like almost all writing, his narrated landscapes are influenced by his intellectual and cultural background and, on occasion, are carefully constructed for a prospective audience.

One only has to take a look at the introduction of Maximilian's travel accounts to realize the multidimensional character of his narrative. At one point, for example, he spoke of the "sterility" of the Northwest as an obstacle to the "astonishing advance of civilization."⁶ Just a few paragraphs later, however, this same "sterile" landscape had turned into an attractive "wilderness" for the works of a natural historian:

The vast tracts of the interior of Northwestern America are, in general, but little known Some few scientific expeditions . . . were set on foot by the government; and it is only under its protection that a thorough investigation of those extensive *wildernesses* (emphasis added) . . . can be undertaken.⁷

But how can one region have such diametrical attributes and be characterized as both "sterile" and "wild?" Whether these two differing descriptions of the "Northwestern" landscape were determined by their context, their specific points of view (i.e. that of the naturalist vs. that of the potential settler), or some other

⁶ For obvious reasons I based my analysis of Prince Maximilian's America strictly on his original German travel accounts. However, the excerpts presented in this study were mainly taken from the better known English translation by Thwaites. Accordingly, throughout this paper I will give references to both Thwaites's publication (i.e. Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 25) and Maximilian's opus (i.e. Wied, vol. 1, vii), so that readers can easily access both sources. This is especially important since I paid close attention to the translation, corrected passages if necessary, and included omitted sections from the original accounts. Throughout this study these corrected or omitted sections are indicated by brackets {}.

⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 27; Wied, vol. 1, x.

narrative also constructed a desirable image of himself. To take again the introduction as an example, he stated that the major objective for his North American expedition was to describe the natural history and the indigenous population of North America, especially the upper Missouri.

There are two distinct points of view in which that remarkable country may be considered. Some travelers are interested {in the rough, primeval condition of nature in} North America, and its aboriginal population . . . while the majority are more inclined to contemplate the immigrant population, and the gigantic strides of civilization introduced by it. The account of my tour through a part of these countries . . . is chiefly intended for the readers of the first class As the United States were merely the basis of my more extensive undertaking, the object of which was the investigation of the upper part of the course of the Missouri, they do not form a prominent feature¹¹

Although I do not question the objective of the Prince's investigation itself, it is important to notice that, almost until the very last day, the exact regional focus for his research was far from written in stone. In the midst of preparations for his journey he still discussed with Rudolf Schinz the possibility of exploring the American South:

My journey to North America is now decided . . . I hope to find interesting matters [of natural history] in the southern regions, especially Louisiana or New Mexico . . . [and that] my journey will give me the opportunity to make some interesting comparisons concerning the human race and the flora and fauna. I especially look forward to seeing the Indians¹²

¹¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 26; Wied, vol. 1, ix.

¹² Maximilian in a letter from March 1, 1832 to Rudolf Schinz (ZBZ: MS Car XV 175, Umschlag II).

Even as late as April 1833, when he already arrived in St. Louis, Maximilian still considered joining a caravan to Santa Fé. What decided his final route in the end was the convenience of the existing infrastructure and trade network of the American Fur Company on the upper Missouri, as well as the resulting possibility to safely study tribes like the Mandan and Hidatsa. Maximilian's later matter-of-fact-statement that the "object of . . . [his] investigation . . . [was] the upper part of the course of the Missouri" thus intentionally concealed his wavering on a regional focus. Apparently, the Prince wanted his readers to see a man who knew from the start where he wanted to go and who, accordingly, followed through with his program.

In sum, just these few examples from Maximilian's introduction support my hypothesis that his narrative is not as unambiguous as we are led to believe. The objective of this chapter is to follow his journey through the North American continent and carefully deconstruct and expose the multifaceted dimension of his creation. From this analysis I find that Maximilian employed three voices in his narrative, which I call strategic, ideological, and Linnaean. These three concepts will be considered in depth in Chapter 4.

Journey to Boston and Stay on the Eastern Seaboard

The epic journey to North America began on the 7th of May, 1832. Maximilian, Bodmer, and Dreidoppel departed from Neuwied on the steamboat *Concordia*. They were accompanied on the first part of the journey by the Prince's two brothers, Carl and August.¹³ Everyone knew the dangers of the imminent trip and that perhaps several years might go by before the adventurers would return to the principality. In Amsterdam the brothers returned to Neuwied, while Maximilian and his companions continued their journey to Helvoet Sluys where they boarded the brig *Janus* on May 17. They left early the next morning, sailed through the Channel and around the southern coast of England into the Atlantic Ocean, until they finally lost sight of Europe on May 24:

Voyages to North America [have] become everyday occurrences, and little more is to be related of them than that you met and saluted ships, had fine or stormy weather, and the like; here, therefore, we shall merely say that our party embarked at Helvoet Sluys, on board an American ship, on the 17th of May, in the evening, and on the 24th saw Land's End, Cornwall, vanish in the misty distance, and bade farewell to Europe.¹⁴

Despite this "everyday occurrence" of voyages across the Atlantic, Maximilian

¹³ See Maximilian's entry for May 11, 1832, in his unpublished field journals (hereafter abbreviated with UFJ), which are housed in the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 37; Wied, vol. 1, p. 3.

could not resist describing encounters with schools of dolphins, the successful hunt of one of them, and his first taste of dolphin steak. And while he found them “to be very good,” he tantalizingly stressed the point that he “did not know, at the time, that [he] should soon find dog’s flesh relishing!”¹⁵ This comment, which refers to a severe food crisis in the winter of 1833-34, was clearly intended to set the stage for more than just a report of a scientific exploration. Here, as in later instances, Maximilian’s discourse created an adventurous and romantic image which he hoped would appeal to the *Zeitgeist* of his fellow countrymen.

Maximilian also wrote that he had hoped “for a sight of the famous sea serpent”¹⁶ during their voyage. Although he quickly added that respected naturalists like Thomas Say and Charles Alexandre Lesueur later told him that the serpent was a fable,¹⁷ the question remains why he decided to mention it. The most likely explanation is that he deliberately injected a mystical ingredient into his narrative for his European readers. As will be discussed below, “dark, lofty forests” and the “savage” will play the same literary function as the sea serpent did in this incident, namely to create a romantic image of exotic and faraway places.

Shortly before the travelers reached the “New World,” and not far away

¹⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 37-38; Wied, vol. 1, p. 4.

¹⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 40; Wied, vol. 1, p. 6.

¹⁷ For more information on Thomas Say and Charles Alexandre Lesueur see “Winter Residence at New Harmony,” p. 93 ff.

from Cape Cod, Maximilian wrote that “the dark blue mirror of the sea shone around [them], moved only by a gentle breeze . . . [while] we Europeans looked eagerly at the distance.”¹⁸ This “dark blue mirror” probably was meant to symbolize as much the uncertainties and dangers of the imminent journey through North America (since you cannot see beyond its surface), as it revealed a time of contemplation for Maximilian. He was about to enter the “New World” for the second time, and, understandably, was excited about the prospects for carrying out his studies of natural history.

After a long and tiresome journey, the prospect of setting foot on land revived the spirits of the travelers and is reflected in Maximilian’s description of the coastal scenery:

At the distance we saw some low mountains, the coast covered with numerous villages . . . and numbers of ships and boats sailing in every direction, all adorned with [colorful] flags These coasts, with numerous white buildings of the towns and villages presented a most charming scene in the splendor of the morning sun.¹⁹

The cheerful moment arrived when the ship entered Boston harbor on Independence Day in 1832 (Figure 7). Here the trio was able to leave the shaky ground of the last forty-eight days and stroll through the streets of Boston. But interestingly, Maximilian’s first impressions of North America

¹⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 39; Wied, vol. 1, p. 6.

¹⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 40-41; Wied, vol. 1, p. 7.

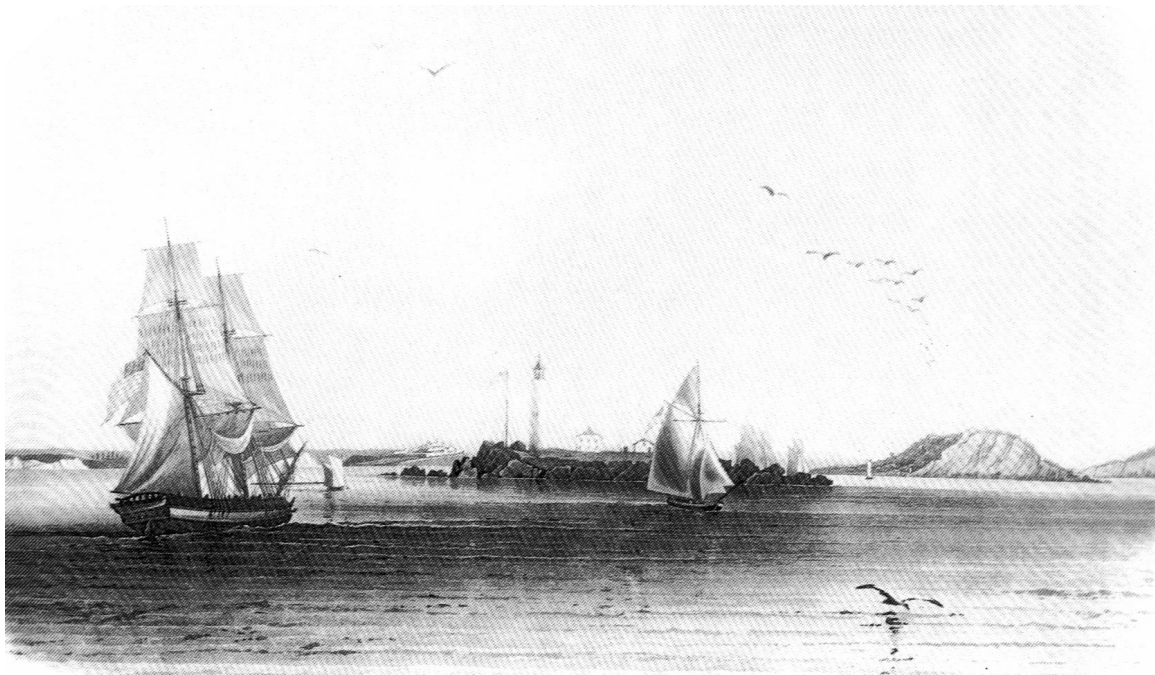


Figure 7: The Boston lighthouse and harbor (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).²⁰ The ship entering the harbor on the left is similar to the brig *Janus* on which Maximilian and his companions crossed the Atlantic Ocean.

revealed disappointment as well as surprise:

Boston . . . reminded me first, of one of the old English towns; but various differences soon appeared. The streets are partly long and broad, partly narrow and irregular, with good flag pavement for foot passengers; the buildings are of brick or stone; but in a great portion of the old town the houses are of wood; . . . In the front of the houses there are frequently little plots of garden, next the street, in the English fashion, planted with tall, shady trees, and flowers . . . Strangers will immediately look for the American plants, especially for those species of tree which are generally cultivated in Europe; but instead of them, they will observe only European trees

²⁰ The drawings presented throughout this chapter were done by Karl Bodmer and accompanied Prince Maximilian's publication in the form of forty-eight large tableaus and thirty-three vignettes.

. . . . It was with much difficulty that I found some stems of the catalpa, which was just then on the point of flowering²¹

The discovery of a European landscape in America, despite the “various differences,” was not what the Prince had expected, or hoped for, it seems. Instead of sugar maple, hickory, and sweet gum in the streets and gardens of Boston, he found Lombardy poplars, Babylonian willows, and other European species. Apparently, while the Europeans had a desire for the exotic and grew American trees in their parks and gardens, the Americans brought part of their historic European culture with them and planted species from their home countries in their front yards and alleys.

But why should this European landscape surprise Maximilian who, by all accounts, was so well prepared for this expedition to North America? For years he had been collecting information on the continent. As can be concluded from his correspondence with Rudolf Schinz and comments throughout his diaries, he knew the most important volumes on American natural history,²² and he had studied various travel reports.²³ None of these works, however, not even that of

²¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 41-42; Wied, vol. 1, p. 8.

²² For example, Alexander Wilson's *American Ornithology* (1808-1814), François André Michaux's *The North American Sylva* (1819), and Richard Harlan's *Fauna Americana* (1825).

²³ E.g. Edwin James's *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* (1823), H. M. Brackenridge's *Views of Louisiana* (1814), William Bartram's *Travels through North- and South Carolina* (1792), and Meriwether Lewis's *Travels to the Source of the Missouri River* (1815).

his acquaintance Duke Bernhard,²⁴ had prepared him for the degree of Europeaness he found in urban North America.

Maximilian also discovered that the European character of the landscape extended into rural parts of the country. During his time in Boston, the Prince made several excursions into the surrounding areas. On trips to the Bunker Hill Monument and Cambridge he again noticed that:

Looking into the country, there is an alteration of verdant hills, numerous villages, and dark woods; the whole forming a highly picturesque landscape . . . [but] this part of the country has, on the whole, the European character--like England, for instance--but it is even now more wooded . . . and the population . . . is distributed in a different matter. In one of the nearest thickets, a little songster (*Sylvia aestiva*), and some other birds reminded me that I was not in Europe, but on the borders of the northern part of the New World²⁵

The trio finally had the chance to see a more agreeable natural landscape (at least from Maximilian's point of view) when they left Boston for Providence, Rhode Island:

We were much pleased with some thick forests of oak, with beautiful glossy (often deeply indented) leaves, of a great variety of forms . . . though so near to the habitations of man, and in a cultivated country, they had more of the wild character of

²⁴ Herzog Bernhard zu Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach (1792-1862), *Reise Sr. Hoheit des Herzogs Bernhard zu Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach durch Nord-Amerika in den Jahren 1825 und 1826* (Weimar: W. Hoffmann, 1828). The book was also published in English in Philadelphia in 1828.

²⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 47-48; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 14-15.

unreclaimed nature than our European forests In many places there were openings into the dark forest, to a great distance; and, now and then, into lovely valleys, with a lake or a river, where the white buildings had a very picturesque appearance, contrasted with the dark woods and the green meadows. Mr Bodmer, however, was not satisfied with all these landscapes: he had expected to find, at once, in America, forms differing from those in Europe²⁶

Even though these landscapes were hardly unreclaimed (or untouched), just the occurrence of thick, dark forests seemed to please Maximilian. Here he could start to imagine what the real wilderness in North America might look like, with all its possibilities to discover new species of flora and fauna, and perhaps even encounter its original inhabitants. Thus, the presence of these forests made the general American environment more agreeable for the naturalist.

The statement that “Mr. Bodmer, however, was not satisfied with all these landscapes” and that “he had expected to find, at once, in America, forms differing from those in Europe” is worth noticing in two aspects. On one hand, Bodmer apparently had his own ideas of what an “American landscape” should look like, which has important ramifications for his paintings, as I will discuss at a later time. On the other hand, Maximilian, who just learned about his own naiveté in regard to the cultural and physical landscapes in America, displays a bout of know-it-all, which, to be fair, is rather unusual for him.

One aspect that repeatedly bothered the Prince throughout this early part

²⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 51-52; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 19-20.

of the journey was the presence of fences in the countryside. {"In most places the fields were fenced in . . . because cattle are not fed in barns These fences give the American landscape an unnatural and stiff appearance, they destroy the sight of nature, and are, therefore, for the European an unpleasant aspect"}²⁷ Later in his travels he added that "would the so useful barn feeding for cattle be introduced here, the ugly, all North American landscapes disfiguring wooden fences could be disposed of."²⁸ Fences, it seemed, hindered Maximilian's ability to imagine the original American landscape.

When the Prince and his companions wandered the streets of Boston they encountered other examples of the European character of this young nation. Fashion was dictated by the newest English and French styles. "Straw hats, trimmed with black or green ribbons, were in general use."²⁹ And, no matter how poor and small the dwellings, the ladies of the house always seemed most elegantly and fashionably dressed while running their daily errands. On a trip to the countryside around Boston, Maximilian again noticed this fashion frenzy and could not help but comment (with a somewhat ironic voice) that:

In this land of freedom, nobody, of course, will allow his neighbor to have an advantage over him; hence we often see silk gowns, and the newest fashions of all kinds, in an amusing contrast with the poor little habitations. Small country carts pass the traveler, in

²⁷ Wied, vol. 1, p. 20.

²⁸ Wied, vol. 1, p. 66; see also Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 86; Wied, vol. 1, p. 62.

²⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 42-43; Wied, vol. 1, p. 9.

which, beside the owner . . . sits a country-lady, handsomely attired, who looks like a copy of some fashion journal. The dress of the {man} is, in general, not so fine. . . .³⁰

It is possible that observations on the American fashion just constituted an amusing aside for Prince Maximilian, but the tone of his language clearly criticized the superficial equality in this “land of freedom,” which, in his opinion, was displayed in the attempt of “country ladies” to mask their social class behind fabrics of silk. His comment also patronized this young nation which, in his mind, still had not found its cultural identity after the Revolution of 1776.

While the travelers stayed at the *Commercial Coffeehouse* in Boston, the Prince had the opportunity to observe more local customs. Merchants, who frequented these kinds of places, became a favorite study object:³¹

The hours for meals are fixed--three times daily; and the signal [to eat] is usually given, two or three times, by ringing a bell. In general, a number of persons habitually take their meals in these inns; they besiege the house before the appointed time arrives, and, when the signal is given, they rush tumultuously into the eating room; every one strives to get before the other, and . . . then every one takes possession of the dish that he can first lay his hands on, and in ten minutes all is consumed; in laconic silence the company rise from [the] table, put on their hats, and the busy gentlemen hasten away, whom you see all day long posted before the inns, or at the fire side in the lower rooms, smoking cigars and reading the colossal newspapers³²

³⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 51; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

³¹ See also Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 156-157; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 154-155.

³² Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 43-44; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 10-11.

The Prince was clearly annoyed by the rude and uncivilized behavior of these individuals, as could be expected from a member of the European aristocracy. He also experienced a culture shock at this early time of his travels, which can be seen at several points in his narrative. He was, for example, outraged that they had to “pull off [their] shoes before a number of people . . . and exchange them for slippers,”³³ when they simply wanted to have a drink in the bar room of their inn. He was taken aback by an assembly of the city militia for the 4th of July celebration, which appeared too colorful and too undisciplined in his mind.³⁴ And he was irritated by the “so-called museums” in the United States, which were, at best, an accumulation of odd curiosities to him.³⁵

At other times, the Prince’s narrative reveals outrage over the neglected and maltreated culture of the indigenous population. From day one he was on the search for the “original inhabitants” of North America (as he was on the search for the original flora and fauna), but very soon came to realize that the eastern seaboard, and its immediate hinterland, had hardly anything to offer to an ethnographer:

The stranger in Boston looks in vain for the original American race of the Indians. Instead of its former state of nature, this country now shows a mixture in all [European] nations, which is rapidly

³³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 44; Wied, vol. 1, p. 11.

³⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 45; Wied, vol. 1, p. 12.

³⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 49; Wied, vol. 1, p. 16.

proceeding in the unjustifiable expulsion and extirpation of the aborigines, which began on the arrival of the Europeans in the New World, and has remittingly continued³⁶ As the study of the aboriginal nations of America had peculiar attractions for me, I searched the shops of all the booksellers and printsellers, for good representations of that interesting race; but how much was I astonished, that I could not find, in all the towns of this country, one good, that is, characteristic representation of them, but only some bad or very indifferent copper-plates, which are in books of travels! It is incredible how much the original American race is hated and neglected by the foreign usurpers³⁷

In the end it took Maximilian more than eight months before he could see his first Indians near St. Louis. This delay was initially caused by logistical problems with his luggage, which included the bulk of his reference library and important instruments needed for his natural history descriptions, and later by a serious illness resembling cholera. In any case, Maximilian and his companions used this extended stay on the East Coast to travel to places such as New York City, Philadelphia, and, curiously, Bordentown, New Jersey.

On the way to New York City the travelers came to Providence, where they “strolled about the surrounding country.” To the Prince this region generally had a “dead and rather sterile appearance,” which he contributed to “the white buildings of the city with their light grey roofs.”³⁸ In his opinion, {“only [the] greenery, which appear[ed] on the hills and in the inhabitants’s gardens,

³⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 43; Wied, vol. 1, p. 10.

³⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 70; Wied, vol. 1, p. 42 (see also Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 252-253; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 102-103).

³⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 54; Wied, vol. 1, p. 22.

moderate[d] this impression to a degree.”³⁹ Thus, white houses which initially had “presented a most charming scene in the splendor of the morning sun,”⁴⁰ when he and his companions arrived in North America, appeared now sterile in the context of his disappointment with the American scenery.

Although Maximilian received news that cholera had just broken out in New York City, he was still determined to pay a visit to this booming harbor. At the time, the city had about 220,000 inhabitants and the Prince was clearly impressed by its extensive and animated commerce. In fact, he considered New York City “but little inferior to the capital cities of Europe, with the exception of London and Paris.”⁴¹ In a footnote, however, he noted that {“some American writers would not agree”} with his statement. He attributed this attitude to {“their ignorance of other countries, or their exaggerated, strong national pride.”}⁴²

After they had seen and toured the environs of New York City, the Prince and his small entourage headed towards Philadelphia. On the way they encountered covered wooden bridges, which, the Prince remarked, “[were] very common in the United States” and that “many travelers already described . . . these useless masses of timber.”⁴³ Coming from a substantially deforested

³⁹ Wied, vol. 1, p. 22.

⁴⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 41; Wied, vol. 1, p. 7.

⁴¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 57; Wied, vol. 1, p. 28.

⁴² Wied, vol. 1, p. 28.

⁴³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 62; Wied, vol. 1, p. 34.

Europe, Maximilian could not understand why the Americans would waste so much valuable wood for the construction of coverings for bridges. This criticism of the misuse or waste of resources in the United States comes up repeatedly in his accounts.

When Maximilian arrived in Philadelphia, cholera again interfered with his agenda.

Letters of introduction from Europe procured me a kind reception in some houses; but on the other hand, I had not an opportunity of becoming acquainted with several scientific gentlemen [of the Academy of Natural Sciences] because, being physicians, they were particularly engaged. Professor Harlan, M.D., well known to the learned world as an author, was of the number.⁴⁴

Therefore, somewhat disappointed, he soon decided to leave for Bordentown, which was located about twenty miles northeast of Philadelphia, and where he wanted to “obtain some little knowledge of the forests of New Jersey.”⁴⁵

I arrived at Bordentown . . . [where] the estates of the Count de Survilliers (Joseph Bonaparte)[are], who had but lately sailed for Europe.⁴⁶ The pleasant country house, in the fine park, is about 300 paces from the village A great ornament of this landscape is the white garden pavilion of Count Survilliers, which rises above the thick groves on the left bank of the Delaware, above Bordentown.

⁴⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 64; Wied, vol. 1, p. 36. Richard Harlan was author of such books like *Fauna Americana* (1825) and *American Herpetology* (1827).

⁴⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 65; Wied, vol. 1, p. 37.

⁴⁶ Joseph Bonaparte was an older brother of Napoleon. He became King of Naples in 1806 and of Spain in 1808. Apparently he purchased this estate near Bordentown, which was also known under the name “Point Breeze”, in 1815 and built the described “country house” (or mansion) in 1820 (Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 65-66, footnote 28).

In the cool of the evening I usually went to this park. . . . From this place winding paths lead through {dark and shady forests of different beautiful trees}, where many birds, of kinds unknown to me, were flying about. The cat bird (*Turdus felivox*, Vieill.) . . . was very numerous in this place.⁴⁷

Maximilian's stay in and around Bordentown (Figure 8) is fascinating for several reasons. It is already surprising that he left Philadelphia without taking the opportunity, it seems, to visit the Academy of Natural Sciences or the Peale Museum, which was renowned for its natural history collection. He was, after all, still waiting for his luggage and thus in need of reference books for his observations. In addition, there was nothing special about the environs of Bordentown from the point of view of a naturalist. And even though he roamed through its forests and encountered some bird species for the first time, his descriptions of these observations appear surprisingly short and almost indifferent in comparison to the rest of his travel accounts.

What really drove him to spend time in and around Bordentown was not its natural history, but its affiliation with Joseph Bonaparte. And even though the "Count de Survilliers" was residing in Europe at the time of Maximilian's visit, the Prince, who had fought against Napoleon during the Wars of Liberation (1813-1815), apparently could not resist the estate of the elder Bonaparte. Unfortunately, Maximilian's narrative reveals little about this episode. In any

⁴⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 65-67; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 37-38.

case, after about a week in Bordentown Maximilian went back to Philadelphia to finally visit the Peale Museum and some bookstores, but he soon turned his back to the Atlantic coast.

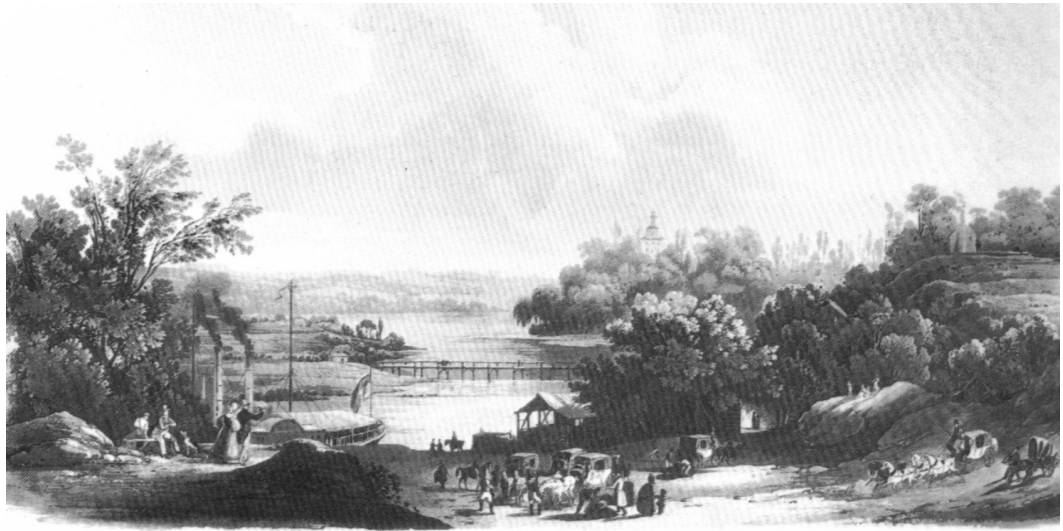


Figure 8: View on the landing place of Bordentown on the Delaware (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

From Pennsylvania to the Banks of the Wabash

All of North America was formerly one interminable forest, only there were what are called prairies in the western parts beyond the Allegheny mountains; but all of Pennsylvania, a state comprising 44,500 square miles, was a primeval forest, which was thinned in a short time by the numerous settlers who flocked to this country. The larger species of game have disappeared in the same ratio, and in the immediate vicinity of Bethlehem there are now not even any deer.⁴⁸

Because their baggage had still not arrived from Boston, Maximilian and his companions decided to use their extended stay on the eastern seaboard to explore the interior of Pennsylvania. On the 30th of July, 1832, they left Philadelphia by stagecoach to travel to Bethlehem. On the way the travelers repeatedly saw German emigrants, who, as Maximilian noted, were mainly “from Württemberg, Baden, or Rhenish Bavaria,”⁴⁹ the southwestern region of Germany.⁵⁰ The Prince had already encountered *Landsleute* (fellow countrymen) on several occasions along the East Coast, but at no other time did their presence in America attract his attention to such a degree.

In historical terms this concentration of *Landsleute* in Pennsylvania is

⁴⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 81; Wied, vol. 1, p. 57.

⁴⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 84; Wied, vol. 1, p. 60.

⁵⁰ It is important to notice that there was no such political entity as “Germany” at Maximilian’s time. Instead, there still existed a conglomerate of principalities, dukedoms and kingdoms. Germany, or the German Reich, only came into existence in 1871. The people, however, still considered themselves Germans (as opposed to Austrians) as can be seen from Maximilian’s repeated mention of his *Landsleute*.

hardly surprising. Since the late seventeenth century, the state had been an important destination for German emigration to North America.⁵¹ In addition, the year 1832 saw a record number of German emigrants when, for the first time, more than ten thousand came to the United States.⁵² Interestingly though, Maximilian overestimated their importance, writing that “[t]he whole country, as far as Bethlehem, and much further, [was] *chiefly* (emphasis added) inhabited by the descendants of German emigrants”⁵³ In truth, Germans amounted to only about one third of the total population of Pennsylvania at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴

Maximilian’s impression of the *Germanness* of Pennsylvania was again reinforced by {“bells of . . . grazing cattle [which] were tuned in accords, as in . . . the mountainous regions of Germany”} and which created {“a surprising country harmony”}⁵⁵ for him. At times this aspect of the cultural landscape might have simply amused him, as when he discovered that the {“region [of the Blue Mountains] . . . looked very much like Germany, and . . . that [they] only had to

⁵¹ Agnes Bretting et al., “Westströme: überseeische Auswanderung - Deutsche in den USA” in *Deutsche im Ausland - Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Klaus Bade (München: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1992), pp. 135-185.

⁵² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States - Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington D.C., 1975).

⁵³ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 72-73; Wied, vol. 1, p. 44.

⁵⁴ Bretting et al., 1992; James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man’s Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (New York: Norton, 1972).

⁵⁵ Wied, vol. 1, p. 78.

speak German, and felt as if [they] were at home, in [their] fatherland.”⁵⁶ But in other situations, when the trio was already in Ohio, Maximilian also showed a considerable amount of pride regarding the conduct of his fellow countrymen. He noted, for example, that German settlers were “said frequently to possess well cultivated farms”⁵⁷ and that they were “cleanly and neatly dressed in their Swabian costumes, and nothing but German [was] spoken amongst them”⁵⁸ But whether the Prince was looking at the *Germanness* he encountered with national pride or a pinch of amusement, there is no doubt that his biased perception of the Pennsylvanian population overstated the actual share of Germans.

As the travelers left Philadelphia to advance further into the interior, they paid special attention to the forests. Although the Prince had now more opportunities to pursue his beloved natural history observations, he could not help but remark that “in many parts [the woods] are on the way to total destruction, for they contain neither timber fit for felling, nor young plants.” And, the Prince continued, “if it is thought fit in future to raise timber in these ruined forests, the [farmers] must be checked in their {destructive rage}⁵⁹, and forest

⁵⁶ Wied, vol. 1, pp. 79-80.

⁵⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 137; Wied, vol. 1, p. 134.

⁵⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 140-141; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 136-137.

⁵⁹ The German term “Zerstörungswut” is translated as “love of destruction” in Thwaites’s edition but literally means “destructive rage” (see also Schach, 1994).

laws and regulations introduced.”⁶⁰ Maximilian also was disappointed to learn that there was “scarcely any [game] in these forests” and that “hardly any but the grey fox (*Canis cinereo-argentes*), the Pennsylvanian marmot (Groundhog, or wood chuck), the grey and the red squirrel, [had] escaped the {destructive rage} of the invaders [i.e. the homesteading settlers].”⁶¹

Regardless of these comments, the Prince soon found more favorable landscapes that earned the description “wilderness,” or were at least “picturesque” in his mind. A “wild wooded spot” in the Rocky Valley near Freiburg, Pennsylvania (today’s Coopersburg eight miles south of Bethlehem), lived up to his expectations and constituted a first adventurous challenge. The travelers even got lost there “until a German peasant showed [them] the rather hidden path, which could hardly be distinguished among the many blocks of stone.”⁶² During their stay in Bethlehem, about seventy miles north of Philadelphia, Maximilian used some time for hunting excursions to the “picturesque islands” of the Lehigh River or to the “wooded mountains” on its banks. And since these regions appeared so attractive to him, Karl Bodmer made “a very characteristic drawing of this wood and water scenery.”⁶³

From Bethlehem the travelers continued their journey a few miles

⁶⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 73-74; Wied, vol. 1, p. 45.

⁶¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 76; Wied, vol. 1, p. 49.

⁶² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 75; Wied, vol. 1, p. 48.

⁶³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 79; Wied, vol. 1, p. 53.

eastward to Easton on the Delaware and then followed that river upstream. Their path appeared “extremely romantic and {attractive}” to the Prince, since it led through “the shade of the dark forest of [sycamore], oak, tulip, walnut, chestnut, and other trees . . . where {a highly interesting vegetation entertained [them] in a very pleasant manner.}”⁶⁴ In the distance they could see the Blue Mountains which “extended . . . further than the eye [could] reach and [was] uniformly covered with verdant, primeval forests.” The Prince, however, still was not content with what he saw, because there were, at this time, no “characteristically shaped peaks, or remarkable forms” and therefore “nothing picturesque” in the general view of the mountain range.⁶⁵ Finally, however, they found such a location when they reached the already famous Delaware Water Gap. This area left a “wild and beautiful” impression on them and, again, “numbers of interesting plants attracted [their] attention.”⁶⁶

After he spent some time at the Delaware Water Gap, the Prince moved westward in the direction of the Pocono Mountains. On their way to this range they soon had “a foretaste of the wild scenery of North America” which they hoped to “find in perfection, in uninterrupted primeval forests” on its summits. Excited about these prospects, the travelers “hastened to the less inhabited,

⁶⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 90; Wied, vol. 1, p. 68.

⁶⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 91; Wied, vol. 1, p. 70.

⁶⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 92; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 72-73.

more elevated, and wilder regions.”⁶⁷ When they finally reached the crest of these mountains, they discovered what Maximilian called an “absolute wilderness.”⁶⁸ The area seemed uninhabited and was characterized by dense, dark forests, and a considerable amount of bears and other wild animals. The Prince was so intrigued, in fact, that he compared this environment with those he had encountered in Brazil,⁶⁹ and he even fantasized about its potential as a place for the undertakings of robber bands.⁷⁰

The hypothetical “robbers” mentioned here come to play an interesting role in Maximilian’s narrative. It seems that the only aspect missing in his perfect “bear wilderness”⁷¹ of northeastern Pennsylvania was the Native American. Even here in the remote areas of the Pocono Mountains, which were so “romantic and wild,” he could not find any. “I was filled with {sadness} by the reflection that, in the whole of the extensive state of Pennsylvania, there is no trace remaining of the aboriginal population. O land of liberty!”⁷² But while he contemplated this {“sadly orphaned Indian country”}⁷³ during this early episode of his travels, he

⁶⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 99; Wied, vol. 1, p. 82.

⁶⁸ Wied, vol. 1, p. 84.

⁶⁹ Wied, vol. 1, p. 83.

⁷⁰ Wied, vol. 1, p. 88.

⁷¹ Maximilian liked to use terms such as “bear wilderness” or “eerie wilderness” for forests that he perceived as primeval and that had at least the potential for game like wolves and bears. The Prince had to wait until he reached the upper Missouri, however, to see his first bear in the wild.

⁷² Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 96-97; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 76-77.

⁷³ Wied, vol. 1, pp. 116-117; see also Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 117; Wied, vol. 1, p. 105.

soon adopted another romantic entity for his narrative:

We met several peasants, with their axes and guns, returning from their work in the woods: they were robust, savage-looking, powerful men, whose sudden appearance in such a lonely spot might elsewhere have excited suspicion [i.e. robbers] At length the moon rose bright and clear to relieve us from our unpleasant situation, and cheered by her friendly beams the gloomy path of the {adventurers}.⁷⁴

One cannot help but get the impression that these “savage-looking” peasants, which the Prince encountered in the forests along the Solomon Creek near Wilkes-Barre, became a substitute for the missing Native Americans.

While Maximilian continued his search for the perfect wilderness in the mountainous regions of northeastern Pennsylvania, he repeatedly witnessed early signs of an advancing civilization. At times, while following a wild creek that was “rush[ing], roaring and foaming over rocks covered with black moss, between old broken pines, in a true primeval wilderness,” he would encounter a solitary sawmill.⁷⁵ In other situations he discovered “a row of new wooden houses” that had just sprung up along a freshly built road in a forest,⁷⁶ or large amounts of tree stumps in the environs of settlements like Stoddartsville on the Lehigh,⁷⁷ which suggested that this part of the country just recently had been

⁷⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 113-114; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 100-101.

⁷⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 104; Wied, vol. 1, p. 91; see also Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 118, 136; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 105, 130.

⁷⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 98; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 80-81.

⁷⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 109; Wied, vol. 1, p. 95.

covered by primeval forests.

Looking at such scenes the Prince began to fathom that timber was the most important resource for these advances of the frontier.⁷⁸ Sawmills, in fact, seemed to be the real pioneers for the mushrooming settlements and developing industries. They supplied the planks and boards needed for the construction of houses and bridges, and also for barges that exported coal from eastern Pennsylvania to other parts of the country. In addition, as he noticed throughout his journey, large amounts of wood were piled along rivers and canals to propel the fleet of steamboats that traversed the country on its various waterways.⁷⁹

During his journey through Pennsylvania Maximilian also visited Mauch Chunk (today's Jim Thorpe), at that time an important hub for the shipping of anthracite coal (Figure 9).

Mauch Chunk is a village of about 200 houses, in the deep and narrow Lehigh valley This place has sprung up since the discovery of the very rich coal mines in the vicinity Several iron railroads, leading to the works, have already been made, canals dug to export the coals in numerous barges . . . and mills of various kinds [have been] built. . . .⁸⁰

One of the major attractions of this community was a gravity railroad that had

⁷⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 98, 123; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 80-81, 113.

⁷⁹ For a thorough discussion of the role of wood in the early United States see John Perlin's *A Forest Journey - The Role of Wood in the Development of Civilization*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989).

⁸⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 119; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 108-109.

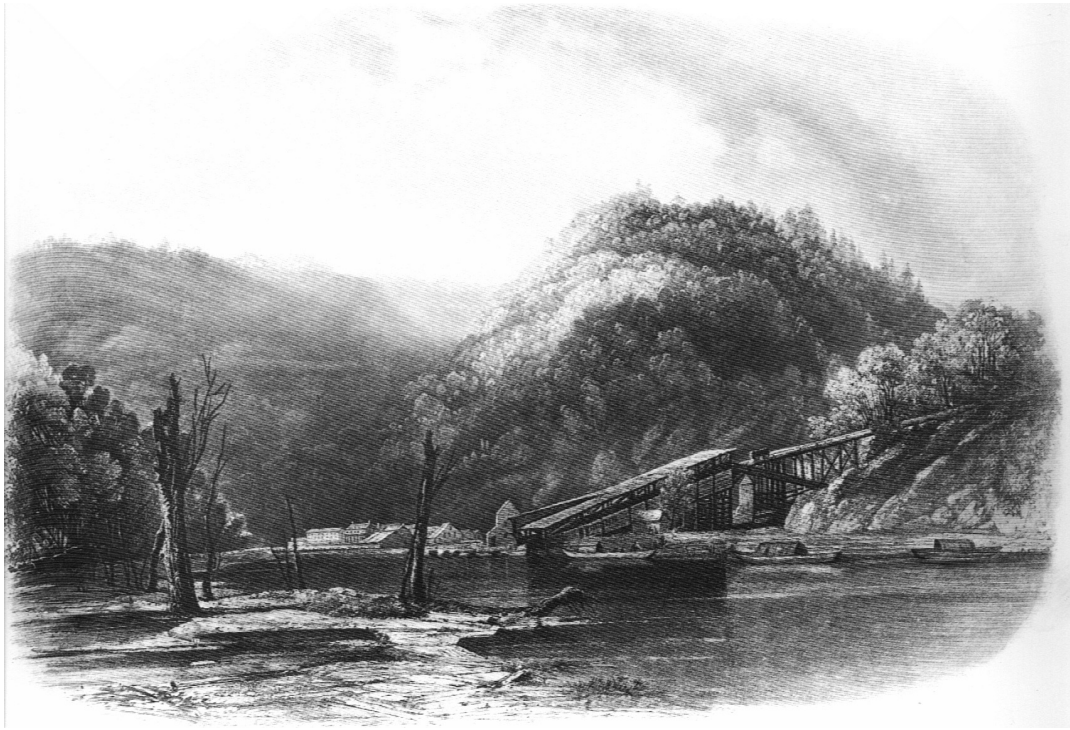


Figure 9: Mauch Chunk on the Lehigh (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

already fascinated hundreds of visitors before Maximilian.⁸¹ The principle of this railroad was fairly simple. The coal mines were located at Summit Hill, about eight miles away from Mauch Chunk and at an elevation of 1,460 feet. Mules pulled empty cars uphill to the mines where they were filled with coal. Once the mules got on board, the wagons rolled downhill again, but this time propelled by gravity. “It was interesting to see the black train advance, and dart by us with the

⁸¹ See especially John F. Sears’s *American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

rapidity of an arrow . . . ; they run five times a day, thus 450 tons . . . [of coal], are brought down to Mauch Chunck daily”⁸²

Maximilian likewise reported that the coal mining company at Mauch Chunk operated six sawmills, each of which produced “4,000 square feet of planks in twelve hours . . . to saw the wood it wants.”⁸³ Interestingly though, he never made the connection between the disappearance of his beloved primeval forests and the advancing industrial civilization as characterized by the coal-mining district at Mauch Chunk. Although the Prince repeatedly lamented the “destructive rage” of homesteading settlers and farmers,⁸⁴ technological innovations and the rapidly expanding industrial revolution seemed to be exempt from such criticism, since to him they symbolized the progress of human society.

Maximilian displayed the same uncritical admiration for the expanding networks of canals and railroads in the United States. At the time of his travels the development of cities and their markets still very much depended on their proximity to the Atlantic Ocean or easily navigable waterways. The biggest concentrations of industries could be found either around port cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, or along the Hudson, Connecticut, Delaware, and similar rivers. Farming areas near these large industrial centers were integrated into their market economies, but elsewhere, beyond the reach of

⁸² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 120; Wied, vol. 1, p. 110.

⁸³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 123; Wied, vol. 1, p. 113.

dependable water transportation, one entered a region of subsistence farming. Consequently, the development of efficient transportation and communication systems to utilize the vast interior resources of the United States became one of the driving forces in the early nineteenth century.⁸⁵

When the Prince was traveling through North America, the transportation revolution was just beginning. The country had entered the golden age of the river steamboat, and the first railroads were making their appearances.⁸⁶ Just how much the networks of canals and railroads expanded at this time can be seen by the following numbers. In 1830 the country had 1,277 miles of canals (Figure 10) and only 73 miles of railroads. Just ten years later, in 1840, freight and people were being transported on 3,326 miles of canals and 3,328 miles of railroads.⁸⁷ Thus, it is not surprising to find frequent entries in the Prince's diaries that describe these improvements in infrastructure.⁸⁸

[The Pennsylvania] canal, which is divided into several parts, will

⁸⁴ See especially Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 73-74, 98; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 47, 80.

⁸⁵ Sellers, 1991.

⁸⁶ The success of the Erie Canal, which was completed in 1825, started a canal boom that lasted for about two decades. With the construction of the Erie Canal, New York City gained a big advantage over its rivaling cities on the seaboard because it was connected to the vast interior markets via the Great Lakes. To counter this development, people in the Chesapeake Bay region invested into the construction of America's first railroad, the Baltimore and Ohio, which eventually linked them with the Ohio River (Taylor, 1951; Cochran, 1981).

⁸⁷ Taylor, 1951.

⁸⁸ See for example Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 89, 131, 153; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 68, 124, 151.

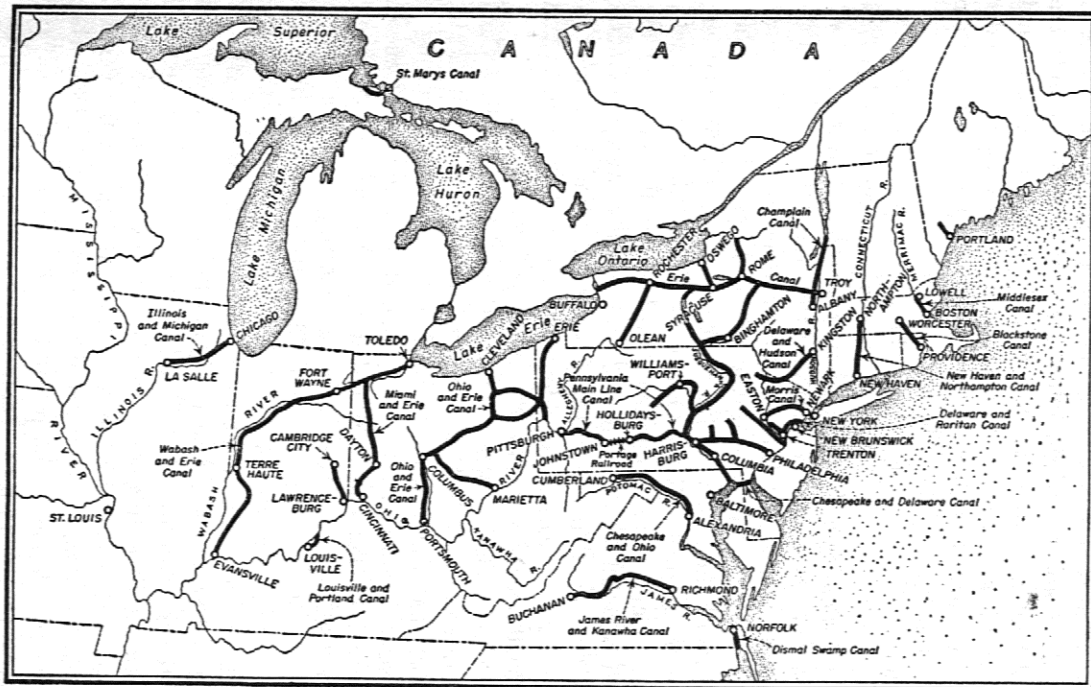


Figure 10: Principal canals built by 1860 (Rogers, 1951). The map is a good depiction of the existing network at Maximilian's time, since the peak of canal construction occurred in the late 1820s and throughout the 1830s.

be continued to Baltimore, the chief sea port, but it is not yet quite completed. Pennsylvania is already intersected by numerous canals, which connect the rivers, and are of the highest importance by the facilities they afford to inland trade.⁸⁹

That this transportation revolution naturally led to rapid expansion of the eastern economy into the interior of the United States, and thus opened thousands of acres of woodland to land-hungry settlers, was never acknowledged by the Prince.

⁸⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 112; Wied, vol. 1, p. 99.

After the travelers had roamed through the Blue Mountains for some time, they returned to Bethlehem once more on the first of September 1832. Their long-awaited baggage finally arrived three days later,⁹⁰ and after they had shipped many specimens of natural history off to Germany, they were ready to continue their journey. It appears that the Prince at this time still envisioned traveling into the interior of North America via the Great Lakes, but back in Bethlehem he again heard alarming news regarding cholera:

The accounts of the progress of the cholera, which we daily received, were not favorable . . . [and] the disorder was extremely dangerous; [the disease] had also spread into the country about the Great Lakes It seemed impossible to avoid it; I therefore chose the route down the Ohio, intending to make the Mississippi, in the following spring, the basis of our excursions into the Western wilds or the Indian country.⁹¹

This cholera epidemic of 1832 actually had originated in the lower Ganges Valley of India some time in 1826. It persistently worked its way through Russia and the Near East into Europe, until it reached England on board an unknown vessel in the summer of 1831. Despite a quarantine act and efforts by the Quebec Board of Health, the disease reached North America in early June of 1832, and subsequently spread via the St. Lawrence and the Hudson Rivers. In New York

⁹⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 126; Wied, vol. 1, p. 117.

⁹¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 127; Wied, vol. 1, p. 118.

City the first case of cholera was reported on June 26, 1832.⁹²

Because the disease followed the arteries of transportation, the threat of cholera accompanied the Prince during much of his journey. Many entries in his narrative deal with this epidemic, and he provides details about the population exodus from cities like New York,⁹³ and the number of people killed in various places. Initially, however, Maximilian seemed not the least bit worried about the possibilities that he could become infected himself:

Intelligence had been received from New York that the cholera had broken out there and that numbers of inhabitants were leaving the city . . . which, however, did not deter us from embarking [on the Boston steam-boat] for New York⁹⁴

With time, however, and better knowledge about the dimensions of this epidemic, the Prince became increasingly concerned. From Bethlehem across the Alleghenies to Pittsburgh and down the Ohio River to Cincinnati and beyond, cholera seemed to always be a hairsbreadth ahead of the adventurers. Many times, when the steamboat stopped to take on travelers or renew its supplies in firewood, Maximilian and his companions would hear news about yet another outbreak of cholera in a community. By the time they had reached Cincinnati, on

⁹² Rosenberg, 1962. During his earlier visit to New York City, Maximilian had already realized that this epidemic might threaten his envisioned travel route via the Great Lakes. See Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 55; Wied, vol. 1, p. 28.

⁹³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 55; Wied, vol. 1, p. 28.

⁹⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 54; Wied, vol. 1, p. 23.

the seventeenth of October, 1832, even the untiring naturalist realized that it was time to exercise caution:

Cincinnati, the most important and flourishing town of the West, with more than 36,000 inhabitants, was at this time visited by the cholera, which, as we were assured by a physician who came to our vessel, carried off, on an average, forty persons daily. I therefore resolved not to stop [here].⁹⁵

In the end though it seemed that all the precautionary measures were in vain. They had just left Louisville to continue their journey down the Ohio River when the Prince and his huntsman Dreidoppel started to feel indisposed. To make things worse it was discovered that cholera was present on board and that a man, who just had declared himself ill in the morning, was dead a couple of hours later.⁹⁶ The Prince must have been extremely alarmed when he attended the subsequent funeral on the shores of the Ohio, even if he never admitted to it. He simply stated at a later point that he “was not in the mood properly to appreciate the fine, lofty forests of Indiana”⁹⁷ when his party left the steamboat at Mount Vernon to take a stagecoach to New Harmony.

Even under the sobering circumstances of an epidemic, the Prince’s narrative reveals more than just a report on cholera’s shocking realities. Earlier in

⁹⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 155; Wied, vol. 1, p. 153.

⁹⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 161; Wied, vol. 1, p. 159.

⁹⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 162; Wied, vol. 1, p. 161.

September, on their journey from Bethlehem to Pittsburgh, for example, the travelers observed that:

Reading is a very pretty town on the Schuylkill, with 6,000 to 7,000 inhabitants The cholera had already carried off many persons here We saw a funeral procession returning home, in which there were several women on horseback; the veils on their large fashionable hats fluttered in the wind, and gave this caravan of Amazons a singular appearance.⁹⁸

The characterization of these women on horseback as “Amazons” is quite peculiar. Of course Maximilian was generally amused by the fashion frenzy of American women, but this was certainly not an appropriate time to ridicule or even discuss a way of life. Perhaps he simply used this poetic metaphor to better describe the procession of “large fashionable hats” with their fluttering veils. Perhaps he imagined that all these women on horseback had just lost their husbands and, therefore, resembled a band of widowed warriors. But no matter the reason for this poetic or romantic slip of the pen, it nevertheless opens another window into the lively imagination of the narrator. “Amazons” here joined the ranks of sea serpents, robber bands, and savage-looking peasants.

⁹⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 130; Wied, vol. 1, p. 123.

Winter Residence at New Harmony

. . . Mr. Owen, a Scotchman, bought [New Harmony from] Mr. Rapp, but afterwards disposed of it to Mr. William Maclure, President of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. At the time of our visit, Harmony had fallen into decay, and the people whom Maclure had settled there, were in part dispersed. Two sons of Mr. Owen were, however, still here, and also Mr. Thomas Say, and Mr. Lesueur; the first, well known as having accompanied Major Long [o]n his two journeys into the interior, and the second, by his voyage [a]round the world with Captain Baudin, and the celebrated Piron.⁹⁹

Maximilian and his companions arrived in New Harmony, Indiana, on the eastern banks of the Wabash on October 19, 1832. Much to their relief, they soon realized that none of them had contracted cholera. The Prince was definitely ill, however, and his condition prolonged their envisioned stay of a few days to a five-month-long winter residence until March 16, 1833. Maximilian was confined to his bed for several days, but he was not the kind of man who remained idle for long. Thus, he left his accommodation whenever his condition would allow it, and soon he was roaming through the forests along the Wabash.

The New Harmony in which the travelers spent the winter of 1832-33 was anything but a typical frontier town. It was a community that had been carved out of the Indiana wilderness in 1814 by a sectarian group known as the Harmonists. The group originated in the dukedom of Württemberg, Germany, and had

⁹⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 163-164; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 164-165.

followed their charismatic leader George Rapp to the United States in 1804, where they founded the town of Harmony, Pennsylvania. In order to keep their traditions alive they conversed in German and dressed like Swabian peasants. They practiced communal living, where each individual surrendered his possessions to the common treasury and submitted to the strict rules of the society. In exchange, members received educational benefits, the religious guidance of their spiritual leader, and provisions for all their physical needs in times of illness.¹⁰⁰

The Harmony community, located about thirty miles north of Pittsburgh, soon became a prosperous town. After ten years, though, George Rapp decided that it was time to leave, and so he and his followers packed their belongings to relocate on the frontier. Within a short amount of time they again erected a substantial town in Indiana, which they called the “new” Harmony, with solid brick buildings and a thriving economy. They operated vineyards, mills, and tanneries, and were especially well-known for their production of cloth, grain, and whiskey. Their symbol, a golden rose, soon became a trademark for their quality goods throughout the country.¹⁰¹

The New Harmony that Maximilian visited was no longer Rapp’s colony,

¹⁰⁰ Karl J. R. Arndt, “George Rapp’s Harmony Society.” In *America’s Communal Utopias*, Donald E. Pitzer, ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 57-87.

¹⁰¹ Arndt, 1997.

however. In 1824, the leader again decided that it was time to depart and he sold the place to the British social reformer Robert Owen. The Harmonists then returned to Pennsylvania where they founded the settlement of Economy, ten miles northwest of Pittsburgh, while New Harmony almost overnight turned into a nonsectarian, socialistic utopia. Owen's dream was short-lived, however. Lacking the radical doctrines of a sectarian community and failing to screen incoming residents, his experiment collapsed in 1827. Still, because Owen's plans had attracted several intellectuals such as William Maclure,¹⁰² Thomas Say,¹⁰³ Charles Alexandre Lesueur,¹⁰⁴ Joseph Neef,¹⁰⁵ and Frances Wright,¹⁰⁶ New Harmony became an important scientific and educational center for decades to come.¹⁰⁷

Maximilian was keenly aware of the intriguing history of his winter residence. Not only was he familiar with the travel accounts of his acquaintance

¹⁰² Maclure was a well-known philanthropist and president of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia since 1817. He was also the founder of about 160 free libraries in Indiana and Illinois, known as the "Workingmen's Institutes." For more information on William Maclure see Donald E. Pitzer, "The New Moral World of Robert Owen and New Harmony." In *America's Communal Utopias*, Donald E. Pitzer, ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

¹⁰³ Thomas Say was an internationally recognized naturalist, with a specialization in entomology and conchology, who also participated in Major Stephen H. Long's expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1819-20. See Patricia Tyson Stroud, *Thomas Say - New World Naturalist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁴ Charles Alexandre Lesueur was a French naturalist who was well known for his animal drawings and his scientific expedition with François Peron to Australia (Stroud, 1992).

¹⁰⁵ Joseph Neef was the Pestalozzian instructor at New Harmony's school (Pitzer, 1997).

¹⁰⁶ Frances Wright was an influential spokesperson for emancipation and women's rights (Pitzer, 1997).

¹⁰⁷ Pitzer, 1997.

Duke Bernhard,¹⁰⁸ who had been to both New Harmony and Economy, but he also had paid a short visit to George Rapp and his followers in Pennsylvania while on the way to the Ohio River. Planned, idealist communities such as Bethlehem, Economy, and New Harmony, in fact, were as much part of Maximilian's intended travel agenda, as were, say, New York City, Mauch Chunk, and Niagara Falls. For some reason, however, his narrative remained surprisingly silent when it came to the discussion of these clearly atypical American places.¹⁰⁹

Of course, there was no need for him to say much about the Moravian settlement of Bethlehem, because his hometown Neuwied had had its own growing Moravian community since 1750, when the first *Herrnhuter* came to the principality.¹¹⁰ His discussion of Economy remained fairly short, because it had already been described "in its leading features by Duke Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar."¹¹¹ Nevertheless, Maximilian's few comments on this latest venture of the Harmonists are still intriguing:

The rapidity with which their settlement sprung up, amidst thick forests, proves the judgement and prudence of their founder. The order . . . is admirable . . . and all inhabitants are usefully employed

¹⁰⁸ Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, 1828.

¹⁰⁹ This reminds one, of course, on the "gap" in Maximilian's narrative during his stay near Joseph Bonaparte's mansion in Bordentown (see pages 64-66).

¹¹⁰ Rheinischer Verein für Denkmalpflege und Landschaftsschutz (RVDL), *Neuwied - Schloss und Stadtkern*, Rheinische Kunststätten, Vol. 310 (Köln: Neusser Druckerei und Verlag GmbH, 1986).

¹¹¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 140; Wied, vol. 1, p. 136.

. . . . The *only complaint* (emphasis added) is, that no account is given of the management, and that the government of the institution is rather too dictatorial. Be this as it may, it cannot be denied that the arrangement and direction of this artificial society are admirable, and do honor to the founder.¹¹²

This “only complaint” of dictatorship, of course, had led to a large schism in George Rapp’s community in March 1832, only six months before Maximilian visited Economy. Then about a third of the Harmonists decided to leave the colony.¹¹³ The Prince, however, never mentioned this incident. Instead, he seemed more interested in the “order” of the community and in the fact that “all inhabitants were usefully employed.” Enlightenment or not, Maximilian still was member of one of the oldest aristocratic families in Germany, and seemed to prefer the dictatorial order of a figure like George Rapp over the potential disorder of a democratic (or revolutionary) movement.

This leaves New Harmony, the third idealist community on Maximilian’s agenda. One certainly would expect to find comments in his narrative on Owen’s utopia, especially since he stayed almost five months in New Harmony in comparison to his two days in Economy. The Prince, however, remained nearly silent on this topic. The only remark is a short, matter-of-fact-statement in the beginning of his chapter. There he simply wrote that Owen’s “Harmony had

¹¹² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 141; Wied, vol. 1, p. 137.

¹¹³ Arndt, 1997.

[already] fallen into decay” at the time of their visit. He gave no further explanation of the circumstances of this decline or of the concept of this socialistic experiment, stating only that since “Duke Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar ha[d] already spoken on this subject,” he needed “not to give any further account of the history of this settlement.”¹¹⁴

Maximilian achieved two ends with this second referral to the travel accounts of his acquaintance. On one hand he endorsed Duke Bernhard’s report which included strong criticism of atheistic tendencies in Owen’s community¹¹⁵ and which belittled its attempts to create a society based on the principles of equality.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, the Prince was able to bypass the problematic discussion of a community which essentially questioned the existing social order in Europe and thus Maximilian’s status as a nobleman. It is hard to imagine, however, that Thomas Say, Charles Alexandre Lesueur, and Maximilian did not take the opportunity to discuss Owen’s failed socialistic experiment during the long winter nights.

In any case, Maximilian seems to have enjoyed his prolonged stay on the Wabash. He had access to one of the finest libraries in the country, which

¹¹⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 163; Wied, vol. 1, p. 164. Maximilian referred here to Chapter XXI of Duke Bernhard’s travel accounts.

¹¹⁵ Duke Bernhard was especially critical of Joseph Neef and “Mr. Jennings” who openly proclaimed that they were atheists. See Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, vol. 2, pp. 116, 122, Vol. II.

¹¹⁶ See especially Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, vol. 2, p. 110.

included the most valuable new works on botany and zoology. He also had the opportunity to discuss matters of natural history with the renowned naturalists Say and Lesueur:

At any other place in this country I should have extremely regretted such a loss of time, but here I derived much instruction and entertainment from my intercourse with two highly-informed men, Mr. Thomas Say and Mr. Lesueur¹¹⁷ I shall always retain a most pleasing recollection of the excursions which we made in the neighborhood of Harmony One of the most agreeable was when we sailed down the Wabash, and landed on its wooden islands We usually landed on Fox Island, on the right bank, fastened our boat to the trunk of a large fallen tree, and then went up the steep bank into a thick, lofty forest¹¹⁸

The Prince was deeply enthralled by the rich diversity of plants and animals he encountered in Indiana's wilderness, and, as always, took copious notes during his excursions. He considered the Wabash "highly picturesque" and "romantic" and repeatedly went into rapture about the "colossal [sycamores]" and "magnificent oaks" he encountered along its banks (Figure 11). He was especially fascinated, though, by the occurrence of Carolina parakeets (*Psittacus carolinensis*)¹¹⁹ which, much to his surprise, remained in this part of the country during the winter. "No other kind of parrot seems to bear so great a degree of

¹¹⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 185-186; Wied, vol. 1, p. 196.

¹¹⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 187-189; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 198-199.

¹¹⁹ Many years later, in 1857, Maximilian published a paper on the now extinct Carolina parakeet (Wied, Maximilian Prinz zu, "Über den Papagei von Nord-Amerika (*Psittacus (Conurus) carolinensis* Lin.)." *Journal für Ornithologie*, 26 (1857): 97-105).

cold as this one. We often saw them flying about in the forest, feeding on the fruit of the [sycamore], when Réaumur's thermometer was at 11 degrees below zero."¹²⁰



Figure 11: Cutoff river and branch of the Wabash (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

Because one of the primary objectives of Maximilian's journey was to increase his natural history collection, he untiringly filled his bags with specimens of local plants and animals. His collections were especially complete for this region since he spent such a long time in Indiana, and he even hired local

¹²⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 169; Wied, vol. 1, p. 175. This particular thermometer was named after René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, who invented the device in 1730. Réaumur set the freezing point at 0 degrees R, and the boiling point at 80 degrees R. Thus 11 degrees R below zero equals about 14 degrees C below zero.

hunters to help him in his pursuit. Here and elsewhere, however, the reader of his travel accounts cannot help but wonder why the Prince felt it necessary to bag yet another duck, salamander, parrot, or tortoise. The need for duplicates to ensure that he had at least one good specimen of each kind in his possession once he got back to Germany, was part of the explanation. Another and more important reason for this collection frenzy was much more mundane. These duplicates were desirable items for trade with his European colleagues who did not have the means or opportunity to travel to North America. Thus, the Prince filled dozens of cases during his travels. As soon as he returned to Europe he began to barter with his fellow naturalists. He wrote, for example, a letter to Rudolf Schinz just a few days after he got back to Neuwied. In it he advertised his treasures:

I have brought much with me, which might be of interest to you. If you don't own Nuttall's *American Ornithology* yet, I can give you a copy, as well as a number of duplicates of animals I am rich in amphibians, I have beautiful Allegheny salamanders . . . and at least sixty tortoises As soon as all my boxes have arrived . . . I will send you a list of my duplicates.¹²¹

Another type of souvenir that preoccupied the Prince during his entire

¹²¹ Prince Maximilian in a letter from August 28, 1834, to Rudolf Schinz. (ZBZ: MS Car XV 175, Umschlag II). At the time Maximilian wrote this letter he still awaited his collection of natural history from the upper Missouri. Just a few weeks later, though, he was shocked to learn that the steamer *Assiniboine*, which carried his precious cargo down the Missouri River, had been lost to fire near Bismarck, North Dakota, on June 1, 1835 (Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 240, footnote 179).

journey in North America was the discovery of hitherto unknown plants and animals. Ever since Carl Linné had devised the *Systema Naturae* in the eighteenth century, naturalists possessed a powerful tool to map the world's biodiversity. And while they stumbled through God's creation in the search of the unknown, they themselves became God-like in that they had the power to "create" new species, as long as they were the first to describe them.

Although Linnaean "bounty hunters" were common at the time, Maximilian was not this sort of person. In fact, he despised those who seemed more interested in the naming of new species than in an accurate description of their characteristics:

{Rafinesque's descriptions [of some new species of *Unio*] are too insufficient and superficial to determine them in the field, and he even created new genera just from some oral descriptions, without having seen the animal himself.}¹²²

Thus, whenever the Prince found what appeared to be an unknown species, he took great care to first depict its major attributes and consult his reference library and fellow naturalists, before he suggested a name. Today's Red-Eared Slider (*Pseudemys scripta elegans*), a turtle he described on one of his excursions

¹²² Wied, vol. 1, p. 179.

along the Wabash, is just one of many discoveries made by Maximilian.¹²³

Not surprisingly, the Prince also expected to collect some information about the indigenous population of North America during his five-month stay in New Harmony. Again he was disappointed to learn that he was about two decades too late. Traces from ancient civilizations still remained in the region, including burial mounds, arrowheads, and bowls of pipes, and Maximilian even received a “considerable number [of decayed bones]”¹²⁴ from Lesueur, which he sent to his mentor Friedrich Blumenbach in Göttingen. No signs of the contemporary native American population were to be seen, however:

Nobody in Harmony was [even] able to give any account of the names of the Indian tribes who inhabited the country at the time when this village was founded The early history of Indiana mentions . . . Kickapoos, Musquitons [Mascoutin], Potanons [Potawatomi] . . . as well as the Piankishaws, Miami, and Viandots [Wyandot] All these Indians are now totally extirpated or expelled from Indiana, and the country [now] enjoys the advantage of being peopled by the backwoodsmen!¹²⁵

Consequently, when the Prince was not occupied with his botanical and zoological studies, he had to be content with his observations of the new landlords of this region. In his chapter the reader learns much about such things

¹²³ Maximilian originally named this turtle *Emys elegans*. See also footnotes 8 and 9 on page 213 of his travel accounts. In addition, see Appendix A for a listing of the major species that he was the first to describe.

¹²⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 173; Wied, vol. 1, p. 182.

¹²⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 177-179; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 185-186.

as steamboat traffic on the Wabash, local taxes and fashion trends, agricultural practices of farmers, and the illegal settling of unoccupied lands.

The sarcasm in the citation above, where the Prince stated that “the country [now] enjoys the advantage of being peopled by the backwoodsmen,” suggests his general negative perception of pioneer settlers he encountered during his travels. Throughout his narrative, but especially in his chapter on New Harmony, Maximilian was highly critical of the primitive ways in which people practiced both agriculture and livestock breeding. He repeatedly described the settlers as a bunch of rude and uneducated “half-savages.”¹²⁶ Perhaps the Prince did not realize that this way of life was fairly typical for the frontier, in stark contrast with the utopias of George Rapp and Robert Owen. At any rate, he never accepted the rough manners of people who eked out a rudimentary existence in the woods of Indiana and elsewhere (Figure 12).

Filled with these and other observations, Maximilian’s time in New Harmony slowly passed. And while he recovered completely from his illness, Karl Bodmer took the opportunity to travel to New Orleans.¹²⁷ If it was not for the company of Say and Lesueur and the available natural history library, the Prince

¹²⁶ See for example Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 165, 179, 211; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 167, 186-187, 227-228.

¹²⁷ On December 29 Karl Bodmer decided spontaneously to accompany “Mr. Twigg,” a local merchant, to New Orleans. “Mr. Twigg” apparently was instructed by Maximilian to ship three chests full of natural history specimens from New Orleans to Europe (UFJ, entry for December 29, 1832).

surely would have regretted his prolonged stay. Under these favorable circumstances though, he was able to thoroughly prepare his upcoming journey into the Indian Territory and to substantially increase his natural history collection.¹²⁸



Figure 12: Settler's farm in Indiana (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Hunt and Gallagher, 1984).

The end of a long winter residence finally came in sight with the early arrival of warmer weather. Maximilian was clearly excited when he reported that “[t]he voice of the turtle-dove was heard as early as the 8th of February; [that] insects buzzed about; [that] flocks of migratory pigeons flew towards the north

¹²⁸ Apparently Maximilian filled eight boxes alone in New Harmony (see his entry in the UFJ for February 23, 1833).

and east; and [that] on the 9th, the first steamboat went up the Wabash.”¹²⁹ With the resumption of steamboat traffic also came the welcome news that cholera had abated in the southern and western parts of the country. Thus, when the long-awaited Karl Bodmer returned to New Harmony on February 15,¹³⁰ and brought with him his first drawings of Native Americans (Choctaws and Cherokees), the Prince became increasingly anxious to leave. As soon as the last specimens of natural history were packed and sent off (including those that Karl Bodmer had brought with him from his trip down the Mississippi River), they made final preparations for their westward journey. At last, in the early morning of March 16, they bade farewell to their friends in New Harmony and went on horseback to the nearby port town of Mount Vernon on the Ohio River.

Journey to St. Louis and the Indian Territory

Spirits were high on this sunny morning in March when the Prince and his companions finally went on their way. They reached Mount Vernon, a community of six hundred souls, at noon, and immediately went down to the banks of the big river. Maximilian’s poetic description of the Ohio, which was going to take them to

¹²⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 196; Wied, vol. 1, p. 208.

¹³⁰ UFJ, entry for February 15, 1833.

the Mississippi River, shows just how excited he was to finally continue his travels. "The view both up and down the river was beautiful. {The woods along the banks . . . disappeared at the next turn of the river in the blue haze in the distance and in the splendor of the proud water surface.}"¹³¹

One can easily imagine the Prince standing at the water's edge, looking into that hazy distance and wondering what the coming weeks and months might bring. But if he had hoped to catch a steamboat the very same day, he again had to learn to be patient. Understandably, that was difficult for him at this time:

We were obliged to wait a couple of days in [Mount Vernon] for a steamboat, to go down the river, {which gave us the opportunity to be completely weary of the rural scenes on the streets, where pigs laid down in the path of the by passer to nurse their numerous offspring.}¹³²

This wait, which felt like such an eternity to the eager naturalist, lasted only two days, until March 18, when they left Mount Vernon on board the steamboat *Conveyance*. They came to Shawneetown, Illinois, the same day, stayed overnight, and took the steamer *Paragon* for the remaining trip to St. Louis.

According to Maximilian, the *Paragon* consumed twelve cords of wood daily, and therefore they regularly had to stop to replenish their supplies.¹³³ Many

¹³¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 199; Wied, vol. 1, p. 217.

¹³² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 200; Wied, vol. 1, p. 218.

¹³³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 203; Wied, vol. 1, p. 221. One cord equals 128 cubic feet of wood, or a pile measuring 4 by 4 by 8 feet.

of the homesteads and small towns they spotted from the deck of their vessel actually made a good portion of their income from the sale of firewood and provisions, which they advertised on large billboards along the river. In fact, one could say there was a symbiotic relationship between the increasing steamboat traffic and the growth and westward push of settlements. And because it had not been that long that steamboats traversed rivers like the Mississippi and Ohio in great numbers, many settlements had just sprung up within the last few years, and consequently were not yet mentioned in the quickly outdated travel guides.¹³⁴

At [Smithland, Kentucky] the Paragon took in wood and provisions . . . The little village, Paduca[h], on the left bank of the Ohio, appeared to have much traffic, and a number of new shops had been built. The Western Pilot of the year 1829 does not mention this place--a proof of its recent origin . . .¹³⁵

Their trip to St. Louis was fairly uneventful. While the landscapes glided past them, they took note of such things as changes in vegetation and rock formations. They also shot at turtles and wild geese which “served as a target for

¹³⁴ Steamboats were introduced on western rivers like the Mississippi and Ohio in the late 1810s, but only in the 1830s did they become the predominant means of transportation. At their climax, in the mid 1850s, more than 700 steamers traversed these rivers. One can imagine the amount of wood that was necessary to propel such an armada, and the consequences it must have had on forests along the western rivers, especially in regions where coal was not easily available. See George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution: 1815-1860. The Economic History of the United States* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951), vol. 4; and Louis C. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949).

¹³⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 203; Wied, vol. 1, p. 221.

[the] hunters.”¹³⁶ Whenever the *Paragon* had to stop to take on wood, the Prince took the opportunity to walk through the streets of small towns to inspect the rudimentary homesteads of pioneer settlers, or most often to roam through nearby forests:

We lay to, to take in fuel, which cost three dollars for two cords. Here was a high, steep, sandy bank, and a small, very wretched planter's log house The woman, with her pipe in her mouth, was occupied at the miserable fire place; the man was just returned, with a boy, from the forest; the two other children looked unhealthy, weak and pale . . . a couple of oxen, five to six young hogs, and some Muscovy ducks, were feeding about the cottage. Immediately behind, and close to it, commenced the magnificent, dense, and lofty forest, which we resolved at once to explore . . .

¹³⁷

As soon as it was time again to get on board, the steamer blew its horn, the travelers hastened back, and the journey continued. In this fashion they arrived in St. Louis eight days after they had left Indiana, on March 24.

The hustle and bustle of a booming town like St. Louis, which Maximilian reported had 6,000 to 8,000 inhabitants at the time, must have been quite a contrast to the tranquility of New Harmony. “[N]umerous steam boats come and

¹³⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 210; Wied, vol. 1, p. 227. This image of hunters shooting at anything that moved on the river banks to pass their time reminds one of the railroad travelers on the Great Plains in the 1860s and 1870s, who passed their time shooting at buffaloes.

¹³⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 205-206; Wied, vol. 1, p. 223. This particular homestead was located near today's Cairo, close to the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Maximilian's negative characterization of this and many other “primitive” homesteads along the river, including their inhabitants, is reminiscent of his description of the backwoodsmen in Indiana (see discussion on p. 104).

go, daily, to New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, Prairie du Chien, etc.; and a very brisk trade employs the motley population of many nations.”¹³⁸

What was special about St. Louis, though, was not its commerce or the rapidity of its growth, but two very different aspects. For the first time in his narrative the Prince strongly voiced his opposition to slavery, and, most importantly, he finally met with the Native Americans.

Throughout his journey, the Prince took note of the African American population. Whenever possible he reported on their number in towns and cities they visited, their occupations, and whether or not they were free or enslaved. Up to this point, however, he had not made any statements about their living conditions in particular or the institution of slavery in general. Perhaps he simply was not as interested in African Americans as he was in the Native Americans. Perhaps, again, he hesitated to touch upon a politically sensitive subject, analogous to socialistic utopias or Bordentown’s prominent resident. In any regard, his experiences in St. Louis broke the silence:

The greater part of the workmen in the port, and all the servants of St. Louis, are negroes . . . {They, including their descendants, are all slaves in the state of Missouri}. They are very numerous here; and though modern travelers represent in very favorable colors the situation of this oppressed race, the negro slaves are no better off here than in other countries. Everywhere they are a demoralized race . . . We were witnesses of deplorable punishments of these people. One of our neighbors at St. Louis, for instance, flogged one

¹³⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 216; Wied, vol. 1, p. 231.

of his slaves in the public streets, with untiring arm. Sometimes he stopped a moment to rest, and then began anew.¹³⁹

To be sure, the enlightened naturalist had already voiced his opposition to slavery at an earlier time, when the travelers visited Louisville. But there the Prince made only one short statement about the “state of oppression in which the negro slaves live in North America,”¹⁴⁰ and in a footnote he specified that {“there are still about 165,000 negro slaves in Kentucky, in all of the United States 1,999,573.”}.¹⁴¹ But at no other time, other than during his stay in St. Louis, did he criticize slavery and the treatment of African Americans in such an outspoken and clear fashion.¹⁴²

Maximilian’s attention to the plight of African Americans soon was cut short, however. Something even more riveting appeared in St. Louis, the subject that would preoccupy him for the next fourteen months--the “original inhabitant:”

St. Louis was the more interesting to us, at this moment, because we had, here, the first opportunity of becoming acquainted with the North American Indians in all their originality It happened that, during our stay at St. Louis, a deputation came down the

¹³⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 216; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 231-232.

¹⁴⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 157; Wied, vol. 1, p. 156.

¹⁴¹ Wied, vol. 1, p. 156. Maximilian gave no source for this information.

¹⁴² At a much later time, in July 1834, he had another chance to comment more thoroughly on issues such as slavery or the abolition movement. Shortly before his return to Europe he visited New York City once more and learned about riots in connection with the American Anti-Slavery Society Meeting, but again he decided to remain silent. He simply stated that there “was a great uproar at this time in the streets of New York” and that “{the mob had broken the windows and demolished the houses of negroes and some clergymen, who had spoken for them}” (Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 192; Wied, vol. 2, p. 422).

Mississippi from two Indian tribes, the Sauk[s] (Sacs) and the Foxes or Outagamies, to intercede for the Black Hawk, who was a prisoner in Jefferson barracks.¹⁴³

Much to his advantage the Prince carried a letter from Duke Bernhard with him which introduced him to General William Clark, then the Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis. With this letter he also gained access to meetings that were held with a group of Sauks and Foxes at Jefferson Barracks in the following days. Finally, the long-awaited moment had arrived when Maximilian was able to “observe and study these remarkable people”¹⁴⁴ (Figure 13).

Perhaps surprisingly, one of the first comments the Prince made about his initial contact with Native Americans was a more general discussion of their race. As a former student of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach,¹⁴⁵ he was happy to report that a “general affinity” existed between the Indians of North America and those he had observed in Brazil in 1815-17. In other words, he confirmed Blumenbach’s hypothesis that the native peoples of both continents belonged to the same race. At the same time he stressed that these people were very different from the Mongolian race, because they did not have the “Tartar features” and did not breed cattle or subsist on milk. After this short racial discussion, though, Maximilian quickly concentrated on what has become the hallmark of his travel accounts, descriptions of the Indians themselves.

¹⁴³ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 216-217; Wied, vol. 1, p. 232.

¹⁴⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 218; Wied, vol. 1, p. 233.



Figure 13: Sauk and Fox Indians on the river bank near St. Louis (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

In his portrayals of Native Americans the Prince usually concentrated on their physical appearance before he discussed aspects of language, customs, and material culture. The description of the Sauks and Foxes is typical:

They are stout, well-formed men, many of them above the middle size, broad shouldered, muscular and brawny The features of the men are expressive . . . ; the cheek bones prominent, the lower jaw broad and angular; the dark brown eyes animated and fiery The teeth are strong, firm and white The nose is large and prominent, often arched The lips are usually rather thick; the

¹⁴⁵ See also pages 29-30, Chapter Two.

hair straight, smooth, and black [They] had shaved their hair off the whole head except a small tuft behind . . . which terminated in a thin braid, to which was fastened the chief ornament He who has become renowned for horse stealing . . . fasten to the tip of this feather the rattle of a rattlesnake Their language . . . has some nasals and gutturals, the words are very frequently pronounced indistinctly [T]hey were very cheerful, and often laughed heartily. If one went up to them familiarly, and spoke to them, many of them had a very agreeable, friendly expression.¹⁴⁶

Despite the cheerfulness and his excitement about this meeting, Maximilian must have been aware that the Sauks and Foxes¹⁴⁷ he was looking at were a defeated people, one who had lost their ancestral lands not that long ago. Many times during his travels along the East Coast and to St. Louis he had commented on the “sadly orphaned country” and mentioned the names of tribes who formerly lived in regions he visited. Now, the closer he came to the line that divided the North American continent into Indian and European territories, the closer he came to the making of history itself.

The aforementioned Black Hawk, for example, was a famous Sauk chief who fought one of the last Indian wars in the Old Northwest. Outraged about a

¹⁴⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 218-226; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 233-241. An abundant literature covers Maximilian's descriptions of the Plains Indians and summarizes his ethnological findings (see my discussion in Chapter One). This dissertation, in contrast, will emphasize only aspects of Maximilian's "Native America," that are essential for a deconstruction of his narrated landscapes.

¹⁴⁷ The Sauks and Foxes already formed a confederacy in the seventeenth century (Carl Waldman, *Atlas of the North American Indian* (New York: Facts On File Publications, 1985).

fraudulent treaty in 1804 that ceded all their tribal lands east of the Mississippi,¹⁴⁸ Black Hawk and his followers challenged the government for almost three decades. They fought alongside Tecumseh (the famous Shawnee chief) on the British side in the War of 1812, regularly attacked U.S. military forts, and persistently returned to their ancestral lands for the traditional spring planting. The confrontation came to a climax in 1832, when the Sauk chief and several hundred of his followers again decided to return to their old villages east of the Mississippi. They were met by federal troops under the command of General Henry Atkinson, and what culminated in the imprisonment of Black Hawk, is just one of many sad chapters in the history of U.S. - Indian relations.¹⁴⁹

Not far from Cincinnati, Maximilian had already seen the steamboat *Parsons*, which was returning troops from this war.¹⁵⁰ Now, in Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis, he was able to see the famous Sauk chief himself. The drama that unfolded during this reunion apparently was so touching that the Prince made a rare emotional comment in his narrative.¹⁵¹ “The sight of the old Black

¹⁴⁸ A large portion of today's Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin (Waldman, 1985).

¹⁴⁹ For further details see Waldman, 1985.

¹⁵⁰ See Wied, vol. 1, p. 153.

¹⁵¹ Maximilian, of course, often made “emotional” comments in his narrative, but they either were connected with descriptions of wilderness or with his outrage about the neglected culture of the indigenous population. The empathy shown here is fairly unusual for Maximilian's narrative, even if he seems reluctant to admit to be one of these spectators who were touched by this reunion.

Hawk, and the whole scene of the prisoners and their friends, was affecting,” he wrote, “and many of the spectators appeared to participate in their feelings.”¹⁵² For once it was not the romantic or the ethnographer who was speaking, but a fellow human being who felt sympathy for Black Hawk’s fate. Consequently, Maximilian’s initial excitement about this encounter with the Sauks and Foxes was dampened to a degree. Moreover, he also must have realized that since he wanted to study the Native Americans “in all their originality,” which had to include their “original environments,” he still had to wait until he ventured farther west.

Coincidentally, Maximilian’s stay in St. Louis also was important in deciding the route for his remaining journey. Up to this point, the Prince knew only that he wanted to explore “the interior of the western part of North America, and, if possible, the Rocky Mountains.”¹⁵³ The question remained whether he should take a caravan by land to Santa Fé, or follow the course of the Missouri River. Both seemed to be viable options, but a combination of factors finally made him decide on the upper Missouri as his destination.

When Maximilian consulted with several individuals in St. Louis about the advantages and disadvantages of an overland trip to Santa Fé, he learned that it would be “extremely difficult, nay impossible, to make considerable collections of

¹⁵² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 230; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 244-245.

¹⁵³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 231; Wied, vol. 1, p. 245.

natural history”¹⁵⁴ during such an undertaking. Most importantly, he would hardly be able to study Native Americans, because the tribes on that route were hostile. In contrast, people in St. Louis painted the Missouri River venture in a much more positive light. In particular, Maximilian met with Major Benjamin O’Fallon, a nephew of the famous explorer William Clark. O’Fallon owned a substantial collection of Indian artifacts from that region, and also a number of George Catlin’s paintings.¹⁵⁵ Thus, if the Prince had not made his decision already, O’Fallon’s artifacts and Catlin’s Indian scenes proved convincing.¹⁵⁶ Subsequently, he obtained passage from the American Fur Company for a long trip to the upper Missouri on the steamer *Yellow Stone*.¹⁵⁷ Equipped with copies of maps made by Lewis and Clark¹⁵⁸ (which O’Fallon had reproduced for him), Maximilian and his companions left St. Louis on the tenth of April, 1833, in the

¹⁵⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 231; Wied, vol. 1, p. 246.

¹⁵⁵ Thwaites, vol. 25, p. 126; Wied, vol. 2, p. 362. I will come back to George Catlin’s paintings at the point when Maximilian returns to St. Louis from his trip to the Indian territory and was able “to form an opinion” on these works.

¹⁵⁶ In addition to seeing Catlin’s works in St. Louis, Maximilian also met with the Swiss-born artist Peter Rindisbacher (1806-1834). Rindisbacher is one of the least-known painters of Native North America in the early nineteenth century. The Prince, however, was so impressed by his work that he commissioned two paintings, which are now owned by the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha.

¹⁵⁷ George Catlin had taken this same steamer on its inaugural trip to Fort Union in 1831. Donald Jackson, *Voyages of the Steam Boat Yellow Stone* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1985).

¹⁵⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 236; Wied, vol. 1, p. 249. See also a publication by W. Raymond Wood and Gary E. Moulton, “Prince Maximilian and New Maps of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers by William Clark.” *Western Historical Quarterly* 12 (1981): 372-386. Apparently Maximilian bound these maps in a small atlas upon his return to Germany. Because more than half of the original maps of the Lewis and Clark expedition were lost in the United States, this atlas is an important asset for researchers of the expedition’s route.

company of Major John F. A. Sanford (the agent for the Crow, Mandan, Assiniboiné, Hidatsa, and Blackfoot) and Major Jonathan L. Bean (the agent for the Ponca and Sioux).

The next morning, on April 11, they made a short stop in St. Charles, where Pierre Chouteau, who headed the American Fur Company's Western Department, left the vessel with his family to return to St. Louis, while Kenneth McKenzie¹⁵⁹ and Major John Dougherty got on board. McKenzie, who was commonly referred to as the "King of the Missouri,"¹⁶⁰ was head of the American Fur Company's Upper Missouri Outfit, based at Fort Union; Dougherty was the agent for the Pawnees, Otos, and Omahas. Maximilian thus had ample opportunity on his trip to become acquainted with several key individuals who, with their knowledge and influence, would be of great help to his investigations.

The Prince soon learned that traveling on the Missouri River and with boats belonging to the American Fur Company was a different kind of experience than the commercial traffic on the Ohio and Mississippi. For one thing, he had plenty of opportunities to get to know the "laboring class" of the company. "The *Engagés* or *Voyageurs*," he wrote, ". . . are mostly French Canadiens or

¹⁵⁹ Kenneth McKenzie visited Prince Maximilian in Germany in the winter of 1834-35.

¹⁶⁰ Goetzmann, 1984.

descendants of French settlers along the Mississippi and Missouri They are rude, but strong and undemanding and used to the strains and deprivations of life among the Indians”¹⁶¹ Although Maximilian’s relationship with these engagés, at times, was rather difficult, their hard work soon earned his respect.¹⁶²

Engagés were responsible not only for replenishing the supplies of food and firewood during the journey, but they also had to free the steamer which frequently ran aground. In such a situation, part of the ship’s cargo had to be unloaded before the steamer was light enough to be freed and they could continue their journey. Moreover, beyond the limit for the steamboat traffic at Fort Union, the engagés even had to pull the commonly used keel boats upriver, whenever a lack of wind made it impossible to sail. Rude behavior or not, these men certainly deserved Maximilian’s respect.

A constant danger of snags was another type of adventure on the Missouri

¹⁶¹ Wied, vol. 1, p. 253.

¹⁶² I am especially referring to an incident during their journey from Fort Union to Fort McKenzie. “The following morning, the 28th of July, gave me another occasion to reflect on the rude manners of our crew ... [who had] thrown [many pieces of my natural history collection] into the river during the night....” (Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 58; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 505-506). That the engagés had a tendency to immediately pluck birds for the kitchen before Maximilian had a chance to inspect them and perhaps claim them for his natural history collection, also did not help their relationship. See also Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 301; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 287, 301.

River (Figure 14). Snags were especially common in the spring of the year, when the river's water level was highest. Maximilian on several occasions witnessed how the pilot of the *Yellow Stone* avoided these hazards, but even the most skillful steersman took a hit every now and then. Carpenters on board were regularly busy repairing or replacing parts of the vessel, and on one memorable occasion the danger was so great that the travelers feared for their lives:

Early in the morning a large branch of a tree, lying in the water, forced its way into the cabin, carried away part of the door case, and then broke off, and was left on the floor. After this accident, when one might have been crushed in bed, we came to Cow Island
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. . . .

In the following days, the Prince and his companions spent much of their time on deck anxiously observing the maneuvers of their captain and scanning both shores of the Missouri for anything noteworthy.

As he proceeded upriver, Maximilian's narrative reads, at times, much like a countdown to when he would reach Indian America: "Not thirty years have elapsed since this whole country [near Rocheport, in central Missouri,] was in the possession of the Indians,"¹⁶⁴ he wrote. Just a few pages later the reader learns that {"twenty-four years ago neither settlements nor steamboats

¹⁶³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 255; Wied, vol. 1, p. 278.

¹⁶⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 243-244; Wied, vol. 1, p. 260.

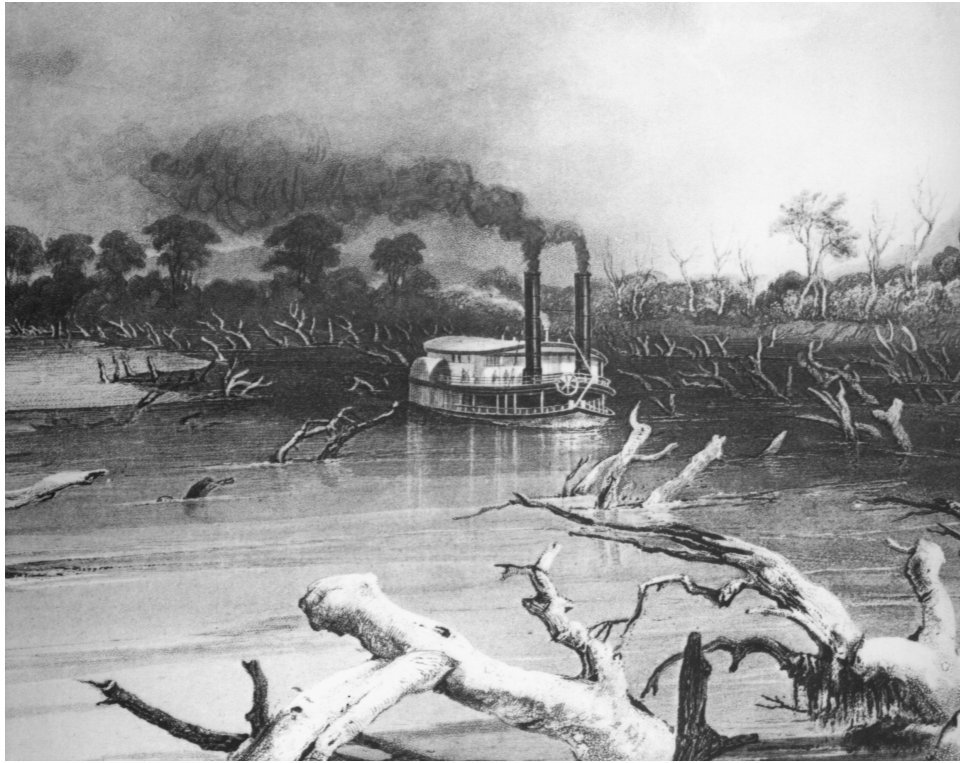


Figure 14: The Missouri full of snags (detail from a drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

could be found, but the Osage who lived and roamed here [near Lexington, in western Missouri]].¹⁶⁵ And near Fort Osage the Prince remarked that “only ten years ago [the Osage] were still at Côte-Sans-Dessein.”¹⁶⁶ While the day approached when this countdown would run out, the Prince was facing a problem. In the introduction to his travel accounts he had already warned his readers that his descriptions of the Missouri River and its environs, at times, would be trying, because “the daily notices were numerous, but the variety very

¹⁶⁵ Wied, vol. 1, p. 265.

¹⁶⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 248-249; Wied, vol. 1, p. 268.

[little].”¹⁶⁷ In other words, despite the constant danger of snags, the Prince was concerned about the entertainment value of this part of his travel accounts. In comparison to the buzzing cities, majestic forests, and expansive mountain ranges of the eastern landscapes, the Missouri seemed rather bland. Thus, to liven up his narrative, he resorted to several tactics reminiscent of his invention of robber bands in the Pennsylvanian forests.¹⁶⁸

In St. Louis he already had described the “large, broad, and very sharp knife[s], which [the Indians] obtaine[d] . . . for cutting up game, and *scalping their enemies* [emphasis added].”¹⁶⁹ Now, while they were moving further upstream, the Prince started to fantasize about the possibility of Indian attacks. { “[T]hese willow bushes [along the Missouri] commonly serve as concealed positions from which the Indians ambush the travelers who drift past, as they pull their vessels upstream.” }¹⁷⁰ Because the travelers were not even in the Indian Territory yet, it can only be assumed that Maximilian added this potential danger to his narrative for the sake of his audience.

On the twenty-first of April, Maximilian and the others arrived at the mouth of the Kansas River, and with it, at the boundary between the United States and the Indian Territory. Since they were now about to enter the promised land (at

¹⁶⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 27; Wied, vol. 1, p. xi.

¹⁶⁸ See page 82.

¹⁶⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 224; Wied, vol. 1, p. 238.

¹⁷⁰ Wied, vol. 1, p. 262.

least from Maximilian's point of view), they "felt much more interested in looking at the forests, because [they] might expect to meet with some of their savage inhabitants."¹⁷¹ Thus, the travelers continuously glanced with a telescope at the landscape from the deck of their vessel. They finally spotted their "first Indian" sitting on a sand bank just a few miles farther north, but were not able to enjoy this encounter because their "attention was soon called to the obstacles on the river."¹⁷² Before they could further penetrate into the Indian Territory, they still had to pass Fort Leavenworth, which had been established by Colonel Henry Leavenworth in 1827 to protect the Santa Fé Trail and to oversee the boundary zone between the European and Indian worlds.¹⁷³ They reached the fort the next day, on the twenty-second of April, 1833.

We soon came to . . . the landing place of [Fort] Leavenworth, . . . a military post . . . [with] about 120 men, under Major Ryley, [which] were stationed [there] to protect the Indian boundary We were stopped at this place, and our vessel searched for brandy, the importation of which, into the Indian territory, is prohibited; they would scarcely permit us to take a small portion to preserve our specimens of natural history.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 252; Wied, vol. 1, p. 272.

¹⁷² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 252; Wied, vol. 1, p. 272.

¹⁷³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 253, footnote 204.

¹⁷⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 253-254; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 274-275.

Maximilian's Native America

The *Yellow Stone* did not waste much time at Fort Leavenworth. The travelers continued their journey the same day, and before nightfall they had advanced a few miles upriver. They were now in the true Indian country, where Prince Maximilian and Karl Bodmer were about to create one of the most important documentaries of the American West. They were also in the sphere of influence of the American Fur Company which played a pivotal role in the shaping of this region. Thus, to fully understand the narrated landscapes of Maximilian's Native America, it is necessary to take a short digression into the development of the fur trade on the upper Missouri and some of its consequences for the indigenous peoples.

In 1822 "at least five major trading companies were contesting for the furs of the northern Great Plains,"¹⁷⁵ but by 1827 the American Fur Company controlled much of the trade on the upper Missouri. When Kenneth McKenzie was able to negotiate a treaty with the Blackfoot in Montana in 1831, this control

¹⁷⁵ Wishart, p. 48. These companies were the Missouri Fur Company, the French Fur Company, the Columbia Fur Company, the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and the American Fur Company.

was virtually complete.¹⁷⁶ By the time Maximilian traveled through the Indian Territory, the company's network of trading posts on the Missouri extended from southeastern Nebraska to west-central Montana. This network included large depots at Fort Pierre, Fort Union, Fort McKenzie, and elsewhere, together with many smaller and often temporary posts that were evenly distributed along the river and its tributaries (Figure 15). The only serious competition the company had on the Northern Great Plains in 1833 was Fort William,¹⁷⁷ operated by William Sublette and Robert Campbell, and the Hudson Bay Company in the north.

The fur trade dramatically changed the face of Native America. Before the advent of large trading companies,¹⁷⁸ for example, the indigenous peoples had maintained their own well-established network for the exchange of goods

¹⁷⁶ For a quarter century the Blackfoot had refused to trade with Americans because of an incident that occurred in the month of July in 1806. The Lewis and Clark expedition was on its way back from the Pacific Coast and some of its members, under the leadership of Meriwether Lewis, were exploring the Marias River. An attempt by some Blackfoot to steal guns and horses from the inattentive explorers turned into a short fight which left two Indians dead. One was stabbed by Private Joseph Field, and the other fatally wounded by Meriwether Lewis himself. Although from 1831 on Americans were able to harvest the furs of the Blackfoot country, their trade relations remained tense for years to come (Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); Wishart, 1979).

¹⁷⁷ In 1834 the ownership of Fort William was transferred to the American Fur Company, and Sublette and Campbell agreed to cease their activities on the upper Missouri. In return the American Fur Company withdrew from the fur trade of the Rocky Mountains for one year (Wishart, 1979).

¹⁷⁸ Of course, trade relations between European-Americans and the indigenous peoples of the Northern Plains (and elsewhere) already existed for more than a century at Maximilian's time. However, the scale of these relations increased dramatically with the arrival of large fur trading companies and their forts on Indian soil (William R. Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West to 1870." In: *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), vol. 4, 351-374; Wishart, 1979).

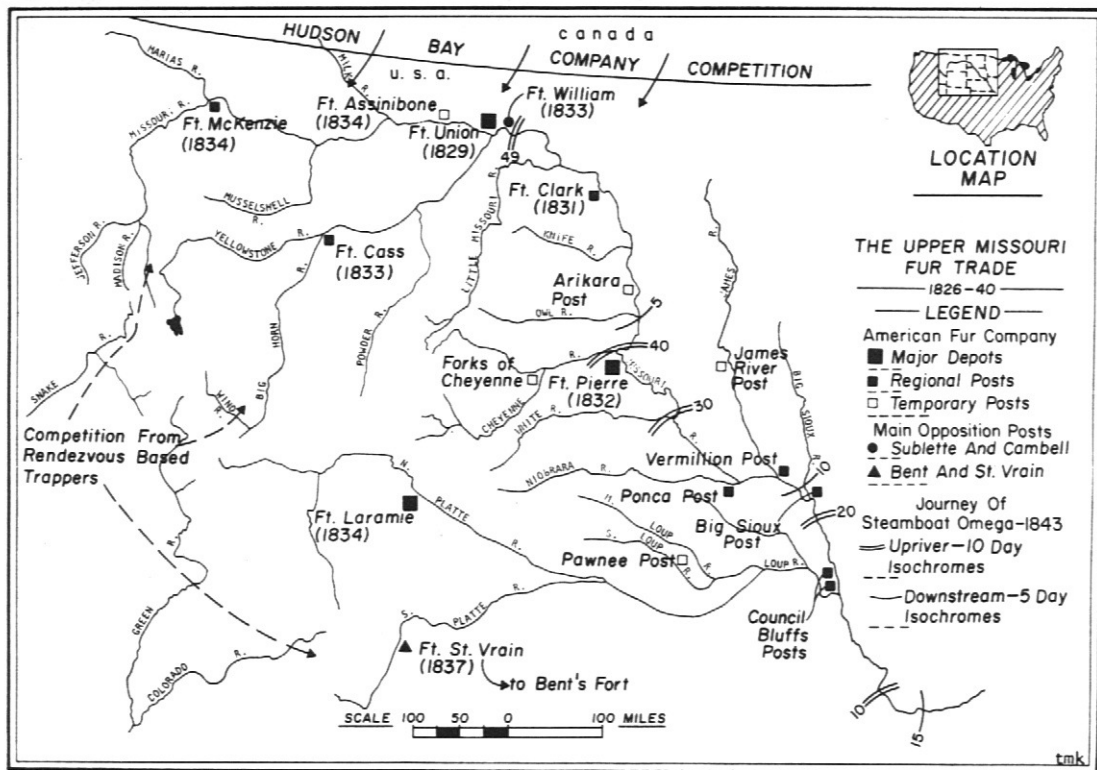


Figure 15: The upper Missouri fur trade, 1826-40 (Wishart, 1979). Fort McKenzie was actually built in 1833.

and ideas. The permanent earthlodges of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara, for instance, were important trading-centers for nomadic peoples. The Crow, Assiniboine, and Cheyenne regularly went there to barter “dried meat, deer hides, bison robes, mountain sheep bows, and other leather goods for garden produce and Knife River Flint”¹⁷⁹ With the introduction of the fur trade on a large scale, these intraregional indigenous relationships were altered, and with it “the material culture, art, subsistence patterns, gender roles, and social and

¹⁷⁹ Swagerty, 1988, quotation on page 353.

political structures of the tribes.”¹⁸⁰ Even if he was not always aware of it, Maximilian observed and recorded many of these changes.

One of the most devastating aspects of the fur trade was its “frontier attitude towards the natural environment,” and its emphasis on “short-term exploitation rather than long-term sustained yield.”¹⁸¹ As long as it was profitable, the fur trading companies induced a large native labor force to obtain the pelts it desired, and offered in exchange firearms, knives, kettles, woolen blankets, and other European goods. At Maximilian’s time the American Fur Company maintained “about twenty-three, large and small, trading posts,”¹⁸² which carried out this trade, and the tribes increasingly directed their economic activities to these locations. As part of the process, the old socio-economic relationships were subsequently complicated, and tribal life became more and more dependent on the acquisition of European goods.

Growing dependence turned into a trauma with the eventual depletion of the natural resources. While the “fur-trading combine”¹⁸³ moved across the land, it gave no thought to the future of the indigenous peoples or, for that matter, healthy populations of beavers and buffaloes. Once a region’s productivity fell below a certain level, trading posts were either consolidated or abandoned. Local

¹⁸⁰ Swagerty, 1988, quotation on page 351.

¹⁸¹ Wishart, 1979, quotation on page 31.

¹⁸² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 380; Wied, vol. 1, p. 431.

¹⁸³ See William H. Goetzmann’s quotation on page 56.

tribes, who by that time had grown dependent on European goods, faced an economic vacuum, and more often than not, had no resources left to pursue their traditional subsistence economies. They either adjusted by following the buffalo herds who “shifted geographically under pressure from the fur trade,”¹⁸⁴ or they eventually had to face starvation.¹⁸⁵ Consequently formerly sedentary peoples like the Ponca abandoned their permanent villages to take up a semi-nomadic way of life. In any case, at Maximilian’s time the fur trade had already irreversibly changed parts of the economic and cultural matrix of the peoples on the upper Missouri.¹⁸⁶

The comments made by the Prince throughout his narrative leave no doubt that he was aware of the multidimensional nature of the fur trade, including some of its consequences for the indigenous population. Even before he entered the Indian Territory he repeatedly remarked that regions formerly known for their fur-bearing animals were now depleted.¹⁸⁷ He also knew about the condition of

¹⁸⁴ Wishart, 1979, quotation on page 66.

¹⁸⁵ “According to Indian Agent John Dougherty, the village Indians [on the Missouri] were suffering from famine for six months of every year” (Wishart, 1979, quotation on page 67).

¹⁸⁶ The smallpox epidemic of 1837, which was imported by the *St. Peters*, a steamboat of the American Fur Company, dealt a severe blow to the indigenous populations on the Upper Missouri (Wishart, 1979). For further information on the impact of the fur trade on indigenous communities see works by Calvin Martin (*Keepers of the Game: Indian-animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978)) and Richard White (*The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajo* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983)).

¹⁸⁷ See for example Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 117, 251, 260; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 104, 270-271, 284.

dependence created by the fur trade because, as he wrote, “the goods with which [the American Fur Company] carr[ied] on the trade . . . bec[a]me necessary even to the most dangerous Indian tribes”¹⁸⁸ At one point he even stated that “if the inhabitants of those parts [of the Missouri] do not take to agriculture, they must emigrate or starve {to death}.”¹⁸⁹ Surprisingly though, the man who had criticized the “destructive rage” of homesteading farmers,¹⁹⁰ lashed out against the neglect and maltreatment of the Native American culture,¹⁹¹ and openly condemned slavery,¹⁹² never directly criticized the American Fur Company.

The Prince on several occasions described the “scene of destruction” that he observed in connection with the fur trade. He saw it as characterized by “whitening bones of buffaloes and stags” scattered “everywhere in the prairie.”¹⁹³ He also realized that “the consumption of [the buffalo . . . was] as indispensable to the Indians as the reindeers [were] to the Laplanders.”¹⁹⁴ At one point, he even gave a complete list of the furs the company received annually from the Indians: 25,000 beaver pelts, 40,000 to 50,000 buffalo hides, 20,000 to 30,000 deer skins, etc.. Yet for all of this, he never made the direct connections between the

¹⁸⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 234; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 247-248. Maximilian here specifically referred to the Blackfoot.

¹⁸⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 233, footnote 164; Wied, vol. 1, p. 247, footnote *.

¹⁹⁰ See page 79.

¹⁹¹ See page 72.

¹⁹² See pages 110-111.

¹⁹³ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 246, 283, 384; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 84, 313, 436.

devastation of the natural resource base, the looming demise of the native cultures, and the fur trade.

Maximilian instead was full of praise for his *Landsmann*¹⁹⁵ John Jacob Astor, even remarking shortly before he returned to Europe that he had the “gratification of seeing Mr. Astor, so justly esteemed in the fur countries.”¹⁹⁶ The Prince’s only criticism of the American Fur Company was his observation that some agents shot buffaloes just for fun:

The numerous Indian tribes subsist almost entirely on these animals, sell their skin after retaining a sufficient supply for their clothing, tents, etc., and the agents of the Company recklessly shoot down these noble animals for their own pleasure, often not making the least use of them, except taking out the tongue¹⁹⁷

Even this comment, of course, did not in the least criticize the general impact of Astor’s business venture on the populations of fur-bearing animals and the traditional subsistence economies of Native Americans.

Why Maximilian refrained from criticizing the American Fur Company can best be explained by a combination of three factors. First of all, the Prince was

¹⁹⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 382; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 433-434.

¹⁹⁵ The term *Landsmann* essentially has the same meaning as *Landsleute* and refers to fellow countrymen.

¹⁹⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 192; Wied, vol. 1, p. 422.

¹⁹⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 382; Wied, vol. 1, p. 434. Apparently, buffalo tongues were considered a delicacy at the forts and in the cities of St. Louis and New Orleans. At one point Maximilian reported that a fire, which occurred at Fort Union in 1832, was fueled by “800 planks and 1,000 dried buffalo tongues.” (Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 189; Wied, vol. 2, p. 27).

acquainted with William Backhouse Astor, the second-eldest son of the fur-trading dynasty, through his studies at the University of Göttingen.¹⁹⁸ This contact had opened quite a few doors for him during his journey in North America, and it essentially bought him a ticket to the upper Missouri. Second, Maximilian enjoyed the hospitality of Astor's agents for almost one year on his trip. James Kipp and other employees not only shared their expertise with him, but they also cared for him when he suffered from scurvy during the winter of 1833-34.¹⁹⁹ Finally, Maximilian, who already showed an uncritical admiration of the industrial progress on the eastern seaboard, seems to have been fascinated with the success story of this fur-trading empire, which, after all, had been founded by a German immigrant.²⁰⁰

After the *Yellow Stone* left Fort Leavenworth on the twenty-second of April, its passengers ascended the Missouri for several days without encountering any indigenous peoples. Much to their surprise (and despite the supposed vigilance of Fort Leavenworth soldiers) they still saw white settlers on the first stretch of their journey who had already {"moved into the Indian Territory

¹⁹⁸ See Chapter Two, page 34-35.

¹⁹⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 345; Wied, vol. 1, p. 394. The Canadian born James Kipp, "director of the trading post at Fort Clark" at the time, was an important source of information (and occasional interpreter) for Maximilian in his studies of the Mandan and Hidatsa.

²⁰⁰ See pages 73-75.

by up to 15 or 16 miles”}.²⁰¹ Soon, however, they left this (illegal) settlement frontier behind, and were only surrounded by “picturesque forests” which alternated with “verdant alluvial banks of the river.”²⁰² Although they spotted Indian huts in these woods here and there, they saw no inhabitants. This absence, plus that of beavers and other fur-bearing animals, and the sight of an abandoned “trading house for the Oto Indians”²⁰³ pointed to the fact that they were in the wasteland of the American Fur Company. Maximilian, however, did not describe the landscape as such. Instead he was struck by the “[s]ilence [that] reigned in these solitudes, [where even] the wind was hushed, and only the dashing and foaming of [their] steamboat interrupted the awful repose.”²⁰⁴

Since there was little other distraction during this part of their journey, the travelers mostly watched the landscape pass by, and whenever the boat stopped to take on firewood, they hunted for waterfowl and turkeys and roamed through the riparian forests in search of natural history specimens. On the third of May they reached the mouth of the Platte River and soon saw before them “the green-wooded chain of hills with the buildings of Belle Vue,”²⁰⁵ Major Dougherty’s

²⁰¹ Wied, vol. 1, p. 281. It is important to realize that settlers often followed in the “slipstream” of the fur trade, which essentially constituted “the first stage of a progressive settlement of the American West.” (Wishart, 1979, quotation on page 18).

²⁰² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 260; Wied, vol. 1, p. 283.

²⁰³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 260; Wied, vol. 1, p. 284.

²⁰⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 260; Wied, vol. 1, p. 284.

²⁰⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 265; Wied, vol. 2, p. 293. Belle Vue (now spelled as one word) is located a few miles southeast of Omaha, Nebraska.

agency (Figure 16). Because servants of the fur company were often married to Indian women, Maximilian here got his first opportunity to meet members of the Oto and Omaha tribes:

[T]heir dress was of red and blue cloth, with a white border, and cut in the Indian fashion. Their faces were broad and coarse, their heads large and round, their breasts pendent, their teeth beautiful and white, hands and feet small and delicate. Their children had dark brown hair and agreeable features {*because they were half of the white race*} (emphasis added)²⁰⁶

This last comment about the mixed-blood children is important in understanding Maximilian's Native America. The remark does not mean, as one might initially suspect, that our enlightened naturalist all of the sudden became a racist. Not only would this conclusion contradict his philosophical foundation and his general statements about the African American and Native American populations, but it would also do injustice to a man who was quite tolerant and open-minded for his time period and societal position. Instead Maximilian's comment should be seen in the context of his representations of Indian women. These portraits reveal what one could call the "ideal of beauty" of an ethnographer, and also give an insight into his cultural background.

Throughout his narrative the Prince repeatedly made the point that there were "but few [Indian women] who [could] be called handsome."²⁰⁷ Many

²⁰⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 266; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 293-294. It should be noted here that Thwaites decided not to publish this last remark in {} by Maximilian.

²⁰⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 256; Wied, vol. 2, p. 107.



Figure 16: Belle Vue, Major Dougherty's agency (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

times, in fact, he would simply describe them as “ugly.”²⁰⁸ He thus made this racist remark of the “agreeable features” of mixed-blood children, because he felt that their physiognomy was “improved” by the injection of European features. Only the younger women fared better, and some of them “were even pretty” in his mind.²⁰⁹ Moreover, regardless of whether they were handsome or not, and whether or not these comments can be considered racist or sexist, Indian women were not what Maximilian came to study. Both the Prince and Karl Bodmer came

²⁰⁸ See Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 271, 325; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 297, 308, 359.

²⁰⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 257, 308; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 107, 342, 531.

from patriarchal societies, where everything centered around men, while women and children were considered “dependents.” Thus it is not surprising that the female component in the landscapes of these two European males was generally neglected. Bodmer, for example, created dozens of portraits of Indian men, many of which identify the individuals by name. At the same time, only a half dozen portraits of women exist, all of whom are young, “pretty,” and nameless. Likewise, Maximilian paid little attention to the female gender and, after a short description of their physical characteristics, he commonly concentrated on the “Indian patriarch.”

To be fair, Maximilian, who with great care described the social and ceremonial organization of tribes like the Mandan and Hidatsa, also included information on the women’s clan structure and on ceremonies in which they participated (e.g. the Scalp Dance and the Buffalo Dance). Because of his patriarchal understanding of the world, however, he never realized the general importance of women in their respective tribes, as, for example, in the organization of the *O-kee-pa*, one of the most important and elaborate ceremonies of the Mandan. Anthropologist Virginia Peters has specifically pointed to the Prince’s neglect in this context:

[T]he women . . . were the economic mainstay which made [the O-kee-pa] possible. No man could win the signal honor for himself of giving the [O-kee-pa] without the wholehearted support and assistance of the women of his own and his wife’s clans. Without

their efforts there could be no [O-kee-pa]. Catlin, Maximilian, and other male observers, however, . . . saw only the surface activities and failed to note that the work of the women was the indispensable platform on which the drama took place The women who helped . . . did so willingly because they knew how important this work was to the welfare of their society. Through beliefs such as these, and the ceremonies which kept them alive, the people of the village tribes created a tight-knit society in which every individual had a secure place. From the day of their naming, women and men belonged to a lodge, a clan, and a moiety which gave them their place in the community.²¹⁰

Nothing in Maximilian's travel accounts suggests that he even partially understood the independent and powerful role Indian women played in this "tight-knit society." Whether this neglect (or blindness) reflects a gender bias or represents a conscious decision by a surprised and disapproving member of Europe's patriarchy remains a matter of speculation.

Another reason for the low visibility of Indian women in Maximilian's (and Karl Bodmer's) landscapes, was the more subtle (though certainly visible) nature of female work, especially to male eyes:

[W]hereas men were in the position of constantly proving, recounting, and visually displaying their heroic deeds in war over and over again lest they be forgotten, Indian families, food and tepees stood as constant, subtle witness to women's capabilities [and power].²¹¹

²¹⁰Virginia Bergman Peters, *Women of the Earth Lodges--Tribal Life on the Plains* (North Haven, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1995), quotation on pages 47-48.

²¹¹Lynne Elizabeth Spriggs, *Nitzitapi: Portraits and Reflections of a People called Blackfeet* (unpublished dissertation, Columbia University, 1995), quotation on p. 69. Spriggs discusses the varying representations of Blackfeet in the nineteenth century. Chapter One deals specifically with the "enlightened perspectives" of the Bodmer paintings.

To make things worse, they were not even able to make an impression on the European males in another important aspect: “The women have nothing to indemnify them for their incessant and laborious work, *not even good clothing* (emphasis added), for this right of the fair sex in Europe is claimed among the Indians by the men.”²¹²

The day after they left Belle Vue, on the fourth of May, the Prince and his companions had their first chance for a closer look at some of these Indian men on the upper Missouri. At the trading post of Jean Pierre Cabanné, located north of today’s Omaha,²¹³ they encountered “a number of Omaha and Oto Indians, and some few [Iowas].” As it turned out though, this first meeting was not as impressive as expected. The Indians they saw were so badly “marked with small pox” that “several had only one eye” and many of them “looked very dirty and miserable.”²¹⁴ This initial impression, however, was soon forgotten when Karl Bodmer was able to make his first Indian portraits since they left St. Louis.²¹⁵ In addition, they also had the chance to experience a tribal dance that same day:

At the request of Mr. Cabanné they performed a dance The principal dancer . . . had a savage and martial appearance, to which his athletic figure greatly contributed. Another man, who was younger, of a very muscular frame--the upper part of whose body was naked, but painted white--had in his hand a war club This

²¹² Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 281; Wied, vol. 2, p. 130.

²¹³ See Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 271-272, footnote 226.

²¹⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 271; Wied, vol. 1, p. 297.

²¹⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 272; Wied, vol. 1, p. 298.

dance was very interesting to me, especially in connection with the beautiful evening scene on the Missouri. The bright light of the moon illuminated the extensive and silent wilderness: before us, the grotesque band of Indians uttering their wild cry, together with the loud call of the night [swallow], vividly recalled to my mind scenes which I had witnessed in Brazil.²¹⁶

Thus the Indians, who during the daytime still looked “dirty and miserable,” now stimulated Maximilian’s imagination. What he saw in front of him, illuminated only “by the bright light of the moon,” are not a struggling people, but an image of what they perhaps once were and what he wanted them to be. Here, as in later situations, the Prince endeavored to portray the natives in this romantic fashion as the *noble savage*, regardless of the existing realities.

The next day, on the sixth of May, the troupe was on the way again and soon had passed the mouth of the Little Sioux River, about forty miles from Belle Vue. From here on, as Maximilian noticed, “the country bec[a]me more and more level, and bare of woods, and [their] eye[s] rove[d] over the boundless prairie”²¹⁷ seeking something noteworthy. While the buffalo berry bush became a familiar sight,²¹⁸ they soon reached the “limit to which the wild turkey extend[ed] on the Missouri.”²¹⁹ Since the country now appeared increasingly desolate, only “the singular forms of the hills afforded [the travelers] an interesting subject of

²¹⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 273-274; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 299-301.

²¹⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 276; Wied, vol. 1, p. 304.

²¹⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 280; Wied, vol. 1, p. 308.

²¹⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 297; Wied, vol. 1, p. 326.

observation.”²²⁰ At one point members of the crew even “set fire to the dry grass of the prairie” so that the travelers might have “the pleasure of seeing how [it] . . . spread.”²²¹

On the eleventh of May they reached the James River, near today’s Yankton, South Dakota, and soon saw before them another steamer of the fur company, the *Assiniboine*, which had run aground. They stopped and paid a short visit to the grounded vessel. While the captains exchanged news and the engagés went about the hard work of unloading and freeing the *Assiniboine*, Maximilian collected plants and observed local bird species including the yellow-breasted lark, the prairie hen, and the great long-billed curlew. He also had an interesting and unexpected encounter with some Ponca Indians who came to see Major Bean, the agent of the Ponca and Sioux at the time:

When I returned to the vessel, I found there three P[o]nca Indians . . . [who] were all robust, good looking men, tall, and well-proportioned, with strongly marked features, high cheek bones, aquiline noses, and animated dark hazel eyes.²²²

The Prince was especially impressed by their chief, Schuh-de-gá-che, who spoke

²²⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 280-281; Wied, vol. 1, p. 309.

²²¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 281; Wied, vol. 1, p. 310.

²²² Thwaites, vol. 1, pp. 283-284; Wied, vol. 1, p. 313.

at a conference with agents of the fur company. "The attitude and gestures of the speaker were graceful; his right arm and shoulder were bare, while he gesticulated with his hand; and his fine, manly countenance was very expressive."²²³ Accordingly, Karl Bodmer made a portrait (Figure 17).

With concerted efforts, both steamers were able to continue their journey the next day, and often they would race each other, another welcome form of entertainment for those who considered this region desolate:

While the lightning flashed from the dense black clouds, we again overtook the Assiniboine, which had landed its wood cutters to fell some cedars on the steep mountain. We, too, landed 300 paces further up, to cut down cedars for fuel.²²⁴

As they pushed on they noticed that antelopes became more and more common. Thus, at the next opportunity, the company's hunters traversed the prairie and soon {"one could hear shots from every direction"}.²²⁵ Even more excitement awaited our naturalist, when on the eighteenth of May the Prince finally saw a small herd of the animals of which, so far, he had only seen bones scattered throughout the prairie. It was the buffalo, of course, and "several . . . hunters were immediately landed to pursue"²²⁶ them, but without success.

²²³ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 286; Wied, vol. 1, p. 314.

²²⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 295; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 324-325.

²²⁵ Wied, vol. 1, p. 328.



Figure 17: The Ponca chief Schuh-de-gá-che (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

A week later the *Yellow Stone* arrived at Fort Lookout, about ten miles north of today's Chamberlain, South Dakota.²²⁷ This fort, which also served as the Sioux Agency at the time, faced an abandoned Arikara village across the Missouri. The Arikara, related to the Pawnee, once inhabited earth lodges in this region and played an important role as middlemen in the trade of the upper Missouri. However, weakened by disease and driven out by the Sioux, they had been forced to abandon their villages in the early 1830s and had moved further north.²²⁸ Maximilian's studies of the Arikara thus had to wait until he spent the winter of 1833-34 near them at Fort Clark.

²²⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 298; Wied, vol. 1, p. 328.

²²⁷ Thwaites, vol. 22, footnote 261, p. 304.

In the meanwhile, the Prince was happy to get acquainted at Fort Lookout with a tribe he was particularly interested in, the renowned Sioux. The Sioux were still one of the largest tribes in North America. Maximilian, who was familiar with the descriptions of them in Pike's and Major Long's travel accounts, estimated their number at 56,100 souls, which amounted to more than five thousand tents.²²⁹ In the following days the Prince, with the help of an interpreter, learned much about six major divisions of the Sioux (Santee, Wahpeton, Sisseton, Yankton, Yanktonai, and Teton),²³⁰ their respective tribal territories, and their customs. In the mean time, Bodmer paid special attention to one of their chiefs, the Yankton *Wahktägeli*, also known as Big Soldier. Because Maximilian was so impressed by the appearance of this chief, Major Bean somehow managed to give *Wahktägeli's* dress to him as a gift before the *Yellow Stone* left the Sioux Agency on May 27.

After three days the travelers arrived at Fort Pierre. At the time, this was the most important center for the Sioux trade and, according to Maximilian, "one of the most considerable settlements of the Fur Company on the Missouri."²³¹

²²⁸ Hunt and Gallagher, 1984; Swagerty, 1988.

²²⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 304; Wied, vol. 1, p. 338. Maximilian included in this number the related Assiniboine.

²³⁰ Maximilian's description of the divisions of the Sioux was fairly accurate for his time. Today the Sioux divide themselves into seven principal groups: the four Santee Dakota units (Mdewakanton, Wahpekute, Sisseton, Wahpeton), the Teton Lakota, the Yankton, and the Yanktonai (Alice B. Kehoe, *North American Indians--A Comprehensive Account* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992)).

²³¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 317; Wied, vol. 1, p. 352

The Prince used a good portion of their several-day sojourn there to deepen his ethnological studies of the Sioux. With much detail he described their workmanship, material culture, and the ways in which the men visually displayed their heroic deeds:

He who, in the sight of the adversaries, touches a slain or living enemy, places a feather horizontally in his hair for this exploit He who kills an enemy by a blow of his fist, sticks a feather upright in his hair Whoever first discovers the enemy, and gives notice to his comrades of their approach, is allowed to wear a small feather, which is stripped, except towards the top. The scalps taken in battle are drawn over small hoops, and hang on the top of the tent-poles.²³²

Maximilian also increased his natural history collection at Fort Pierre, and became particularly interested in the prairie dog. He was so thorough in his investigations that he even dissected this animal in order to examine its internal organs. Prince or not, there seemed to be no work too dirty when it came to the possible discovery of new scientific information.²³³

On June 5 the travelers continued their journey upriver, but this time aboard the *Assiniboine*. The *Yellow Stone* had returned to St. Louis three days earlier, with “7,000 buffalo skins and other furs.”²³⁴ After about two weeks they

²³² Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 326-327; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 359-360.

²³³ At an earlier time of his journey Maximilian dissected a skunk in order to determine the source (or reservoir) for its smelly defense. For the prairie dog see Wied, vol. 1, endnote 3, pp. 365-366; for the skunk see Wied, vol. 1, endnote 5, p. 210. (The majority of Maximilian's original footnotes, in which he commonly elaborated on his natural history observations, have not been translated.)

²³⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 327; Wied, vol. 1, p. 361.

arrived at Fort Clark, north of modern Bismarck. This post was built in 1831 as a center for the trade with the sedentary Mandan and Hidatsa peoples, but it also attracted nomadic groups like the Crow.²³⁵

The Assiniboine soon lay to before the fort, against a gently sloping shore, where [more than] 600 Indians were waiting for us. Close to the beach, the chiefs and most distinguished warriors of the Mandan nation stood in front of the assembly of red men, among the most eminent were Charata-Numakschi (the wolf chief), Mato-Topé (the four bears), Dipauch (the broken arm), Berock-Itainu (the ox neck), Pehriska-Ruhpa (the two ravens), and some others. They were all dressed in their finest clothes, to do us honor.²³⁶

Even though Maximilian spent only one day at Fort Clark, he found the time to give a brief account of the Mandan and Hidatsa.²³⁷ He also visited with some Crow who had erected about seventy tents near the fort. Thus, although he had only a few hours on that particular day in June 1833, this inquisitive ethnographer still managed to include a short but detailed description of the social organization of the Crow.²³⁸

The *Assiniboine* left Fort Clark for its next destination, Fort Union, on the nineteenth of June. Steamboats were still a novelty in this part of the country, and consequently their appearance attracted a lot of attention. Thus, on the first part of their journey, several Mandan chiefs accompanied the travelers because

²³⁵ The Crow are relatives of the Hidatsa (Kehoe, 1992).

²³⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 344-345; Wied, vol. 1, p. 394.

²³⁷ The Prince, of course, did not know at this time that he would have ample opportunity to study both tribes in the winter of 1833-34.

they could not resist taking a ride on this “hissing machine.” According to Maximilian, the boat was “look[ed] upon as one of the most {powerful} medicines of the white men.”²³⁹ Likewise, whenever the *Assiniboine* neared a settlement of the Mandan or Hidatsa, large crowds gathered along the banks of the Missouri to gaze at the vessel.

[W]e saw, immediately before us, the numerous, motley, gaily painted, and variously ornamented crowd of the most elegant Indians on the whole course of the Missouri. The handsomest and most robust persons, of both sexes and all ages, in highly original, graceful, and characteristic costumes, appeared, thronged together, to our astonished eye; and there was, all at once, so much to see and observe, that we anxiously profited by every moment to catch only the main features of this unique picture ... ²⁴⁰

The exuberance with which Maximilian described this scene shows how excited he was to finally meet a people who seemed to resemble the perfect *noble savage*. For once, no apparent signs of disease, economic misery, or acculturation spoiled the experience, and the Prince savored the moment which allowed him to contemplate the “handsomest and most robust persons” on the upper Missouri.

What is most fascinating about this particular incident though is the emerging self-consciousness of the narrator when he encounters this perfect

²³⁸ See Wied, vol. 1, p. 401.

²³⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 358; Wied, vol. 1, p. 410.

picture. As the travelers looked at the Indians, the Indians returned the curiosity and stared right back. Being {"gazed at by these strange faces with varying expressions"}²⁴¹ made the explorers themselves into study objects. The Prince subsequently turned introspective, becoming something of a primitivist, and compared the European fashion (and life style) to that of the indigenous peoples:

These handsome, robust men, showing their remarkable fine white teeth as they smiled, gave free expressions to their feelings; and the unnatural and ugly fashions, as well as the different costumes of the white people, probably afforded ample matter for satirical observations, for which these *children of nature* (emphasis added) have a peculiar [sense].²⁴²

This was the only time in his travel accounts that Maximilian used the term *Naturkinder* ("children of nature") to describe Native Americans he encountered. This language suggests that the Prince, like many other Europeans, had a highly romantic image of the *noble savage* in his mind, and that he, at least to a degree, envied their supposedly harmonious and natural way of life.

Five days after they had left Fort Clark they arrived at Fort Union, another important trading center of the American Fur Company (Figure 18). The fort had been built in 1829 near the mouth of the Yellowstone River to

²⁴⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 359; Wied, vol. 1, p. 411.

²⁴¹ Wied, vol. 1, p. 411.

²⁴² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 360; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 411-412.

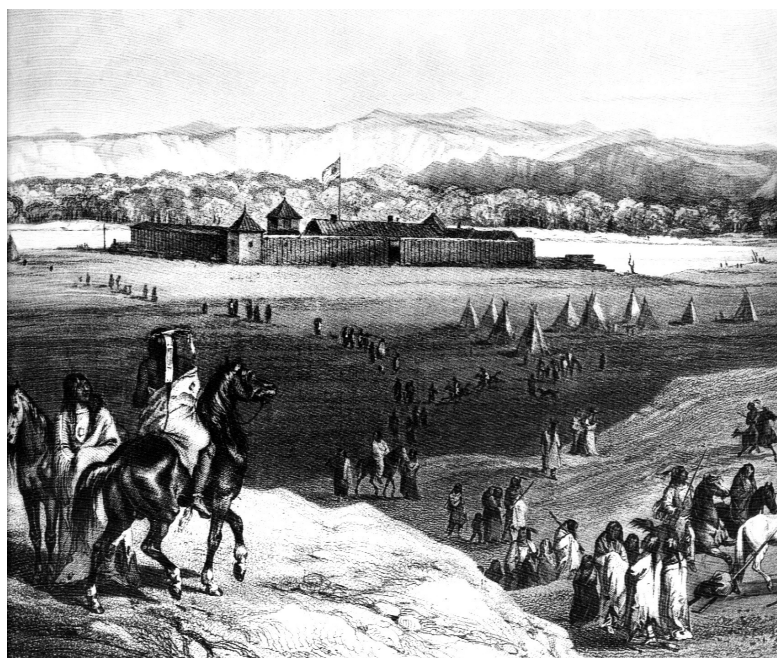


Figure 18: View of Fort Union (detail from a drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

“receive the trade of the Assiniboine, Cree, and Chippewa.”²⁴³ Because it constituted the head of steamboat navigation on the Missouri at the time, the fort also “served as an entrepôt for furs produced in the Crow and Blackfoot lands” farther west.²⁴⁴

The stay at the fort fortunately coincided with the arrival of several Assiniboine bands, so that the travelers had the opportunity to study these nomadic peoples in the coming days.²⁴⁵ The first sight of the approaching Indians left quite an impression on Maximilian. As a former Prussian officer, the scenes

²⁴³ Wishart, 1979, quotation on page 57.

²⁴⁴ Wishart, 1979, quotation on page 57.

²⁴⁵ It is quite conceivable that the Assiniboine were simply attracted to the fort by the noise of the steamboat.

that developed in front of him brought back memories of the Napoleonic Wars:

On the 26th of June, the arrival of a numerous band of Assiniboine was announced to us by several messengers A close body of warriors, about 250-300 in number, had formed themselves . . . in the manner of two bodies of infantry, and advanced in quick time towards the fort The war-hoop . . . [had] some resemblance to the song which we heard in the years 1813 and 1814 from the Russian soldiers.²⁴⁶

The ethnographer in the Prince soon triumphed over the soldier, however, and he concentrated again on his routine descriptions of the Assiniboine, while Bodmer made sketches of several individuals, a campsite, and some tree graves. Both the naturalist and the artist were clearly happy in their work, because it filled their days with interesting observations and animated the otherwise “sad prairie.”²⁴⁷

Since they stayed nearly two weeks at Fort Union the Prince also found the time to describe the design, logistics, and management of the fort itself. He reported, for example, that the garrison’s personnel of up to a hundred people²⁴⁸ subsisted mainly on the meat of 600 to 800 buffaloes per year. In addition, they received provisions “such as pork, ham, flour, sugar, coffee, wine and other

²⁴⁶ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 14-15; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 455-456.

²⁴⁷ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 17; Wied, vol. 1, p. 458.

²⁴⁸ See Wishart, 1979.

luxury articles . . . sent from St. Louis by the steamer.”²⁴⁹ Maximilian even boasted that they “had every day [at Fort Union], fresh or dried buffalo [meat], bread made of flour, and [that they were never short of] coffee or wine.”²⁵⁰ A few months later, however, this indulgence would be only a memory as the Prince would learn that the winter months in the forts of the American Fur Company were anything but luxurious.

Maximilian and his companions left Fort Union bound still farther upstream for Fort McKenzie on July 6. This time their craft was the keelboat *Flora*.²⁵¹ Now in the midst of a country that had a fairly vital animal population, the travelers noted for the first time that the demand for fresh meat and hides by the American Fur Company had a large impact on the natural resources of the fort’s immediate environment. Thus, for several miles they “saw no game, it being too near to the [f]ort; but [they only] observed traces of stags and buffaloes, and numbers of their bones.”²⁵² In addition, even though travel on the often-shallow waters of the Missouri had never been easy and free of danger, the Prince soon learned that the continuation of their journey would be increasingly slow and difficult. More than ever they depended on the pure muscle power of the engagés to pull and

²⁴⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 383; Wied, vol. 1, p. 434.

²⁵⁰ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 11; Wied, vol. 1, p. 451.

²⁵¹ Including Maximilian and his companions, there were fifty-two men onboard the *Flora* which measured sixty foot in length (see Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 24-25; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 465-466).

²⁵² Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 26; Wied, vol. 1, p. 468.

push the boat upriver.

While the engagés slowly fought against the current in the coming weeks, Maximilian and his companions did their best to entertain themselves. Just a few days after they had left Fort Union they spotted the first buffalo herds, and soon thereafter deer, elk, wolves, and grizzlies became familiar sights. Since a crew of fifty-two men was always in need for provisions, the travelers often joined hunting parties to replenish their supplies. From a footnote for “hunting enthusiasts” in Maximilian’s accounts, we learn that the party killed fifty-four buffaloes, eighteen elk, thirteen black-tailed deer, twenty-six common deer, nine bears, two pronghorn, two bighorn, one wolf, and dozens of smaller animals on this leg of their journey.²⁵³

A surprising aspect about Maximilian’s descriptions of these hunting excursions is the display of a double standard. Earlier the Prince had condemned agents of the American Fur Company for thoughtlessly shooting buffaloes without utilizing the whole animal. Now that he himself participated in the chase, things seemed to be different. On July 20, for instance, he reported that they had killed “twelve buffaloes, four bulls, five cows, and three calves, but brought away only the flesh of the cows, leaving all the rest to the wolves. . . .”²⁵⁴ Just a day

²⁵³ Wied, vol. 1, p. 547, footnote **. This journey from Fort Union to Fort McKenzie covered a distance of about 650 river miles and lasted for thirty-four days.

²⁵⁴ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 47; Wied, vol. 1, p. 492.

later, when they successfully killed a bear, he explained that “[they] contended [themselves] with carrying off as trophies only the head and fore paws.”²⁵⁵

It seems that at this time it was important for Maximilian to participate in the chase of animals that were either rare in Europe or only found on the North American continent. What could be more thrilling for a passionate hunter like the Prince then going after bears and buffalos? Thus, at a later point, he even joined a buffalo chase on horseback, and his descriptions clearly show that he was enjoying himself:

When we reached the top of the hill, we examined with the telescope the extensive plain, and perceived some small groups of buffaloes . . . the most numerous of which we resolved to attack With our {rifles} ready to fire, we made a regular cavalry attack on the heavy animals, which, however, galloped away at a brisk rate. The horsemen divided, and pursued the bulls, which were partly shot by the practiced marksman, and partly wounded by the others
256
. . . .

In the excitement of these and similar situations²⁵⁷ the conscientious naturalist turned into a passionate hunter, and natural history specimens into trophies. Even after his return to Europe, Maximilian could not resist boasting about his

²⁵⁵ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 48-49; Wied, vol. 1. p. 493.

²⁵⁶ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 195; Wied, vol. 2, p. 32.

²⁵⁷ See especially his description of a bear hunt (Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 43-44; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 487-488).

hunting success to highly receptive audiences.²⁵⁸

If they were not following the chase, the days on their journey to Fort McKenzie were filled with the collection of specimens and observation of unusual rock formations. At night the occasional *aurora borealis*²⁵⁹ and the howling of wolves captured their minds. Landscapes in this part of eastern Montana were especially inspiring. At one point the rock formations resembled ancient castles from the Rhine.²⁶⁰ Elsewhere the travelers were reminded of Swiss mountains and of Gothic chapels or gardens “laid out in the old French Style, where urns, obelisks, statues, as well as hedges and trees clipped into various shapes, surround[ed] the astonished traveler.”²⁶¹ Karl Bodmer filled page after page of his portfolio with such drawings, while Maximilian’s narrative became highly romantic:

Like a dream these marvelous figures streak past the eyes of the astonished traveler, and only through direct sketches of the most

²⁵⁸ One has to keep in mind that most of the subscribers of Maximilian’s travel accounts (which he listed in his second volume) were members of the aristocratic society which essentially owned the privilege of hunting at the time. Aside from his natural history specimens, which were either dried, stuffed, or preserved in alcohol, the Prince also brought four live bears with him to Europe, a pair of *Ursus ferox* and a pair of *Ursus americanus*. He soon got rid of them, however, because they were troublesome and expensive to keep (see Maximilian’s letter from August 28, 1834, to Rudolf Schinz (ZBZ: MS Car XV 175, Umschlag II)).

²⁵⁹ The *aurora borealis* (Latin for “northern dawn”) is the famous northern light. At Maximilian’s time many naturalists still thought this phenomenon was caused by meteors. Thus, somewhat disappointed, the Prince wrote that they “never heard any noise accompanying these meteors.” (Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 38; Wied, vol. 1, p. 481) Today we know that the *aurora* is caused by an interaction of solar winds and the magnetosphere of the earth. See Neil Bone, *The Aurora--Sun-Earth Interactions* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996).

²⁶⁰ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 49; Wied, vol. 1, p. 494.

²⁶¹ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 67 and pp. 81-82; Wied, vol. 1, p. 521 and p. 537.

striking ones do these later still survive in the rewarding collection of the remote, forgotten, marvelous world of nature.²⁶²

Finally, on August 9, 1833, shortly after they had passed the mouth of the Marias River, in today's central Montana, they arrived at Fort McKenzie, at the time the westernmost installation of the American Fur Company.²⁶³ Although built only the year before, it was already one of the most lucrative trading posts of the company, because it was located in the heart of the Blackfoot country and "was one of the few remaining areas with large quantities of beaver."²⁶⁴ While Fort McKenzie served first and foremost as a trading-center for the Blackfoot, the Gros Ventres (or Atsina), Sarcee, Kutenai, and other nations also frequently came to barter for desired European goods. The travelers earlier had had a short encounter with the Gros Ventre near the mouth of the Judith River, and now they were able to meet with numerous Blackfoot, as well as some Kutenai and Sarcee:

[Everywhere] our arrival gave animation to the [landscape], and our canons began to fire salutes from time to time, in which the heavy rain was very troublesome. We passed the last winding of the river, [when] a most interesting scene presented itself. A prairie extends along the north bank, at a point to which, project[ing] towards the

²⁶² Porter, 1991, quotation on page 37. This remark was actually made by Maximilian on their way back from Fort McKenzie to Fort Union in September 1833. Today, some of these formations are partially submerged in the waters of Fort Peck Lake.

²⁶³ According to Maximilian twenty-seven employees of the fur company worked at the fort, plus an unspecified number of Indian women (Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 93; Wied, vol. 1, p. 554).

²⁶⁴ Wishart, 1979, quotation on page 62. See also footnote 178 on page 125.

river, we saw Fort McKenzie, on which the American flag was displayed. A great number of Indian tents were erected in the plain . . . [where] near the fort about 800 Blackfeet were drawn up in a close body, like a well-ordered battalion.²⁶⁵

Maximilian soon learned that the Blackfoot were divided into three tribes, the Siksika (or Blackfoot properly), the Blood (or Kainah), and the Piegan. While he took his normal notes on their material culture, social organization, and physical appearance, he also became aware of the highly competitive nature of fur trade in this part of the country. At the time, the Blackfoot traded not only with the American Fur Company, but also with the Hudson Bay Company in the north, and even with the Spaniards at Santa Fé.²⁶⁶ In other words, the Blackfoot still were an independent people who claimed the right to trade with whomever they saw fit. However, the increasing influence of the American Fur Company was about to change that.

On August 10 the Prince witnessed a reception for the Indians that opened the trading season. While a delegation of chiefs and about thirty of their principal warriors were led inside the fort, the main body of the tribes sat outside in half circles, facing the gate, and waiting patiently:

We observed some remarkable, martial-looking physiognomies among those men . . . [but] {unfortunately} the Chiefs wore, for the most part, the uniform received from the Company, made in the

²⁶⁵ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 87; Wied, vol. 1, p. 545.

²⁶⁶ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 96; Wied, vol. 1, p. 559.

fashion of a great coat, with round hats and tufts of feather, on which they prided themselves greatly, but which disfigured them most lamentably. {One just imagine} their faces, painted with a bright red, surrounded with their thick, lank hair, and surmounted by a round hat with tuft of feathers, such as our German post-boys used to wear, {and one has to laugh aloud!} Some of their uniforms were of two colors--one half red, and the other half green, not unlike the dress of some of our prisoners. Mehkséhmé-Sukahs was the most interesting and dressed in the true Indian fashion.²⁶⁷

Maximilian's description of this scene is important for two reasons. It clearly shows that he was appalled by these distinguished Indians who entered the fort "disfigured" by European-style uniforms. Here and elsewhere in his accounts, Maximilian made no secret of his aversion to such signs of acculturation in clothing.²⁶⁸ Interestingly, however, other European items such as iron kettles, iron hoes, glass beads, knives, and woolen blankets were exempt from criticism.²⁶⁹ Apparently they either did not ruin the overall appearance of his (and Bodmer's) Indian models or they symbolized some kind of acceptable progress to him.

The second key point in the Prince's quotation above is its description of

²⁶⁷ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 125-126; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 592-593.

²⁶⁸ Another good example of this deeply felt aversion is Maximilian's visit with the Seneca near Buffalo upon his return to the east coast in 1834. "We visited some of the [Seneca] families, who showed us their bibles and prayer books in the Indian language; we bought specimens of their work, adorned with porcupine and other dyed quills, and likewise bows and arrows, which they still esteem. Deeply regretting the destruction of the remarkable aboriginal inhabitants of the east of North America, I returned in the evening to Buffalo" (Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 163; Wied, vol. 2, p. 398).

²⁶⁹ See for example Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 321-322 and vol. 23, p. 276; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 355-357 and vol. 2, p. 175.

how important select European commodities were to the success of fur-trading companies. As the historians Richard White and William Cronon wrote:

Indian reasons for participating in the fur trade were diverse and numerous. They included the symbolic and ritual power attributed to European goods [like uniforms and medals] and the simple material attraction of [others], whether those had to do with the sharpness of metal tools, the warmth and colorfulness of woolen fabrics, or the effectiveness of firearms²⁷⁰

Although the uniforms Maximilian described might have been “disfiguring” from the point of view of an ethnographer, they were highly visible signs of honor and distinction, and symbolized some degree of power and status.

As the following incident at Fort McKenzie indicates, the American Fur Company was quite aware of this importance that Native American peoples attached to certain goods, and they effectively used this knowledge to manipulate tribes and push out the competition:

While the company of Indians were employed in smoking, Mr. Mitchell took Ninoch-Kiäiu (the bear chief), who had always been very faithful and devoted to the Whites and the American Fur Company, into his own room, and presented him with a new uniform . . . and a new double-barreled precision gun. Mr. Mitchell wished particularly to distinguish this man, because he had never been to the north to trade with the Hudson Bay Company. When [Ninoch-Kiäiu] . . . entered the assembly of chiefs . . . it immediately became evident that the distinction conferred upon him made no favorable impression on them; some chiefs who had made presents to Mr. Mitchell, and had not yet received anything in return--for instance, Mehkséhmé-Sukahs, could not conceal their feelings; the

²⁷⁰Richard White and William Cronon, “Ecological Change and Indian-White Relations.” In: *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), vol. 4, 417-429, quotation on page 422.

latter hid his head behind the person who sat next to him, while the others hung down their heads, and seemed lost in thought. When Mr. Mitchell perceived this . . . [he said] that “they saw how the American Fur Company distinguished its faithful friends”²⁷¹

Subsequently, the said Bear Chief was asked to mount his horse and parade with his new acquisition outside the fort, so that those, who had not been allowed to enter, could see him. Although Mitchell’s conduct clearly offended the other chiefs and almost provoked an attack by some Blood Indians,²⁷² he was following a well-established strategy. Such manipulations were, in fact, crucial for the American Fur Company at the time because another important commodity of the fur trade--alcohol--was outlawed by the United States government. Unlicensed American traders and the British competition were able to ignore such restrictions, of course, and so traders at Fort McKenzie and elsewhere were at a disadvantage.²⁷³

As barter and exchange of ceremonial gifts took their course inside the fort in the following days, Maximilian and Bodmer mingled with the indigenous population. They strolled through campsites and accepted invitations into the spacious tents of Blackfoot chiefs, where they shared food and tobacco. While

²⁷¹ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 127; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 593-594.

²⁷² Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 131; Wied, vol. 1, p. 595.

²⁷³ Wishart, 1979. Maximilian repeatedly mentioned in his travel accounts that Indians asked for alcohol (e.g. Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 109, 155; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 531, 572, 618). See also Thwaites, vol. 22, footnote 205, p. 254 for further explanations on this ban of alcohol by the United States government.

the Prince took notes, Bodmer made sketches and invited certain individuals into the fort, so that he could draw them more carefully. Consequently, the two men hardly had any time for observations of flora and fauna, and only once did they make an extended trip to the Teton River farther west.²⁷⁴

At the time, Maximilian still was hoping to reach the Great Falls some forty miles upstream and perhaps explore the three principal sources of the Missouri River. An incident on August 28, however, quickly changed his plans. In the early morning about six hundred warriors of the Assiniboine and Cree suddenly attacked a Piegan camp in front of the fort. Although the attack was aimed only at the Piegan Indians, the inhabitants of the fort (including Maximilian and his companions) soon were standing on the roof and firing at intruders. Piegan women and children found refuge in the fort, while their men desperately fought the unexpected enemy. At the same time, some of the warriors hurried off to summon aid from the great camp of their nation, which was located about eight to ten miles away. Thus, for several hours the Prince was able to witness “truly original” scenes of an Indian war (Figure 19), which eventually was decided in favor of the Piegan Blackfoot.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 137-138; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 601-602.

²⁷⁵ For a more detailed description of this incident see Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 146-152; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 609-616. Neither Maximilian nor Thwaites explain what caused this conflict.

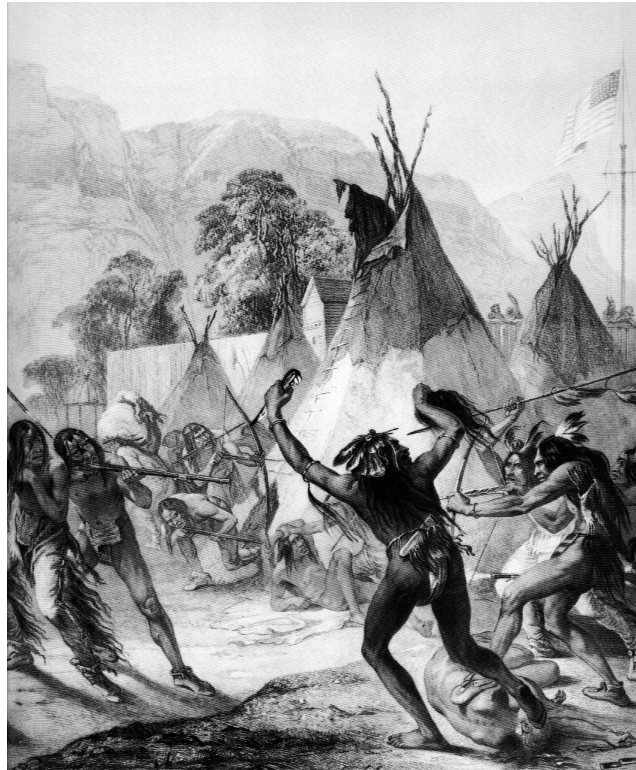


Figure 19: View of Fort McKenzie and the battle on August 28, 1833 (detail from a drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

Ever the tireless naturalist, Maximilian left the safety of the fort to inspect the destroyed Piegan campsite as soon as possible and to have a closer look at the body of a dead Assiniboiné warrior:

The Indian who was killed near the fort especially interested me, because I wished to obtain his skull. The scalp had already been taken off, and several Blackfeet were engaged in venting their rage on the dead body . . . Before I could obtain my wish, not a trace of the head was to be seen.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 149; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 612-613.

Head-hunting certainly sounds grisly, but as during his Brazilian expedition, the Prince took every opportunity to find skulls from deceased Indians for his comparative studies of the human race. At times he would even search grave sites for such treasures.²⁷⁷ Once he had finished his examination he sent the skulls to his former teacher Blumenbach in Göttingen, where they were integrated into an extensive collection known as the “Golgotha.”²⁷⁸

Although Maximilian and Bodmer considered themselves fortunate to witness the fighting between Assiniboine, Cree and Blackfoot warriors, the Prince soon realized that this incident had serious consequences for the envisioned westward continuation of his expedition:

It was my intention to pass the winter in the Rocky Mountains, and I had the execution of this project much at heart; but circumstances had arisen which rendered it very difficult, nay, impossible. A great number of the most dangerous Indians surrounded us on all sides, and . . . occupied the country towards the Falls . . . Mr. Mitchell [was obliged] to send away all serviceable horses . . . [and] without an interpreter we could not undertake a journey which was very difficult for a few persons. . . .²⁷⁹

The travelers thus stayed two more weeks at Fort McKenzie to complete their work, and then turned their backs on the Rocky Mountains and floated back

²⁷⁷ In Brazil, for example, Maximilian opened a grave of a young Botocudo Indian to “free the peculiar skull from its imprisonment.” See Maximilian, Prinz zu Wied, *Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* (Frankfurt: Brönner, 1820-21) vol. 1, p. 355. In North America he acquired, for example, “two well preserved male skulls” from a grave near the abandoned Arikara villages on the Missouri. See Thwaites, vol. 25, p. 86; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 321-322.

²⁷⁸ See also Schach, 1994. Golgotha is the Aramaic term for “skull.”

²⁷⁹ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 164; Wied, vol. 1, p. 627.

down the Missouri River on the fourteenth of September. This time they were on board a newly built Mackinaw boat that had room for seven passengers, numerous boxes of natural history specimens and ethnological artifacts, and even some live animals, including a prairie fox (*Canis velox*) and a pair of young bears (*Ursus ferox*).

Their return journey to Fort Union took only fifteen days, and nothing out of the extraordinary happened on the way. They again enjoyed most peculiar rock formations of the upper Missouri, went on occasional hunting excursions, and lost themselves in the contemplation of buffalo herds (Figure 20). Since they just had experienced an Indian war in which they fought on the side of the Blackfoot, they were not keen on meeting Cree and Assiniboiné warriors, which would have been quite possible in this part of the country. Thus, they took no chances, and descended the Missouri River as quietly and inconspicuously as possible.

They stayed for almost one month at Fort Union, and their sojourn amounted to almost a vacation after the exciting events at Fort McKenzie. Their entertainment consisted mainly of a first chance to participate in a buffalo chase on horseback,²⁸⁰ and the study of Cree and Assiniboiné Indians who frequented the fort. They also took several opportunities to visit nearby Fort William, which

²⁸⁰ See page 128.

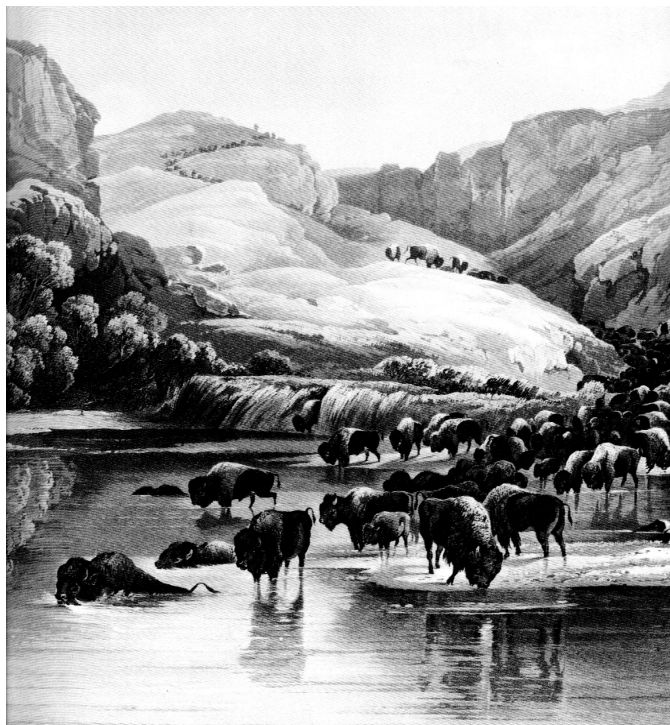


Figure 20: Buffalo herd on the upper Missouri (detail from a drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

had just been erected by “Messrs. Soublette and Campbell, opposite the mouth of the Yellow Stone [River]”²⁸¹ and in direct competition with the American Fur Company. What is perhaps most interesting about Maximilian’s comments in this regard is the degree to which he identified himself with the American Fur Company:

The Indians at this time fared very well *with us* (emphasis added); for the opposition of Fort William, in our neighborhood, induced *our people* (emphasis added) to pay them higher prices for their goods, in order to draw them away. Endeavors were made by each party to outdo the other in entertaining them, in which the more powerful

²⁸¹ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 198; Wied, vol. 2, p. 35.

and firmly established American Fur Company, of course, could hold out the longest.²⁸²

When winter made its first appearance with a snow storm on October 27, the Prince knew it was time to leave if he wanted to follow through with his plans to study the Mandan and Hidatsa in the following months. Thus, accompanied by five employees of the American Fur Company, they left Fort Union on October 30 on board their Mackinaw boat and again descended the Missouri River.

After a fairly uneventful journey they arrived at Fort Clark on November 8, where they took up a winter residence that lasted for more than five months until the eighteenth of April, 1834 (Figure 21). Here Maximilian made the thorough observations of the Mandan and Hidatsa that (in unison with Karl Bodmer's paintings) would become the most important single contribution of this expedition. Here, too, for the second time during his North American travels, the Prince would suffer from a serious indisposition (scurvy) that almost cost him his life, but which was eventually cured with a diet of wild onions (*Allium spec.*).²⁸³ In any regard, for now the travelers were content to have arrived at Fort Clark in time for the approaching winter. They soon laid claim to a freshly built cabin, and then set out to explore their immediate environment.

When the French fur trader La Vérendrye visited the upper Missouri in

²⁸² Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 202-203; Wied, vol. 2, p. 40.

²⁸³ Wild onions contain considerable amounts of micronutrients, vitamin C, and vitamin A (see Kelly Kindscher, *Edible Wild Plants of the Prairie* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987).

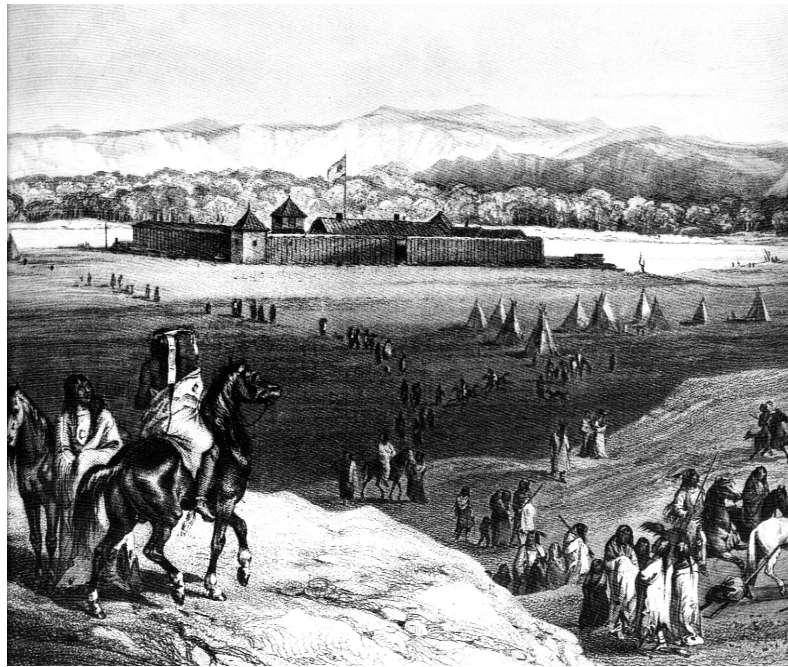


Figure 21: Mandan Indians on the frozen Missouri (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41). The Mandan village Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kusch is located to the right of Fort Clark.

1738 he reported six Mandan villages located near the mouth of the Heart River (near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota),²⁸⁴ while at the same time the Hidatsa (who can be divided into the Hidatsa proper, the Awaxawi, and the Awatixa) lived some forty miles to the northwest in three villages near the mouth of the Knife River.²⁸⁵ Both tribes, however, suffered a devastating smallpox epidemic in the early 1780s and lost more than half of their total population.

²⁸⁴ Colin F. Taylor, *Mandan Culture and Ceremonial* (Wyk: Verlag für Amerikanistik, 1996).

²⁸⁵ Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social & Ceremonial Organization* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

Thus, at Maximilian's time, the Mandan had consolidated their surviving people into two villages (Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kusch and Ruhptare), while a diminished Hidatsa population still occupied their traditional sites.

During the winter months the Prince took every opportunity to visit with the Mandan and Hidatsa. With the help of James Kipp, director of the American Fur Company at Fort Clark, and Toussaint Charbonneau, a seasoned interpreter,²⁸⁶ he became especially well acquainted with Dipäuch (a Mandan elder), Mató-Tópe (a Mandan chief), and Addíh-Hiddísch (a Hidatsa chief). The Prince's accounts describe everything from their earthlodges (Figure 22), clothing, and subsistence economies, to their language, ceremonial life (e.g. *O-kee-pa*, scalp dance, buffalo dance), and clan structure. He was so thorough in his work that even today his descriptions are a valuable primary source for the scholarly world.²⁸⁷ What is of more relevance to this present study, however, are the events at Fort Clark which reveal another important facet of a narrative, the ethnocentricity of its creator.

At one point, for example, when Maximilian studied the material culture of the Mandan, he described buffalo robes as painted "in a rude {child-like} style."²⁸⁸ He also portrayed the Indians themselves as "childish" in their behavior, "like all

²⁸⁶ This is the same Charbonneau who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their expedition.

²⁸⁷ See literature review in Chapter One.

²⁸⁸ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 263; Wied, vol. 2, p. 113.

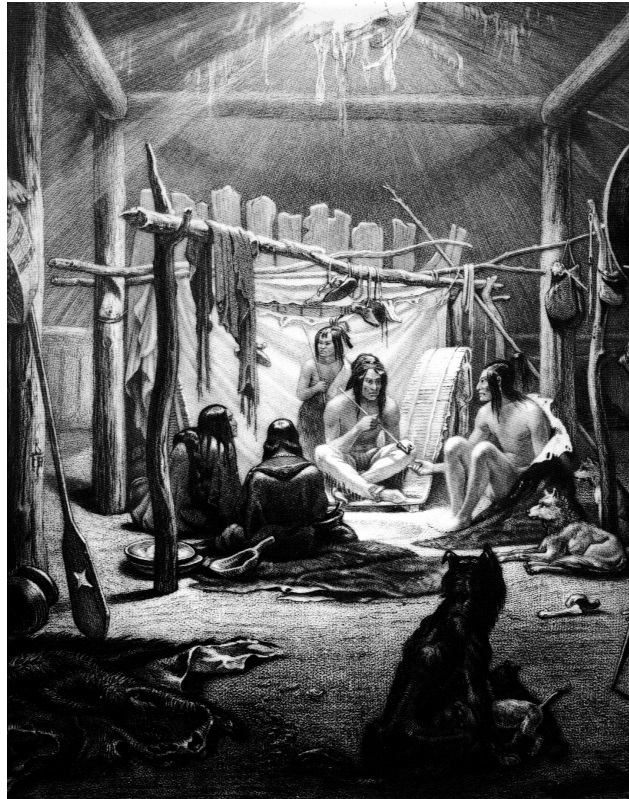


Figure 22: The interior of a Mandan earthlodge (detail from a drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

savages,” because “they [were] very fond of ornament, and the young men ha[d] always a little looking glass suspended from their wrists” that they were “constantly consulting”²⁸⁹ Similarly, when Dipäuch told the history of his people, the Prince editorialized about their “extremely silly” and “childish mythology,”²⁹⁰ and wrote that the Mandan were “full of prejudice and superstition”²⁹¹ in regard to natural phenomena. Maximilian even went further in

²⁸⁹ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 258-259; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 108-109.

²⁹⁰ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 300-301; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 148-149, 243.

²⁹¹ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 318; Wied, vol. 2, p. 165.

this vein. He made negative remarks about the {"pitiful caterwaul"} of women who in their dances "rock[ed] from side to side {like ducks},"²⁹² and characterized the flute playing of an Indian as "a wretched piece of {children's} music"²⁹³ This clearly was not the voice of an objective naturalist, but rather of a person who considered his own culture superior to others.

Maximilian's ethnocentricity also surfaced clearly at Fort Clark in regard to another important aspect of his Native America--sexuality--but this time with a strong moralistic undertone. He remarked, for example, that "among all the North American Indian nations there [were] {mannish women}, who [were] called Bardaches by the Canadians." These men, he noted, were not only "dressed . . . and treated like women," but apparently some young men even lived {"in a certain unnatural way with them}."²⁹⁴ At other times the Prince mentioned that "prudery [was] not [a] virtue of . . . Indian women"²⁹⁵ and characterized them as both "licentious"²⁹⁶ and "dissolute."²⁹⁷ Thus, when the Prince described a ceremony known as "walking with the buffalo," where Hidatsa women engaged in ceremonial intercourse, he made no secret of his condemnation of such conduct,

²⁹² Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 49; Wied, vol. 2, p. 284.

²⁹³ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 363-364; Wied, vol. 2, p. 413.

²⁹⁴ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 283-284; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 132-133.

²⁹⁵ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 282; Wied, vol. 2, p. 130.

²⁹⁶ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 386; Wied, vol. 2, p. 238.

²⁹⁷ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 354; Wied, vol. 1, p. 401.

which also shows that he never understood the full meaning of this ritual.²⁹⁸

Finally, when it came to certain aspects of the Mandan mythology and culture which Maximilian considered too graphic, he simply used Latin when describing them, so that only the educated in Europe could read it. Again, this is a sign of his disapproval.²⁹⁹

Despite these episodes of culture shock, the Prince could not be deterred from his studies of the Mandan, the Hidatsa, and, to a lesser degree, the Arikara. He even grew fond of certain individuals, and especially esteemed the Mandan chief Mató-Tópe (Figure 23), who possessed a “noble character” in his opinion.³⁰⁰ If not for the severe food shortage at the end of the winter, when their diet consisted mainly of river water and boiled maize,³⁰¹ all might have been splendid until the very end of their sojourn in the Indian Territory. However, on the eleventh of March, 1834, the Prince felt the first symptoms of what was to become a serious case of scurvy. Thus, inhibited in his studies and suffering from increasing pain, his mood, quite understandably, turned foul:

²⁹⁸ For further explanations of this ceremony, whose main function was the transfer of spiritual power from one man to another via a woman as an intermediary, see Peters (1995) and Alice B. Kehoe, “The Function of Ceremonial Sexual Intercourse Among the Northern Plains Indians.” *Plains Anthropologist* 15 (1970): 99-103.

²⁹⁹ See Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 257, footnote 217 and p. 309, footnote 278; Wied, vol. 2, p. 107, footnote * and p. 157, footnote *. In footnote 217 Maximilian describes the genitals of Indian women, including anthropogenic deformations of the labia; in footnote 278 the Prince essentially describes a phallus (“a cow’s tail”) which appears in the creation story of the Mandan.

³⁰⁰ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 79-80; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 315-316.

³⁰¹ Thwaites, vol. 24, pp. 75-76; Wied, vol. 2, p. 311.



Figure 23: The Mandan chief Mató-Tópe (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41).

We are tired of life in this dirty fort for the highest degree. Our daily routine is conducted in such a filthy manner that it nauseates one. Since our Negro cook Alfred suffers from a severe rheumatic disease, we now have a filthy attendant and cook named Boileau who wears a fur cap, sits down among us and handles the cups and plates with his disgusting fists after cleaning his nose according to the manner of our peasants. This is also exactly the manner of the clerk of the fort, Kipp, who along with his wife and child scatters these items about and then cleans his fingers on the first object that comes to hand. The little boy has a gap in his trousers, both in front and in back, so that he may relieve himself quickly and without formality on the floor of the room, which happened frequently during meals. The indolence and indifference of [Mr. Kipp] this otherwise commendable man goes so far that he eases himself near the fort in full sight of passersby, having neglected to build an outhouse for

this purpose. In short our sojourn here was a hard test.³⁰²

Not surprisingly, Maximilian later edited this passage out of his published travel accounts, because he neither wanted to insult his former hosts, nor disclose this moment of weakness which represented the definite low point of his journey.

The bad times were quickly forgotten, however, when the Prince's health turned for the better:

At the beginning of April I was still in a hopeless condition, and so very ill, that the people who visited me did not think that my life would be prolonged beyond three or, at the most, four days . . . [but after I had eaten wild onions for four days] the swelling of my leg had considerably subsided, and I gained strength daily. The evident prospect of speedy recovery quite reanimated me, and we carried on with pleasure the preparations for our departure, though I was not yet able to leave my bed.³⁰³

After a long, but instructive winter, the travelers again took to the Missouri River on the eighteenth of April. What had been many days of hard labor for the engagés the year before, now seemed to pass with great swiftness and ease. Just eight days later they arrived at Fort Pierre which, as Maximilian noted, "was in excellent condition."³⁰⁴ However, the employees of the American Fur Company

³⁰² David Thomas and Karin Ronnefeldt, *People of the First Man--Life Among the Plains Indians in Their Final Days of Glory* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1976), quotation on pages 200-201.

³⁰³ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 82; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 317-318. Although he quickly recovered from scurvy, Maximilian lost his teeth as a result of this hard winter at Fort Clark (Carmen Sylva, "Mein Großonkel Maximilian." *Velhagen & Klasing's Monatshefte* (1912/13): 245-250).

³⁰⁴ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 88; Wied, vol. 2, p. 323.

there and the nearby Indians were experiencing a severe food crisis, which was a rather common occurrence on the upper Missouri at this time of the year.³⁰⁵ Consequently, at Fort Pierre the princely stomach received its first taste of “the flesh of a dog,” a meal that he found “so excellent that [he] speedily surmounted [his] prejudice and antipathy.”³⁰⁶

On April 29 they again headed downriver, stopping only for occasional hunts or to put up camps for the night. In rapid succession they passed Fort Lookout (May 1), the trading post of Major Pilcher³⁰⁷ (May 12), and Major Dougherty’s agency at Belle Vue (May 13). Finally, on the eighteenth of May, and just one month after they had left Fort Clark, they arrived at Fort Leavenworth, their gateway back into the Europeanized section of the United States.

Return to the East Coast and Europe

Even at Fort Leavenworth the travelers spent only a few hours. With fresh provisions on board they pushed on the same day in spite of “very heavy rain.”³⁰⁸ Ever since the Prince and his companions had bidden farewell to their friends at

³⁰⁵ See footnote 185 on page 128.

³⁰⁶ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 89; Wied, vol. 2, p. 324.

³⁰⁷ This post formerly belonged to Jean Pierre Cabanné.

³⁰⁸ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 116; Wied, vol. 2, p. 353.

Fort Clark, they seemed in a hurry to get back to the East Coast and ultimately to Europe. Consequently, the remaining part of Maximilian's agenda was determined by final visits with old acquaintances and a few short stops at special sites including the Cahokia Mounds and Niagara Falls. Natural history observations were still part of the daily routine, but they receded into the background under the constraints of a rigid timetable.

The first significant stop after Fort Leavenworth was St. Louis on the twenty seventh of May. They stayed almost one week in this booming town, which the Prince reported "was now healthy, and not suffering from . . . cholera, as [they] had expected"³⁰⁹ from reports they received en route. Maximilian, who was eager to share his experiences with General William Clark, was disappointed to learn that the Superintendent of Indian Affairs was absent. Nevertheless, he found a worthy confidant in Major Benjamin O'Fallon, Clark's nephew:

We received much kindness in the house of Major O'Fallon, who is perfectly acquainted with the Missouri, and the aboriginal inhabitants. Here we saw a collection of Indian portraits and scenery by Mr. Catlin, a painter from New York, of which we were able to form an opinion after our recent travels in the country.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 125; Wied, vol. 2, p. 362.

³¹⁰ Thwaites, vol. 24, pp. 125-126; Wied, vol. 2, p. 362.

Maximilian's mention of George Catlin is intriguing, but a reader of his travel accounts never learns what his opinion might have been. The Prince published an article on the issue in 1842, however, in which he critically analyzed Catlin's *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* as well as the paintings he saw in St. Louis. Although Maximilian found words of praise for Catlin's accomplishments in his commentary, his remarks were, in general, fairly critical. He argued that Catlin's portraits of Native Americans (unlike Karl Bodmer's) did not give good likenesses of the individuals they depicted; that his descriptions of indigenous culture were, at times, too poetic and exaggerated; and that certain aspects of Catlin's Native America, as described in the *Letters* (e.g. Indian names, ceremonies, and artifacts) were plainly wrong.³¹¹ At the time though, the Prince decided not to mention his reservations about the paintings he saw at O'Fallon's house, because he did not want to offend its collector.

Maximilian also used his second stay in St. Louis to inspect the nearby Indian mounds at Cahokia, Illinois. He clearly enjoyed setting his eyes upon these ancient earthen landscapes constructed by Mississippian cultures, but

³¹¹ See Maximilian zu Wied, "Einige Bemerkungen über George Catlins Werk: Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians." *Isis* (1842): 726-741. This critique, however, did not deter Maximilian from an endorsement of Catlin's account of the *O-kee-pa*, which had been brought into question by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, an important American ethnologist of the nineteenth century (Brian W. Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

criticized, again, the United States government for its neglect of these and other archeological sites.³¹² Once the Prince had finished his examinations of the ancient mounds, which he compared to smaller barrows found in German forests, it again was time to leave. On the third of June the travelers boarded the steamer *Metamora* to continue their journey.

Three days later they arrived at Mount Vernon, where they went ashore and took a carriage to pay a last visit to New Harmony. One more time they enjoyed inspired discussions with Thomas Say³¹³ and Charles Alexandre Lesueur, and shared with them the adventures, observations, and drawings from the upper Missouri. On the ninth of June the Prince again became restless, however, and the travelers bade farewell to their friends in New Harmony and took a stage coach to Vincennes, Indiana. From Vincennes they turned eastward, and via Washington, Paoli, and New Albany they came to Louisville on the fourteenth of June. There they immediately boarded a steamer for Cincinnati.

The year before, when the travelers had first seen Cincinnati from the deck of a steamer, they had been afraid to visit because of a cholera outbreak. Now the city seemed to be safe, and so they stayed for three days. Maximilian

³¹² See Thwaites, vol. 24, pp. 127-128; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 364-365.

³¹³ Maximilian regarded Thomas Say and his work as a naturalist highly. Thus, when he heard of his sudden death on October 10, 1834, just four months after their last meeting, he made special mention of him in his travel accounts (see Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 170-171; Wied, vol. 1, p. 180).

used his time mainly to visit museums and bookstores, and, as at earlier times, was disappointed by the lack of Native American literature.³¹⁴ By chance the Prince also met with an old acquaintance from New Harmony, Robert Owen, who introduced him to the German community in Cincinnati. At the time the residents of Cincinnati included about ten thousand people of German descent, close to a quarter of the total population. Maximilian thus was amused to hear his native tongue spoken throughout the city, even though he had some reservations about his compatriots since “most of them [were] of the lowest and most uneducated class” and he feared that they would not leave a “favorable impression” of his nation on the Americans.³¹⁵ On the nineteenth of June they had seen enough and booked passage upstream on the mail boat *Guyandotte*.

At noon the next day they arrived at Portsmouth, Ohio, from where they traveled northward on the Ohio Canal to Lake Erie. In the beginning the route followed the valley of the Scioto River through towns like Chillicothe and Circleville. At Lockbourne, however, about ten miles south of Columbus, the canal left the Scioto valley and turned in a northeastern direction towards the Licking River and Newark. The canal followed this general course until it reached Gnadenhütten, in the Tuscarawas valley, when it again turned north via Dover, Massillon, and Akron to Cleveland. The travelers sighted Lake Erie on the twenty

³¹⁴ See page 72.

³¹⁵ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 144; Wied, vol. 2, p. 381.

sixth of June:

The sea-like expanse of the large Lake Erie was very striking when emerging from the wooded valleys, and the sight of it reminded me of the approaching voyage to my native country. The dark blue lake stretches to the far horizon, like the ocean; the eye is attracted by the white sails and the smoke of the steam boats; while the finest weather and the purest atmosphere favored the illusion.³¹⁶

Not wasting any time in Cleveland they boarded a steamer for Buffalo, where they went ashore the next day. This growing town of twelve thousand inhabitants on the northeastern tip of Lake Erie had two important things to offer our naturalist. On one hand, the internationally renowned Niagara Falls were located about fifteen miles north of Buffalo. On the other hand, the Prince also wanted to visit the nearby villages of the Seneca and Tuscarora peoples.

As so many before him, Maximilian was mesmerized by the Niagara Falls, and he spent many hours over several days in contemplation of the spectacular scenery:

The eye is lost in the depth of the foaming whirlpool, the light spray of which envelopes the admiring spectator, whose ear is stunned with the roaring sound of the cataract. No language can describe the grandeur and sublime impression of the scene, from which we could with difficulty tear ourselves.³¹⁷

In comparison, Maximilian's experience with the Seneca and Tuscarora

³¹⁶ Thwaites, vol. 24, pp. 158-159; Wied, vol. 2, p. 393.

was sobering, for he was greatly distressed by the degree of acculturation he observed among these two tribes.³¹⁸ What is perhaps most fascinating about this episode, however, are remarks he made when he visited the Tuscarora:

There is less originality among [the Tuscarora] than among the Seneca.... Their features, color, and hair seem to {have suffered more from} their intercourse with the Whites; yet I saw, now and then, a characteristic physiognomy, especially among the women.³¹⁹

Indian women, whom the Prince formerly considered ugly, now became more attractive in the light of the observed acculturation because they seemed to preserve his image of the “original physiognomy” and thus the “original inhabitant.” In addition, we may recall that, in the Indian Territory, half-breed children had “more agreeable features” because “they were half of the white race.” Now, however, far away from the Plains Indians, the intercourse with European-Americans had resulted in less original and, thus, less agreeable features.³²⁰ Clearly, these contradictory statements speak not for the objective observer, but for an individual whose representations of Native Americans were

³¹⁷ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 172; Wied, vol. 2, p. 404.

³¹⁸ See p. 155, footnote 269.

³¹⁹ Thwaites, vol. 24, pp. 175-176; Wied, vol. 2, p. 407. Thwaites translated Maximilian's statement “ihre Züge, Farbe, und Haare schienen schon mehr durch die Vermischung mit den Weissen gelitten zu haben” as “their features, color, and hair seem to be more changed by their intercourse with the Whites.” Maximilian, however, did not simply speak of change (“Veränderung”). He clearly remarked that their features had suffered (“gelitten”) from their intercourse with a European-American population.

³²⁰ See also discussion on pages 133-135.

influenced by a combination of romantic expectations, a patriarchal *Weltanschauung*, and the discourse of a naturalist.

Early in the morning of the first of July the travelers left Buffalo and took a stage coach to Tonawan[d]a to return to New York City and the East Coast via the Erie Canal and the Hudson River:

The boats on the Erie Canal are much the same as those on the Ohio Canal Our boat had fourteen or sixteen berths, which were very commodiously arranged. The horses drawing these boats are always on the trot, and they perform a distance of 104 miles in twenty-four hours. Twelve hundred such boats navigate this canal, the original cost of which was 700,000 dollars; whereas that of the Ohio Canal was only 400,000. This great work was commenced in 1817, and completed in eight years.³²¹

During this canal trip the Prince made his last observations of Native Americans (the Oneida people); again noticed the constant stream of immigrants pouring into the country; admired rapidly growing towns like Syracuse; and used a short stop in Albany on the fourth of July to meet with Dr. Edwin James, the author of Major Long's travel accounts. Five days after they had left Buffalo they arrived at New York where Maximilian "rejoiced to find the town in a perfectly healthy state, and all [their] friends well."³²²

³²¹ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 177; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 409-410.

³²² Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 191; Wied, vol. 2, p. 421. These individuals included the Prussian Consul Schmidt, Mr. Gebhard, Mr. Schuchart, Mr. Meier, and Mr. Iselin (see also Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 58; Wied, vol. 1, p. 29).

Despite all the business they still had to take care of before they could return to Europe from New York, the Prince made one final visit to Philadelphia. There he met with several people he had missed two years earlier because of the cholera epidemic.³²³ On the sixteenth of July, however, time finally had run out. Maximilian and his companions boarded the packet-boat *Havre* in New York, crossed the Atlantic in twenty three days, and set foot again on the European continent on the eight of August, 1834.

³²³ One of these was Richard Harlan, a well-known naturalist and professor of comparative anatomy in Philadelphia, who in 1832 had been member of the city's cholera commission.

Chapter 4

Voices of a Narrative

Every image and idea about the world is compounded . . . [by] personal experience, learning, imagination, and memory. The places that we live in, those we visit and travel through, the worlds we read about and see in works of art, and the realms of imagination and fantasy each contribute to our images of nature and man. All types of experience, from those most closely linked with our everyday world to those which seem furthest removed, come together to make up our individual picture of reality We are all artists and landscape architects, creating order and organizing space, time, and causality in accordance with our apperceptions and predilections.¹

The excerpts from Prince Maximilian's travel accounts presented in the preceding chapter illustrate clearly that his narrative reverberates with much more than the "objective." Whenever he wrote about a certain subject matter, the descriptions were informed by his unique intellectual history, and his narrative thus offers both information and invention. In other words, Maximilian's travel accounts are as much the creation of his own mind as they are a result of his careful observations. Another individual traveling at the same time and following the same route would have given us a very different account simply because we all view and interpret the world differently

¹ David Lowenthal, "Geography, Experience, and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology," in *The Conceptual Revolution in Geography*, Wayne K. D. Davies (ed.) (London: University of London Press, 1972), pp. 77-107, quotation on page 94.

depending on our socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.²

This is not to say that Maximilian's accounts are pure fiction, but rather that he (consciously or not) constructed and determined his narrative. Both in the field and back home the Prince made decisions about what to describe and what to leave out. Upon his return to Germany he carefully ordered his narrative and chose the language that would appeal to (or at least not alienate) his prospective audience. At the same time, while he was writing down his observations in the field or editing his travel accounts for publication, Maximilian was eyeing the world through a prism which was coated with a complex and often competing set of ideologies. Thus, the *Journey to the Interior of North America* also is a journey to the imagination and intellect of a narrator. From my analysis I find three distinct layers in Maximilian's narrative --landscapes I call Linnaean, strategic, and ideological. In this chapter I examine and discuss these three concepts.

² Susan L. Blake, "Travel and Literature: The Liberian Narratives of Esther Warner and Graham Greene." *Research in African Literature* 22 (1991): 191-203. Karin M. Morin, *Gender, Imperialism, and the Western American Landscapes of Victorian Women Travelers, 1874-1897* (unpublished dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1996). David Wishart, "The Selectivity of Historical Representation." *Journal of Historical Geography* 23 (1997): 111-118.

The Linnaean Landscapes

The most straightforward layer in Maximilian's narrative consists of what I term Linnaean landscapes. Here the Prince as a child of the Enlightenment and as a representative of the European scientific Reconnaissance dissects, categorizes, measures, and classifies the natural history he observes, whether flora, fauna, meteorology, geology, or even comparative anthropology. Inspired by Carl von Linné's *Systema Naturae*, travelers like Maximilian set off to distant shores to map a dazzling "New World" and to make order out of perceived chaos. Consequently, "[s]pecimen gathering, the building of [natural history] collections, the naming of species, the recognition of known ones,"³ dominated a good portion of the travel accounts that came out in the second half of the eighteenth and during much of the nineteenth centuries.

The Linnaean landscapes in Maximilian's narrative are characterized by a mechanical and almost sterile mode of description. Here the reader is exposed to endless lists of observed species, a litany of Latin terms, and the disenchanting descriptions of a physical world. This is the layer of the

³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), quotation on page 27. As Pratt pointed out, natural-history descriptions have been part of travel reports since the sixteenth century, but only with Linné's *Systema Naturae* did "the observing and cataloguing of nature" become an important aspect of such accounts (Pratt, 1992, quotation on page 28).

narrative that lacks emotion and opinion, because its objective is not to emphasize, politicize, or romanticize, but simply to describe and come to grips with the natural history of a specific place and region. The following passage is typical for Maximilian's Linnaean landscapes:

In the forests of Indiana the ground is covered with a thick undergrowth, fifteen, twenty, or thirty feet high, consisting chiefly of the papaw tree (*Asimina triloba*), the spine wood (*Laurus Benzoin*), and the red bud (*Cercis canadensis*); the flowers of the two latter precede the leaf. Under these lower trees, shrubs cover the ground, {and in open spaces *Rhus typhinum* can be found, which is used to dye leather red There are several species of climbing plants, *Celastrus scandens*, *Clematis virginiana*, *Hedera quinquefolia*, several species of *Artis* and *Smilax*, but especially *Rhus radicans* On old trunks one can see a variety of mosses, e.g. *Neckera viticulosa*, *Parmelia tiliacea*, etc. . . . [T]he titmouse (*Parus. bicolor*, and *Atricapillus*), and the nuthatch (*Sitta Carolinensis*), seek everywhere for insects and nuts. . . . The snapping turtle (*Emys serpentina*) becomes large and heavy *Emys picta*, *pulchella*, and other species are common, the latter of which is characterized by the orange coloring of her bottom.}⁴

Because the Prince was first and foremost on a scientific mission in North America, his Linnaean inventories (which also included descriptions of material culture, developing industries, rural and urban landscapes) essentially built the foundation for his later publications, including travel accounts and a variety of scholarly articles. In his Linnaean descriptions Maximilian, in fact, presented "meticulous written observations" that were

⁴ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 166; Wied, vol. 1, pp.169-176. It should be noted that a large portion of Maximilian's Linnaean landscapes (especially his extensive endnotes) are missing in Thwaites's translation.

characterized by a high degree of “unreserved objectivity.”⁵ Still, this layer is not as unambiguous as one might assume. First of all, while writing and editing his accounts, the Prince decided to place a good portion of his extensive natural history observations into numerous endnotes. Although it was important to him to report the minute scientific details of his expedition, he realized that such detail would greatly inhibit the flow of a story he wanted to tell to his European audience. The following is a typical example from Maximilian’s endnotes:

{The wolf of the Wabash woodlands and the forested regions east of the Mississippi does not seem to be much different from the European, and can therefore hardly be considered a variety of the same. For a comparison I will give the measures of a female wolf which was shot near Harmony on the Wabash and which weighed sixty pounds: total length 57" 9" . . . ; length of the tail including the hair ends 18" 8" . . . ; length of the head 9" 9" . . . ; length from the tip of the nose to the front corner of the eye 4" 9¹/₃" . . . ; circumference of the head in front of the ears 16" 3" . . . ; length of the front paw to the joint 6" . . . ; circumference of the animal behind its forelegs 23" 5" . . . ; length of the upper fang 9¹/₂", the lower 9¹/₃".}

⁶

A second important point about Maximilian’s supposedly objective descriptions is the fact that he did not describe *everything* he saw, of course, but only that which he considered noteworthy. At times he simply may have been overwhelmed with the amount of information available to him, and

⁵ See my discussion in Chapter Three, pp. 57-58.

⁶ Wied, vol. 1, endnote 3, p. 210.

perhaps had no choice but to be selective. More often, though, he simply focussed on what inspired his imagination. This selectivity, however, points to a critical aspect of Maximilian's America: the confrontation and interpolation of competing discourses in his narrative.⁷ In other words, the Prince was not only eyeing and describing the world as a naturalist, but also as a romanticist, aristocrat, male, and former Prussian officer. And these particular points of view, in turn, colored and skewed his representations of the North American continent.

One cannot help but notice, for instance, that the Prince was deeply impressed with the rich flora and fauna of the eastern woodlands, especially of remote regions such as the Pocono Mountains. Consequently, his descriptions of these forests were carried out with much detail and enthusiasm. In stark contrast, Maximilian's ability to thoroughly describe the western landscapes was initially paralyzed by the *otherness* of the prairie from his previous experience. Thus, he first ignored the grasslands (which at one point he even flatly depicted as "bare, dead, [and] lonely . . . scarcely offer[ing] a living creature except . . . herds of buffaloes and antelopes, or few deer and wolves"⁸) and preferred to roam through the forests along the Missouri River. In other words, his initial confrontation with a foreign biome

⁷ See also Morin's (1996) discussion of Victorian women travelers and their representation of landscapes.

⁸ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 42; Wied, vol. 1, p. 486.

(despite his thorough preparations) inhibited his ability to *see*.

Maximilian's predilection for the forest biome led to a substantial exclusion of the prairie from his narrative. Although the Prince soon grew accustomed to the grasslands and left the sanctuary of the riparian forests,⁹ this example points to the occurrence of exclusions in his travel accounts. Likewise, as I will argue below, a close reading of Maximilian's narrative also exposes moments when he emphasizes and even alters certain information. Thus, although the America the Prince presented to his European audience was built on the foundation of his Linnaean landscapes, his *Journey* constitutes more than just the "report" of a naturalist.

The Strategic Landscapes¹⁰

I employ the term strategic landscapes to reveal Maximilian as an editor and censor of available information. From this perspective the Prince is not simply a natural historian whose mission is to objectively describe the observed

⁹ See, for example, Maximilian's descriptions of the environs of Fort Clark (Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 241-251; Wied, vol. 2, pp. 78-95).

¹⁰ My concept of "strategic landscapes" was inspired by Lydia Fossa's work *The Discourse of History in Andean America: Europeans Writing for Europeans* (unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 1996). In this study Fossa employed the term "strategic silence" to refer to gaps or blank sections in the representation of Andean America by Spanish colonizers of the sixteenth century.

cultural and physical environments, but instead a person who knowingly manipulates his narrative to emphasize and contain selected aspects. Thus, the Prince made many decisions beyond those of natural history descriptions about what he wanted to report to his countrymen (and in which fashion) and what to leave out. Certain human-oriented issues, he decided, were either irrelevant or too sensitive socially and politically. Consequently, this layer is influenced by Maximilian's intellectual and cultural background, by his societal position, and, most importantly, by his desire to sell a product to the European audience.

Perhaps the best example of Maximilian's strategic landscapes can be found in the illustrations that accompanied his published travel accounts. Although there is no doubt that Karl Bodmer surpassed many, if not all, nineteenth-century artists in his ability to create a visual documentary of the North American continent (e.g. landscapes, indigenous peoples, material culture, natural history specimens), it is important to take a closer look at the specific sample of his works that was included in Maximilian's publication.

When the travelers returned to Germany in 1834, Bodmer brought with him more than four hundred sketches and watercolors that represented a detailed record of the entire expedition. In subsequent months this portfolio was carefully evaluated and images chosen from it that were to become an indispensable part of Maximilian's narrative. When comparing the original

watercolors¹¹ with the aquatints¹² that eventually adorned the *Journey to the Interior of North America*, a careful observer notices some interesting differences. First of all, Bodmer's portfolio included a fairly equal number of illustrations from the eastern and the western segments of the journey. In the publication, however, the focus shifted significantly to the west, with a special emphasis on Native Americans.¹³ Obviously Maximilian realized that if he wanted to succeed in the publication of his travel accounts, he needed to consider the tastes of a European audience that was fascinated with the noble savage.¹⁴

An even more eye-opening aspect of the use of Bodmer's paintings are actual changes that were made in his illustrations after the travelers had returned to Germany.¹⁵ Apparently it was not enough to shift the emphasis to the western landscapes. Some of the original watercolors actually were "enhanced" to appeal to potential subscribers of the travel accounts. The two

¹¹ For Bodmer's original watercolors see Hunt and Gallagher, 1984.

¹² In Maximilian's publication, Bodmer's watercolors were reproduced as aquatints. Aquatints, which involve a process of etching, were probably the preferred medium because they produce an effect resembling a drawing in watercolor.

¹³ For instance, only four of the forty-eight large engravings that were produced for the travel accounts depict eastern landscapes (The Lehigh and her Islands near Bethlehem; New Harmony on the Wabash; Confluence of the Fox River and the Wabash; The Niagara Falls).

¹⁴ See also Chapter 1, pp. 8-9.

¹⁵ This study focusses only on changes that were made in the original watercolors for the publication of Maximilian's travel accounts. However, following this publication in 1839-41, Bodmer's illustrations were frequently reproduced by other artists for a variety of projects, which led to further alterations. For a thorough discussion of these continuing changes see Madelyn Dean Garrett, *Karl Bodmer's Aquatints: The Changing Image* (unpublished thesis, University of Utah, 1990).

pairs of images discussed below beautifully illustrate the scope of these alterations.

Figures 24a/b depict two versions of the same incident that occurred on April 19, 1833, when the steamboat *Yellow Stone* stranded itself on a sandbank near Fort Osage in western Missouri. Both illustrations show engagés of the American Fur Company using a flatboat to “unload part of the ship’s cargo to lighten its draft,”¹⁶ so that they might eventually continue their journey. In the original watercolor (see Figure 24a) the process of unloading the steamer seems rather peaceful, and both the flatboat and the engagés become an almost negligible part of the total composition. In the published aquatint, however, the same scene (see Figure 24b) appears much more dramatic: The wind is blowing harder (as indicated by the smoke emitted from the ship’s chimneys); the waves are significantly higher (suggesting a stronger wind or current); and, in the foreground, the engagés are fighting against the elements (which gives the reader the freedom to fantasize about possible accidents and lost cargo). In other words, the illustration that appeared in the published travel accounts conveyed a much more dramatic and romantic atmosphere than the original.

¹⁶ Hunt and Gallagher, 1984, quotation on page 141. It should be noted that, although the authors mention that Bodmer’s original watercolor of this particular scene was “reproduced” for Maximilian’s publication, they never elaborated on any changes.

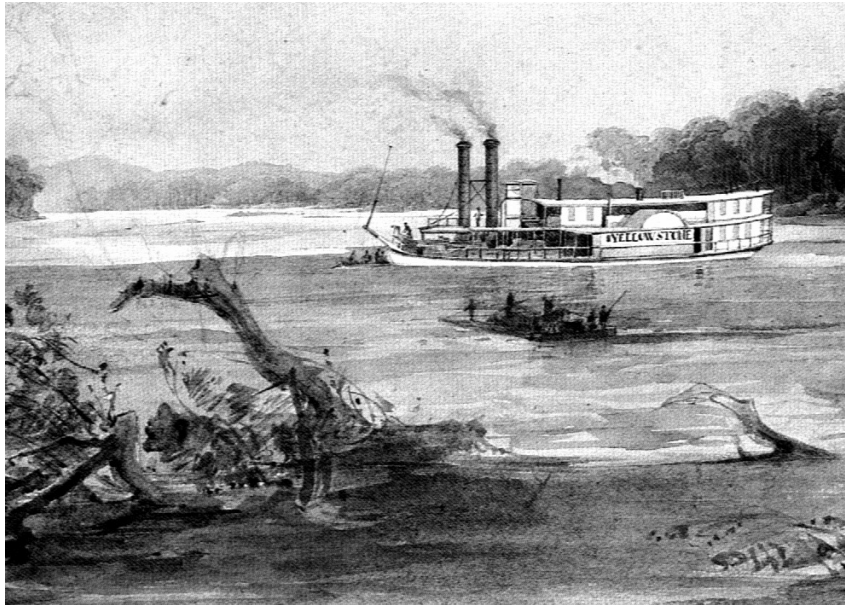


Figure 24a: Unloading the *Yellow Stone* (detail from Karl Bodmer's original watercolor) (Hunt and Gallagher, 1984).

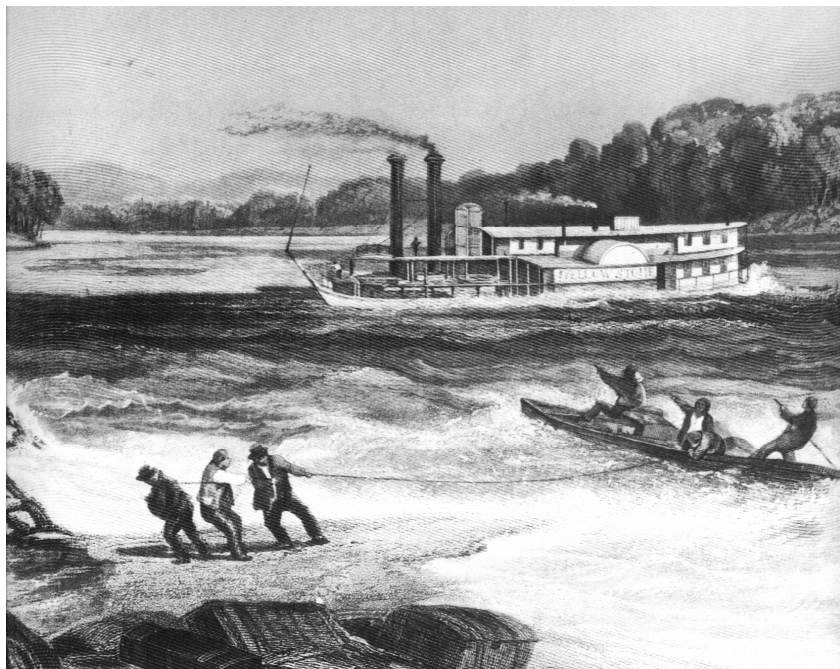


Figure 24b: Unloading the *Yellow Stone* (detail from the same scene as it appeared in the travel accounts) (Wied, 1839-41).

Figures 25a/b also depict two versions of the same scene--an Assiniboine burial scaffold--which Bodmer drew on July 4, 1833, in the woods near Fort Union. The original watercolor (see Figure 25a) shows a calm scene with luxuriant vegetation and the sobering image of a wrapped dead body on an elevated platform. However, in the published version (see Figure 25b), this serene scene is animated by the appearance of three wolves that prowl underneath the scaffold in search of food, as if indicating that the struggle for life continues even after death. As in the prior example, the aquatint that eventually appeared in the published travel accounts conveyed a very different mood than the original watercolor. Consequently, although Bodmer's aquatints in many ways still accurately present the information that was available to him (e.g. general landscape features, the design of a burial scaffold, details of the vegetation), they at times introduce a romantic dimension into the narrative as part of a sales strategy.

Another aspect of Maximilian's strategic landscapes, which is as intriguing as the changes in Bodmer's paintings, are omitted sections or moments of strategic silence that occur throughout his travel accounts. More than once (and for a variety of reasons) the Prince felt the need to exclude certain segments of the journey from his narrative. These exclusions tell us a great deal about Maximilian's personality and his societal position.

In the beginning of his journey, for instance, the Prince decided to go



Figure 25a: Assiniboine burial scaffold (detail from Karl Bodmer's original watercolor) (Hunt and Gallagher, 1984).



Figure 25b: Assiniboine burial scaffold (detail from the same scene as it appeared in the travel accounts) (Wied, 1839-41).

to Philadelphia to visit with members of the Academy of Natural Sciences.¹⁷ In addition, he wanted to explore the renowned Peale Museum and perhaps find some natural history volumes in local bookstores. Because of the cholera outbreak, however, none of his learned acquaintances were available.¹⁸ The bookstores also proved to be a big disappointment, and only the natural history collection in the Peale Museum lived up to his expectations. Consequently, the Prince soon left Philadelphia for a place called Bordentown where, as he put it, he sought to “obtain some little knowledge of the forests of New Jersey.”¹⁹

What really interested Maximilian in Bordentown, however, was not its woods, but its most famous resident--Joseph Bonaparte--who was the elder brother of Napoleon and the former king of Spain. Although (or perhaps because) Bonaparte was in Europe at the time, Maximilian could not resist the chance to inspect his estate,²⁰ and he repeatedly strolled through Bonaparte's private park.²¹ Such a park landscape, of course, was hardly the best place for a naturalist to obtain good knowledge of the forests of New Jersey and to discover new species of flora and fauna. Instead, the Prince

¹⁷ Maximilian became a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences in 1834 (see Appendix D).

¹⁸ See Chapter Three, p. 74.

¹⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 65; Wied, vol. 1, p. 37.

²⁰ According to Hunt and Gallagher (1984) Bonaparte's estate included about 300 acres.

²¹ See especially Maximilian's entries from July 19 through July 23, 1832, in his unpublished field journals (UFJ).

clearly was more fascinated by its association with Napoleon's elder brother. Back home in Germany, however, Maximilian apparently became embarrassed about this melancholic (and perhaps simply touristic) adventure. The reader of his travel accounts gets a clear sense of an omission in this section of the narrative, and, for instance, never learns much about Bonaparte's mansion (Figure 26) or his pavilion, which was a favorite lookout for the Prince.²² Similarly, the fact that Maximilian had a short encounter in Bordentown with "young Murat, [the] son of the former King of Naples,"²³ is also omitted from his travel accounts. Thus, while the Prince did not hide the fact that he went to Bordentown, he clearly de-emphasized and even obscured its association with his former enemies.²⁴

A second strategic silence, although for a different reason, occurs when Maximilian describes his extended sojourn in New Harmony, Indiana. Forced to interrupt his travels by a serious indisposition, the Prince stayed the winter of 1832-33 in this intriguing community, and spent much of the time in the company of Thomas Say and Charles Alexandre Lesueur. Both Say and

²² This pavilion is the white structure with the tower in Figure 8, p. 76, Chapter Three. See also Maximilian's entry in his UFJ on July 19, 1832.

²³ See Maximilian's entry for July 22, 1833, in his UFJ. The Prince here speaks of a son of Joachim Murat (1767-1815), who was one of Napoleon's most important marshals and king of Naples from 1805 until 1817.

²⁴ It may be recalled that Maximilian served as an officer in the Prussian army. He took part in several battles against Napoleon, which culminated in the victory of the allies in 1814. For his accomplishments in these battles Maximilian was decorated with the Iron Cross by King Friedrich Wilhelm III (see Chapter Two, p. 32).



Figure 26: Joseph Bonaparte's Mansion near Bordentown (detail from Karl Bodmer's original watercolor) (Hunt and Gallagher, 1984).

Lesueur had come to New Harmony in 1824 as part of William Maclure's scientific entourage which joined Robert Owen's socialist experiment there. This intriguing experiment, however, was never directly mentioned in Maximilian's narrative. Instead, the Prince referred readers who wanted more information to the travel accounts of his acquaintance Duke Bernhard.²⁵

It is true, of course, that Owen's utopia had already collapsed in 1827, five years before Maximilian's arrival. It is hard to imagine, however, that the

²⁵ For a short discussion of New Harmony's history see Chapter Three, pp. 93-98.

Prince, who in general was very curious about planned idealist communities,²⁶ did not have the opportunity to learn more about New Harmony's socialist background. Maximilian, Say, and Lesueur spent endless hours during the winter sharing tobacco and stories in front of a fireplace. There must have been times when the three naturalists (an American, a Frenchman, and a German) tired of discussing natural history and instead touched upon this other topic. However, the Prince never mentioned any such discussions in his travel accounts and offered no additional information whatsoever in regard to the town's history. This strategic silence in Maximilian's narrative can be explained by his societal position.

Ever since the French Revolution, life for the European aristocracy had been in constant turmoil. In 1830, only two years before the Prince traveled to North America, the July Revolution in France once again had encouraged liberals to hope for general social reforms throughout Europe. Consequently, it is not too surprising that Maximilian, a member of the threatened, conservative aristocracy, was not keen on reporting aspects of a socialist experiment (even if it had failed). Such a report essentially would have questioned his own status (and that of his potential subscribers) and might have poured oil on a simmering fire back home. It is also possible, of course,

²⁶ Maximilian, for example, visited the Moravian settlement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and the Harmonists in Economy, Pennsylvania (see Chapter Three).

that the Prince as an aristocrat simply avoided this topic even in his fireside discussions. His journal entries only briefly mention Owen's "unique religious and philanthropic views" and the "community that would own everything in common."²⁷ In any regard, despite a five-month stay in New Harmony, Maximilian's published travel accounts remained silent about its socialist history.

Whereas the aforementioned examples of strategic silences were mainly caused by sociopolitical concerns, other situations existed where the Prince cut out parts of a story for personal and ethical reasons. During his travels, for instance, Maximilian had the chance to form opinions on the relative abilities of a variety of American-based naturalists. In his field journals Thomas Say²⁸ and Thomas Nuttall²⁹ received good grades, for example ("Thomas Say is certainly a very modest, conscientious, and well-informed man; and as a zoologist he seems to me to be the leading one Nuttall is a well-informed young man, his merits well-known."), while Richard Harlan³⁰ and Constantine Samuel Rafinesque³¹ were viewed very critically ("Harlan is a superficial compiler. Rafinesque seems to be more of a charlatan, who tries

²⁷ See Maximilian's entry for October 29, 1832, in his UFJ.

²⁸ For information on Thomas Say see Chapter Three, p. 95, footnote 103.

²⁹ Nuttall was an English naturalist (1786-1859) who became best known for discoveries of North American plants (*The Genera of North American Plants*, 1818). He also studied ornithology (*Manual of the Ornithology of the United States*, 1832).

³⁰ For information on Richard Harlan see Chapter Three, p. 179, footnote 324.

³¹ Rafinesque was a controversial naturalist (1783-1840) who made contributions to the fields of botany and ichthyology (the study of fish).

to make himself important by means of his new genera and species.”).³²

When he published his travel accounts, the Prince included praise for the accomplishments of respected colleagues, but he generally avoided criticizing others.³³ If he found himself in a situation where the actual work of a fellow naturalist needed correction, he did so very cautiously:

When, here and there, I detected some deviations from Mr. Gallatin's³⁴ vocabularies, it was my duty to record them in order to aid investigation and come nearer to the truth. The fault-finding spirit would certainly never prompt me to this³⁵

Maximilian's modesty as a truth-seeking individual, who did not care much about badmouthing colleagues, is also displayed in regard to George Catlin's paintings. Twice the Prince had the chance to inspect a selection of Catlin's works in St. Louis. Even though he apparently did not like them very much, he initially decided to keep the criticism to himself. Only a few years later, when Catlin published his *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, did the Prince break his silence because he felt a need to correct errors.³⁶

³² See Maximilian's entry for January 11, 1833, in his UFJ.

³³ An exception was Maximilian's criticism of Rafinesque (see Chapter Three, p. 102).

³⁴ Maximilian refers here to the multi talented Albert Gallatin (1761-1849), who was Secretary of the Treasury from 1801 until 1804, and who was also known for his studies of Native American tribes. In 1842 Gallatin founded the American Ethnological Society of New York, which earned him the title of "father of ethnology" in the United States.

³⁵ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 207; Wied, vol. 2, p. 463.

³⁶ See Chapter Three, p. 173.

A final example of a strategic silence is displayed in Maximilian's descriptions of the American Fur Company. Based on his observations in the Indian Territory,³⁷ one should think that the Prince had reasons enough to criticize John Jacob Astor's enterprise, despite his fascination with the success story of a famous German immigrant. Maximilian certainly knew about the importance of buffalo and deer for Indian subsistence economies, and he repeatedly described "scenes of destruction" caused by the fur trade. Reckless killings had produced not only "animal bones scattered throughout the prairie," but also a lack of game along sections of the Missouri River. Thus, the Prince simultaneously observed a growing dependence of indigenous peoples on European goods and the first signs of a deterioration of their culture. Still, however, Maximilian opted for silence instead of criticism.

This time, I feel that the Prince's quiescence was caused by his "code of honor." As I alluded to earlier, he was not only well acquainted with the Astor family (especially with William Backhouse Astor, the second-eldest son of the dynasty), but he also depended heavily on their company's infrastructure on the upper Missouri. Moreover, when the Prince fell seriously ill in March of 1834, the employees of the American Fur Company were vital to his recovery. Thus, speaking out against his patron and friends clearly

³⁷ See my discussion in Chapter Three, pp. 125-131.

would have violated Maximilian's notion of loyalty. Readers are consequently forced to read "between the lines" and to essentially draw their own conclusions about the fur trade from the scattered observations the Prince felt willing to report.³⁸

The Ideological Landscapes

Whatever the varied motives for the moments of strategic silence in Maximilian's narrative, there can be no doubt that the image he presented to the European audience was carefully edited and, at times, considerably modified. Thus, readers of his travel accounts received not only a severely shortened version of the mind-numbing detail of all the Linnaean landscapes in his journal entries, but also a selection of human-oriented material that was consciously shaped to the romantic taste of the time period and presented in a sociopolitically acceptable form. In addition to these restrictions, there also exists a third important filter in Maximilian's narrated version of the United States, what I call the ideological landscapes. This layer shows among other things a strong concern for the noble savage and a general sense of the *otherness* found in the "New World."

³⁸ At times Maximilian "defused" critical comments by hiding them in footnotes and endnotes.

In a sense all landscapes in Maximilian's America are ideological landscapes. Whether his discourse was dominated by his mission as an inquisitive naturalist or his desire to sell a *kosher* product to the upper class in Germany, his ideological framework determined the way in which he presented the material to his audience. However, the landscapes that I specifically label as ideological in this study are much more passive and subtle in their appearance than the two I have discussed so far. In this third layer the narrator neither simply describes what he "sees," nor edits or manipulates his travel accounts for sociopolitical reasons. Instead, he inadvertently provides clues to his cultural and intellectual background by writing down what comes to his mind. In other words, while the Prince consciously emphasized or withheld information in his strategic landscapes, and while he meticulously and mechanically described cultural and physical environments in his Linnaean landscapes, his ideological landscapes expose layers of his subconsciousness. Consequently, this aspect of the narrative is much more complex than those previously discussed and reveals a variety of intriguing and often competing ideologies.

As I have argued in Chapter Two, Maximilian's philosophical foundation was strongly rooted in the Enlightenment. However, the Prince also was deeply influenced by the Romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which effectively challenged the Enlightenment's

emphasis on reason and its disenchanted mode of describing and dissecting the world. In the sciences Romanticism found its expression in the nature philosophy of Lorenz Oken and Georg Büchner. Nature philosophers believed that man could transcend the limitations of reason if he sensuously and intuitively penetrated beyond surface phenomena. Underneath those surfaces one then could find the more profound truth of nature itself.³⁹

A break with the norms of rational analysis and its disenchanted descriptions of a physical world is clearly visible throughout Maximilian's travel accounts. Here the conflict between the naturalist and the nature philosopher is displayed through the use of particular language wherein words not only have the power to accurately describe visible characteristics but also to invoke highly romantic images.⁴⁰ And while endnotes in Maximilian's narrative are generally devoted to the discourse of a naturalist, the main text is interspersed with romantic notions.

When he assumes the guise of a nature philosopher the Prince does not describe the size of trees in feet or meters, but considers them "enormous" and their branches "colossal."⁴¹ Now "gigantic firs . . . rise in awful gloom" and "old decayed trees" hinder the traveler "from penetrating

³⁹ See my discussion on Maximilian's philosophical background in Chapter Two, pp. 51-55.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the importance of language in the construction of places see, for example, Yi-Fu Tuan, "Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81 (1991): 684-696.

⁴¹ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 165; Wied, vol. 1, p. 168.

farther. . . into a {bear} wilderness” where the {“cry of the black crow”} can be heard and where {“long braids of moss hang from the branches of old firs.”}⁴² At another time rock formations on the upper Missouri turn into Gothic chapels and French gardens,⁴³ and the Prince is lost in the contemplation of these {“marvelous figures”} which pass his eyes “as in a dream.”⁴⁴ Then again, indigenous peoples appear “martial-looking,” “handsome,” “robust,” and they are dressed in “highly original, graceful, and characteristic costumes.” In addition, the Indians turn into the perfect embodiment of the noble savage (Maximilian’s “children of nature” or *Naturkinder*) when he encounters them as strong, confident and independent people, without any signs of acculturation.⁴⁵ Clearly, this language is not that of an objective naturalist, but rather that of a deeply enchanted observer whose narrative is transformed by a romantic discourse.

In certain situations the romanticism in Maximilian’s narrative approaches the stage of pure fiction. Mystical sea serpents are included in his descriptions of the transatlantic voyage, even though the Prince knows they don’t exist.⁴⁶ Primeval forests in the remote Pocono Mountains become the

⁴² Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 103-104; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 89-90.

⁴³ Thwaites, vol. 23, pp. 81-82; Wied, vol. 1, p. 537.

⁴⁴ Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 172; Wied, vol. 2, p. 6.

⁴⁵ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 359-360; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 411-412.

⁴⁶ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 40; Wied, vol. 1, p. 6. See also p. 63, Chapter Three. This sea serpent also appears in Maximilian’s UFJ, although at a later point. See his entry for February 2, 1833.

fictional stage for bands of robbers,⁴⁷ and some mourning women he observes at a funeral procession in Reading, Pennsylvania, turn into “Amazons.”⁴⁸ Especially Native Americans, though, stimulate Maximilian’s fantasy. Early on “savage-looking” peasants in the woods near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, play substitute for the missing Native American element.⁴⁹ Later, willow bushes along the lower Missouri turn into potential hideouts for “ambushing Indians,” even though the travelers had not yet entered the Indian Territory.⁵⁰ Thus, this layer in Maximilian’s narrative is miles away from the objective truth of an enlightened naturalist and exposes a fascinating dimension of his travel accounts.

Although the Native American is the most important icon of Maximilian’s romantic America, it is interesting to notice that not every noble savage makes the cut in his narrative. The Prince, for example, was clearly annoyed whenever he encountered indigenous peoples wearing uniforms from the American Fur Company rather than their “original costumes.”⁵¹ And even when they were dressed in their traditional regalia, it had to be their finest attire to satisfy Maximilian’s expectations:

⁴⁷ Wied, vol. 1, p. 88. See also p. 82, Chapter Three, and Maximilian’s entry for August 29, 1832, in his UFJ.

⁴⁸ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 130; Wied, vol. 1, p. 123. See also pp. 92, Chapter Three, and Maximilian’s entry for September 17, 1832.

⁴⁹ Thwaites, vol. 22, pp. 113-114; Wied, vol. 1, pp. 100-101. See also pp. 82-83, Chapter Three.

⁵⁰ Wied, vol. 1, p. 262. See also p. 122, Chapter Three.

⁵¹ See Chapter Three, p. 154.

The old Middle Bull had a venerable look He promised to sit for his portrait, which we did in the sequel, *unhappily not in his handsome dress, but in his everyday clothes* [emphasis added].⁵²

Mató-Tópe paid us a visit in a very strange costume; his head-dress was much more suitable for an old woman than for a warrior. His head was bound round with a strip of wolf's skin, the long hairs of which stood on end, and which hang down behind.⁵³

In other words, the Prince had a stereotypical image of a Native American on his mind, which influenced his selection and representation of indigenous peoples throughout his travel accounts. It is telling of this predilection, that, with the exception of one portrait (see Figure 27) and one individual in a scene near Fort Clark (see Figure 5, p. 44), no Indian is depicted in anything but his or her “traditional costume,” and more often than not, they are shown in their most formal and impressive attire. These images, in turn, reinforced and informed the existing stereotypes of the *Indianer* in Germany, when Maximilian published his travel accounts a few years later.

Although this Romanticism constitutes the most visible aspect of Maximilian's ideological landscapes, it is not the only voice that informs and transforms his representations of America. His patriarchal *Weltanschauung*,

⁵² Thwaites, vol. 23, p. 158; Wied, vol. 1, p. 621.

⁵³ Thwaites, vol. 24, p. 72; Wied, vol. 2, p. 307.



Figure 27: Addih-Hiddisch, a Hidatsa Chief (detail from a drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41). Note the hat.

for instance, has a significant influence on the treatment of women in his narrative. The Prince came from a society where the fair sex (*das schöne Geschlecht*) was traditionally confined to the raising of children, the organization of households, and occasional church activities. This background gave him not only a strong predisposition toward their “traditional roles,” but also, more often than not, a tendency to ignore them altogether.⁵⁴

Given his era and circumstances, the general neglect of the female

⁵⁴ The only exception is his repeated ridicule of their fashion frenzy. See Chapter Three, pp. 69-70.

gender in Maximilian's travel accounts should perhaps not be too surprising. After all, why should a patriarch (even if he was a naturalist) pay attention to women and such things as kitchen work and the raising of children? Although this rationale might be acceptable for Maximilian's European-American landscapes (which must have looked quite familiar to him in regard to gender roles) it is considerably less applicable for his descriptions of Native America. Here the Prince not only encounters peoples who are very different from his own, but he also has the declared objective to study their societies. But here, it seems, Maximilian's patriarchal *Weltanschauung* interferes with his Linnaean discourse. Instead of starting with a blank page in his narrative, the Prince's ideological framework predetermines his observations.

A patriarchal discourse has two important consequences for Maximilian's Native America. First, both the Prince and his hired painter generally ignore Indian women in their representations. As I alluded to earlier,⁵⁵ whereas Bodmer's visual documentation of the northern plains Indians includes dozens of portraits of Indian men (most identified by their names), only six portraits of Indian women appear (all of whom remain anonymous). Likewise, the Prince, after short descriptions of the physical characteristics and material culture of the Indian women, quickly moved on to concentrate on the "Indian patriarch." His discourse, then, individualizes the

⁵⁵ See Chapter Three, pp. 134-135.

Indian males while it turns the females into objects, wherein “physical aspects” (anatomy, clothing) are more important than the person.

Second, a patriarchal discourse also leads to Maximilian’s failure to understand (and describe) the significance and role of women in Indian societies. In comparison to the European society of the early nineteenth century, the Indian women’s position was much more powerful and respected in their communities. None of the elaborate native ceremonies, like the *O-kee-pa* I mentioned in Chapter Three,⁵⁶ would have been possible without the support of women. In addition, the European concept of “dependents” (i.e. wives and children) did not exist in Native American societies. The fact that every newborn child of the Mandan “belonged to the mother’s household, her mother’s lineage, and her clan”⁵⁷ completely escaped the purview of our conscientious but patriarchal naturalist.

Maximilian’s representation of Indian women points to still another important aspect of his ideological landscapes--his ethnocentricity. His descriptions of the native women, for example, are generally negative because of his European “ideal of beauty.” Thus, with very few exceptions, he simply considers Indian women to be “ugly” which, in turn, must have further increased his tendency to ignore them. His disapproval of their appearance

⁵⁶ See p. 135.

⁵⁷ Virginia Bergman Peters, *Women of the Earth Lodges--Tribal Life on the Plains* (North Haven, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1995), quotation on page 76.

even goes so far that, at one point, he makes comments on the physical improvement of half-breed children who are products of their mother's intercourse with European men.⁵⁸

In the context of beauty, though, it is important to notice an intriguing conflict between two competing discourses in Maximilian's narrative--his ethnocentricity and his romanticism. Less than three weeks before the travelers returned to Europe, the Prince visited the highly acculturated Tuscarora Indians near Buffalo, New York. Here Maximilian disappointedly observed that there was "less originality among them" and that "[t]heir features, color and hair seem to {have suffered . . . from} their intercourse with the Whites."⁵⁹ Thus the same intercourse which he said had led to a physical improvement of half-breed children in the Indian Territory, now prompts a loss of their original, noble physiognomy. In other words, while the ethnocentrist prefers the "more agreeable features" of half-breed children in the Indian Territory because of his European ideal of beauty, on the eastern seaboard the melancholic romanticist longs for the "original inhabitants" and their characteristic features.

Maximilian's ethnocentric discourse, however, is not restricted to women. He generally considered Indian men lazy, for instance, because he observed and experienced them in their respective villages and not out on the

⁵⁸ See Chapter Three, pp. 133-134.

range. "The men lead a very indolent life; for, besides the chase and war, their only occupations are eating, smoking, sleeping and making their weapons."⁶⁰ Clearly, the Prince did not understand the full extent of the men's work, which, according to contemporary scholars, was as important to the well-being of their communities as the hard labor of women. As the geographer David Wishart has written recently:

[Indian] men were responsible for hunting, defensive and aggressive warfare, manufacture of weapons, and nearly all society-wide political and religious operations. The division of labor had some flexibility, and men would help with heavy work, such as lodge construction, and there were many instances of women helping defend the village. The complementary nature of the roles [of men and women], and the high status that went with being a skilled farmer as well as successful hunter, was missed by the early nineteenth-century observers.⁶¹

Moreover, that Indian men often paid a high price for their "indolent life" as hunters and warriors also escaped our ethnocentric naturalist, even though he noted that the Omaha, for example, had "but few vigorous young men among them" because of warfare and disease.⁶²

Maximilian's ethnocentricity also influenced his representations of

⁵⁹ Thwaites, vol. 24, pp. 175-176; Wied, vol. 2, p. 407.

⁶⁰ Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 327; Wied, vol. 1, p. 361.

⁶¹ David Wishart, "The Roles and Status of Men and Women in Nineteenth Century Omaha and Pawnee Societies: Postmodernist Uncertainties and Empirical Evidence." *American Indian Quarterly* 19 (1995): 509-518, quotation on page 515.

⁶² Thwaites, vol. 22, p. 274; Wied, vol. 1, p. 301.

material culture, music, and mythology of the indigenous peoples.⁶³ Thus, to the European taste, buffalo robes were painted “in a rude, {child-like} style.” The flute playing of an Indian man sounded like “a wretched piece of {children’s} music,” the singing of women appeared like a {“pitiful caterwaul”}, and their dancing resembled the waddling of ducks. Moreover, the Prince considered the mythology of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and other tribes “extreme[ly] silly” and “childish,” and, in general, he described the Indians as being “full of prejudice and superstition.” This bias inhibited Maximilian’s ability to objectively describe the observed native cultures. Consequently, the reader of his travel accounts never learns what Indian flute playing, singing, or dancing really was like. Instead, the Prince’s discourse effectively distances the European from the Native American, creating the classic *other* culture, which, in his mind, was not only different but subordinate to his own.

Maximilian’s reactions to matters of sexuality are just as intriguing and, again, reveal the multifaceted design of his narrative. First, the Prince repeatedly voiced his moral and, thus, ethnocentric condemnation of the northern plains tribes because of the occurrence of Bardaches, homosexuality, ceremonial intercourse, and the perceived general “licentiousness” of their women.⁶⁴ Second, and despite these moral concerns, the Prince, as the true Linnaean ambassador, still felt obliged to report even

⁶³ See my discussion in Chapter Three, pp. 165-167.

the sexually explicit aspects of his journey to his learned audience. However, in order to defuse material that would be considered taboo in Germany, he described these somewhat delicate issues in Latin, so that only very few could read and understand it.⁶⁵

Readers might expect that the Prince would have followed his strategy of translating and, thus, obscuring sexually explicit (or at least suggestive) material uniformly throughout his travel accounts. However, one occasionally runs into passages like the following, which were not disguised in Latin:

{The female gender, especially the younger women, have nice complexions; they were offered to us for Whiskey and other things.}⁶⁶

When the ceremony had continued a couple hours, the women began to act their part. A woman approached her husband, gave him her girdle and under garment, so that she had nothing on under her robe; she then went up to one of the most distinguished men, passed her hand over his arm, from the shoulder downwards, and then withdrew slowly from the lodge. The person so summoned follows her to a solitary place in the forest; he may then buy himself off by presents, which, however, few Indians do. . . . This festival always continues for four successive nights, and . . . the rioting and noise continued uninterruptedly throughout the night.⁶⁷

One has to wonder, then, why Maximilian elsewhere bothered with translating sections into Latin, when just a few pages later his text leaves hardly anything

⁶⁴ See my discussion in Chapter Three, pp. 167-168.

⁶⁵ See Chapter Three, p. 168, footnote 300.

⁶⁶ Wied, vol. 1, p. 531.

⁶⁷ Thwaites, vol. 24, pp. 30-31; Wied, vol. 2, p. 266.

to the fantasy of his (male) subscribers. Unfortunately, the Prince's travel accounts offer us no solid clues to answer this question. Perhaps this *otherness* of the Indian sexuality, which the Prince condemned throughout his narrative and which he at times obscured, also was attractive to him. Whether the occasional inclusion of eroticism in Maximilian's travel accounts was a conscious decision or caused by his hidden desires as a male observer must remain a matter of speculation.

In sum, it must become clear that none of the landscapes discussed in this chapter stand by themselves. Instead, Prince Maximilian's America presents an interpolation of many competing discourses and landscapes, which at times overlap, challenge, and inform one other. The foundation of the narrative, perhaps, are the Linnaean landscapes, just as the Enlightenment was the basis for Maximilian's *Weltanschauung*. However, both the active intervention of the Prince as an editor (as a response to sociopolitical pressures in his strategic landscapes) and his more unconscious negotiation of America due to a variety of concealed ideologies (as displayed in his romantic, ethnocentric, and patriarchal discourses in his ideological landscapes) had a significant influence on the final product that was presented to European audiences. The deconstruction of Maximilian's travel accounts, thus, reveals the complexity of the narrator and his creation alike.

Chapter 5

Concluding Remarks

All narratives and descriptions contain at least interpretive and explanatory stratagems, for these are built into language itself. [A narrative] . . . a human experience . . . is almost always ambiguous and complex.¹

[H]istorical representation is selective because the historian has no direct access to past reality but only to relics of evidence which cannot be representative of all that went on. Historical representation is also selective and subjective because facts are selected from the evidence with questions already in mind and many other valid facts which another historian, in another time or place, might have used are left untouched. And historical representation is subjective because the combining of facts into a narrative is not governed by a formula but achieved through countless idiosyncratic decisions by the scholar.²

As I conclude this dissertation, it seems appropriate to add a caution to my analysis of Prince Maximilian's travel accounts. Just as the Prince negotiated *his* America as a result of various competing discourses, this dissertation is the consequence of one individual's work, based on a unique educational and cultural background. In other words, another Ph.D. candidate with the same material and research goal as mine (but with a dissimilar upbringing and experience) would most certainly have told a different story because

¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, "Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81 (1991): 684-696, quotation on p. 686.

² David Wishart, "The Selectivity of Historical Representation." *Journal of Historical Geography* 23 (1997): 111-118, quotation on pp. 115-116.

subjectivity (and creativity) always permeates our writings whether we are members of the “hard” sciences or the “soft” humanities. In the end, to be human also means to be subjective. The recognition of this fact is frightening to some people and leads them to a reluctance to *do* poststructural analyses. I prefer to see it as an emancipation from the slavery of a nonexistent objectivity.³

When Prince Maximilian traveled through the United States in 1832-34, he plainly did not dissect the world around him according to a Linnaean *Weltanschauung*. Although some scholars want us to believe that he was a “meticulous observer” who always viewed the landscapes he encountered with “unreserved objectivity,”⁴ his descriptions were undoubtedly colored and skewed by his points of view as a romanticist, ethnocentrist, aristocrat, male, and former Prussian officer.

This dissertation has attempted to deconstruct Prince Maximilian’s travel accounts to look beyond their façade and to unveil their hidden layers of meaning. Through an identification of moments of quiescence and proliferation in the Prince’s narrative it becomes clear that he employed three distinct voices to describe his North American experience (Figure 28). In his

³ Wishart, 1997.

⁴ See Chapter Three, p. 57.

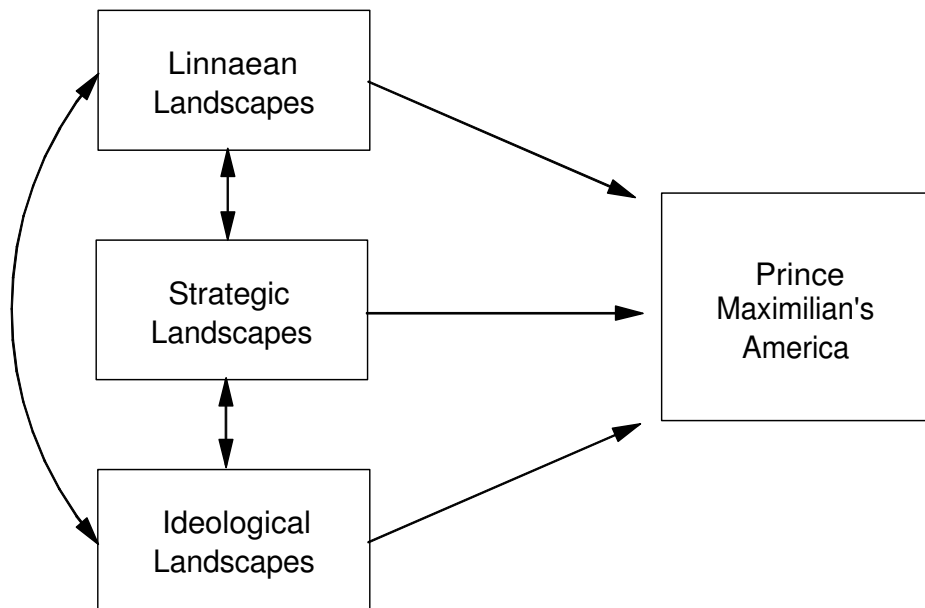


Figure 28: Voices of a Narrative

Linnaean mode landscape description was dominated by his mission as a naturalist, and he systematically and almost mechanically reported on the cultural and physical environments he encountered. His strategic landscapes, in contrast, were influenced by his desire to sell an inspiring and sociopolitically acceptable product to European audiences, which necessitated a certain amount of editing and even invention. Finally, his ideological landscapes exposed a more subtle and unconscious negotiation of America, pointing to a variety of concealed ideologies that included romanticism and ethnocentrism.

Perhaps the best example for the complex total design of Prince Maximilian's narrative can be found in the cartouche of the travel map that accompanied his published travel accounts (Figure 29). Here we see a composite of his North American experience which beautifully reveals Maximilian's overlapping Linnaean, strategic, and ideological perspectives.

In the far distance and at the center of the image sits the foaming Niagara Falls, the only feature from the eastern part of the United States to be included. Nowhere are there any signs of the European civilization--no cities, no settlers, no farmsteads, no industries, no canals, and no railroads. Also in the distance, and not far away from Niagara Falls, imaginary earthlodges of the Mandan or Hidatsa are standing on a cliff, some tepees are nearby, a group of Indians is chasing buffaloes across the prairie, and some deer stand at the edge of a forest.

In the foreground the scene is framed by Maximilian's beloved forest biome. To the left a group of Indians is descending a hillside. Some are engaged in conversation, while others are carefully watching the buffalo chase in the distance or perhaps scanning the plains for potential enemies. At the center a snake on a rotten tree trunk, a beaver and its den, and even a group of wolves take the stage. To the right and not far away from an Indian burial scaffold a bear is leaving the thickets of a forest in search of food or



Figure 29: Prince Maximilian's America (drawing by Karl Bodmer) (Wied, 1839-41)

water. All of these facets offer an intriguing mosaic of what I call Prince Maximilian's America.

In the cartouche Maximilian's Linnaean landscapes are represented by a peculiar sample of North America's flora and fauna, its indigenous culture, and its physical environments. The selection of these particular Linnaean objects not only gives testimony to his work as a naturalist, but also points to the strategic and ideological qualities of the narrative. Apparently the purpose of this cartouche (as of the travel accounts) was not to show a representative cross-section of his North American experience, but an image that (intentionally or not) focused on the western landscapes and evoked a highly romantic and adventurous atmosphere. There are no signs here of the European civilization he encountered (not even New Harmony) because the Prince felt that his audience was more interested in the natural history and indigenous population of the "New World." All the Indians depicted are men and dressed in their traditional costumes, and they show no signs of disease or acculturation. The wildlife that animates the scenery is exotic as well and most certainly watered the mouths of his fellow hunters in Europe. No signs of the American Fur Company and the fur trade can be seen, and nothing hints at problems such as overhunting or deforestation. Thus, the image that

Maximilian presented to his European audiences, the America that he

created through the mesh of his Linnaean, strategic, and ideological filters, is that of a grandiose and exotic environment. It is an *other* world, where indigenous people and nature live in a state of harmony.

Although I have made the distinction between Linnaean, strategic, and ideological landscapes throughout this dissertation as a means to deconstruct Maximilian's narrative, a clear differentiation between the three is not always possible. How can I, for instance, really *know* that the Prince's silence about the American Fur Company's impact on indigenous subsistence economies on the upper Missouri was not simply part of a self-delusion. If this were so the instance would be part of his ideological rather than his strategic landscapes. Perhaps he simply *wanted* to believe that indigenous peoples like the Mandan and Hidatsa still lived a pure and uncontaminated way of life and this belief effectively hindered him in addressing the realities and consequences of the fur trade. Even though these and other possible questions can never be completely answered, I believe that my analysis of Prince Maximilian's America has successfully opened an avenue into the inner worlds of a man and his time.⁵

⁵ James Duncan, "Sites of Representation: Place, Time, and the Discourse of the Other," in *Place, Culture, Representation*, James Duncan and David Ley (eds.) (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 39-56.

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Appendix A

Traces in the Nomenclature of Flora and Fauna

The following taxonomic entities are (in one way or another) connected with Prince Maximilian's accomplishments as a naturalist. These entities came to my attention as I conducted my research. Although this list is by no means complete, I felt it would be worthwhile to append them to my dissertation. The Prince did not care much about naming plants and animals after himself, but fellow naturalists often bestowed this honor upon him. Maximilian, for example, never traveled to West Africa. Still, a snake species found in this part of the world (*Polemon neuwiedi*) refers to him. In addition, it should be noted that not all "obvious" entities found in the literature are connected with Prince Maximilian. Quite a few, in fact, refer to the Bavarian King Maximilian I., who sponsored expeditions of naturalists like Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius (1794-1868) and Johann Baptist von Spix (1781-1826) to the Americas (e.g. *Maximiliana*).

In the first column I give the scientific name of each entity and (if available) the author who first published a description in parentheses (). In the second column (if available) additional information is given such as common names in quotation marks "" or some general idea on the type of flora and fauna in parentheses (). The third column places the described species of flora or fauna in their respective hemisphere.

Flowering plants:

<i>Helianthus maximilianii</i> (Schrader)	"Maximilian (or Narrow-Leaved) Sunflower"	North America
<i>Maxillaria neuwiedii</i> (Reichenbach)	(Orchid)	South America
<i>Neuwiedia</i> (Blume)	(Orchid)	South America
<i>Neowedia</i> (Schrader)	(Vine)	South America
<i>Sarcobatus</i> (Nees)	(Shrub)	North America

Mammals:

<i>Callithrix kuhli</i> (Wied)	"Wied's Black Tufted-Ear Marmoset"	South America
<i>Centronycteris maximiliani</i>	"Shaggy-Haired Bat"	South America
<i>Diclidurus albus</i> (Wied)	"White Bat"	South America
<i>Leonthopithecus chrysomelas</i>	"Wied's Tamarin"	South America
<i>Leopardus Wiedii</i>	"Margay"	South America
<i>Onychomys leucogaster</i> (Wied)	"Northern Grasshopper Mouse"	North America
<i>Wiedomys pyrrhorhinus</i> (Wied)	"Red-Nosed (or Caatinga) Mouse"	South America

Reptiles:

<i>Bothrops neuwiedi</i>	"Neuwied's Lancehead" (Snake)	South America
<i>Hydromedusa maximiliani</i>	"Maximilian's Snake-Necked Turtle"	North America
<i>Hyla crepitans</i> (Wied)	(Frog)	South America
<i>Hyla crucifer</i> (Wied)	"Spring Peeper" (Frog)	North America
<i>Hyla elegans</i> (Wied)	(Frog)	South America
<i>Hyla faber</i> (Wied)	(Frog)	South America
<i>Micrablepharus maximiliani</i>	(Lizard)	South America
<i>Polemon neuwiedi</i>	(Snake)	West Africa
<i>Pseudacris triseriata</i> (Wied)	"Western Chorus Frog"	North America
<i>Pseudemys scripta elegans</i> (Wied)	"Red-Eared Slider" (Turtle)	North America
<i>Pseudoboa neuwiedi</i>	"False Coral Snake"	South America
<i>Sibynomorphus neuwiedi</i>	(Snake)	South America

Birds:

Gymnorhinis cyanocephalus (Wied)

“Maximilian's (or Pinyon) Jay”

North America

Myiarchus tyrannulus

“Wied's Crested Flycatcher”

North America

Neopelma aurifrons

“Wied's Tyrant Manakin”

South America

Pionus maximiliani

“Maximilian's (or Scaly-Headed) Parrot”

South America

Other entities:

Mesosaurus maximiliani (Goldfuss)

(Fossil)

North America

Appendix B

Maximilian's Library

The following bibliography presents a small fraction of Prince Maximilian's library which built an important cornerstone for his research in the Americas. According to Schmidt (1985) his library consisted of 3,229 volumes at the time of his death. Note that in most cases information on the publishers of the listed works is missing. This information was not given by Schmidt.

Allen, Paul, *History of the Expedition under the Command of Cpt. Lewis and Clark to the Sources of the Missouri ...*, vol. 1-2 (Philadelphia, 1814).

Audubon, John J., *The Birds of America from Drawings made in the United States and their Territory* (New York, 1840-44).

Barton, Benjamin S., *New Views of the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America* (Philadelphia, 1798).

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(Not listed in Schmidt's publication, but Maximilian repeatedly referred to Bernhard's travel accounts in his diaries.)

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Appendix C

Maximilian's North American Itinerary

1832

July 4	Arrival in Boston (excursions to Charlestown and Cambridge)
July 8	En route to New York City via Providence, Rhode Islands
July 16	To Philadelphia
July 19	To Bordentown, New Jersey
August 23	From Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to Mauch Chunk (today's Jim Thorpe)
September 26	To Pittsburgh
October 19	Arrival at New Harmony, Indiana

1833

March 16	From New Harmony to Mount Vernon on the Ohio River
March 24	Arrival at St. Louis, Missouri
April 10	To the upper Missouri on the steamer <i>Yellow Stone</i>
April 22	Arrival at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
May 4	Bellevue, Nebraska
May 30	Fort Pierre, South Dakota; continuation on the <i>Assiniboine</i>
June 18	Fort Clark, North Dakota
June 24	Fort Union, North Dakota
August 9	Arrival at Fort McKenzie
November 8	Back at Fort Clark for the winter of 1833/34

1834

April 18	From Fort Clark down the Missouri River to St. Louis
June 3	Departure from St. Louis for the East Coast (via the Ohio River (Cincinnati), the Ohio Canal (Portsmouth), and Lake Erie to Buffalo, New York, and the Niagara Falls)
June 28	From the Niagara Falls via the Erie canal and the Hudson River (Albany) back to New York City
July 16	En route to Europe

Appendix D

Maximilian's Acceptance to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia in 1834

