Appendix 6: Adventure Narratives and *Our Cousins in Ohio*

The adventure story was, at this time, emerging as an important sub-genre of children's literature. Although *Our Cousins in Ohio* is more a work of domestic fiction, a narrative of settlement more than of exploration, it participates in important ways in the adventure genre. In *The Children's Year*, the older brother reads aloud from Captain Marryat's *Settlers in Canada* (1844) and *Masterman Ready: or the Wreck of the Pacific* (1841) and fantasizes about emigrating to America, "to have all kinds of difficulties and hard work to do, and to be in danger from Indians" (12). As this book's sequel, *Our Cousins* offered the promise of just such an adventure. Vicariously, if not in practice, the children of *Our Cousins* are entirely wrapped in the ethos of adventure. Their fireside reading includes John Charles Frémont's *Narrative of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842*; Charles Waterton's *Wanderings in South America*; John McClung's *Sketches of Western Adventure, Containing an Account of the Most Interesting Incidents Connected with the Settlement of the West, from 1755 to 1794*. Cousin Israel Hopper tells of his journey down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, where he sees alligators and feasts on exotic fruits. From their comfortably settled perspective near Cincinnati, the family are surrounded by movement and adventure: formerly enslaved people moving north, westward migrants in their wagons, displaced Native Americans moving west to new homelands or east to Washington with petitions for redress, soldiers on their way to war in Mexico. It is indeed an "interesting contrast" that Gillian Avery notes between "the first [book] showing the sheltered, cosseted lives led by her own children, and the second…describing the sturdy independence expected of young Americans" (263).

From Charles Waterton, *Wanderings in South America, the North-West of the United States, and the Antilles, in the Years 1812, 1816, 1820, & 1824* (London: B. Fellowes, 1828).

*In a letter to Mary Howitt sometime before leaving England, Alderson wrote enthusiastically about Waterton's work, with its "grandeur of effect" in depicting the "interminable wilds of South America of its grand and majestic forests its broad savannahs [sic] and its mighty rivers" (Ht/7/1/40, Correspondence of Mary Howitt [1799–1888], Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham). When the children find a black snake, Alderson writes that they 'went to fetch it a la Waterton (*Writing Home *326). Howitt further embellishes the incident in her telling of it, with a song as the children bring it home and a funeral for it afterward (92).*

There was a person making shingles, with twenty or thirty negroes, not far from Mibiri-hill. I had offered a reward to any of them who would find a good-sized snake in the forest, and come and let me know where it was. Often had these negroes looked for a large snake, and as often been disappointed.

One Sunday morning I met one of them in the forest, and asked him which way he was going: he said he was going towards Warratilla creek to hunt an armadillo; and he had his little dog with him. On coming back, about noon, the dog began to bark at the root of a large tree, which had been upset by the whirlwind, and was lying there in a gradual state of decay. The negro said, he thought his dog was barking at an acouri, which had probably taken refuge under the tree, and he went up with an intention to kill it; he there saw a snake, and hastened back to inform me of it.

The sun had just passed the meridian in a cloudless sky; there was scarcely a bird to be seen, for the winged inhabitants of the forest, as though overcome by heat, had retired to the thickest shade: all would have been like midnight silence, were it not for the shrill voice of the pi-pi-yo, every now and then resounded from a distant tree. I was sitting with a little Horace in my hand, on what had once been the steps which formerly led up to the now mouldering and dismantled building. The negro and his little dog came down the hill in haste, and I was soon informed that a snake had been discovered ; but it was a young one, called the Bush-master, a rare and poisonous snake.

I instantly rose up, and laying hold of the eight-foot lance, which was close by me, “Well then, Daddy,” said I, “we’ll go and have a look at the snake.” I was barefoot, with an old hat, and check shirt, and trowsers on, and a pair of braces to keep them up. The negro had his cutlass, and as we ascended the hill, another negro, armed with a cutlass, joined us, judging, from our pace, that there was something to do. The little dog came along with us, and when we had got about half a mile in the forest, the negro stopped, and pointed to the fallen tree: all was still and silent: I told the negroes not to stir from the place where they were, and keep the little dog in, and that I would go in and reconnoitre.

I advanced up to the place slow and cautious. The snake was well concealed, but at last I made him out; It was a Coulacanara, not poisonous, snake, but large enough to have crushed any of us to death. On measuring him afterwards, he was something more than fourteen feet long. This species of snake is very rare, and much thicker, in proportion to his length, than any other snake in the forest. A Coulacanara of fourteen feet in length is as thick as a common Boa of twenty-four. After skinning this snake I could easily get my head into his mouth, as the singular formation of the jaws admits of wonderful extension.

From John McClung, *Sketches of Western Adventure, Containing An Account of the Most Interesting Incidents Connected with the settlement of the West, from 1755 to 1794* (Cincinnati: U. P. James, 1839)

Reading aloud from 'the history [of] Big Foot & Little Foot: two Indian chiefs & their deadly encounters on the banks of the Ohio with one Adam Poe, an Irish settler' formed a memorable part of William Charles'('Willie' in OCO*) visit to the Evans's farm ('Colsonville' in* OCO*) (*Writing Home *447,* Our Cousins in Ohio *223).*

About the middle of July, 1782, seven Wyandots crossed the Ohio a few miles above Wheeling, and committed great depredations upon the southern shore, killing an old man whom they found alone in his cabin, and spreading terror throughout the neighborhood. Within a few hours after their retreat, eight men assembled from different parts of the small settlement and pursued the enemy with great expedition. Among the most active and efficient of the party were two brothers, Adam and Andrew Poe. Adam was particularly popular. In strength, action, and hardihood, he had no equal, being finely formed and inured to all the perils of the woods. They had not followed the trail far, before they became satisfied that the depredators were conducted by Big Foot, a renowned chief of the Wyandott tribe, who derived his name from the immense size of his feet.

His height considerably exceeded six feet, and his strength was represented as Herculean. He had also five brothers, but little inferior to himself in size and courage, and as they generally went in company, they were the terror of the whole country. Adam Poe was overjoyed at the idea of measuring his strength with that of so celebrated a chief, and urged the pursuit with a keenness which quickly brought him into the vicinity of the enemy. For the last few miles, the trail had led them up the southern bank of the Ohio, where the foot prints in the sand were deep and obvious, but when within a few hundred yards of the point at which the whites as well as the Indians were in the habit of crossing, it suddenly diverged from the stream, and stretched along a rocky ridge, forming an obtuse angle with its former direction.

Here Adam halted for a moment, and directed his brother and the other young men to follow the trail with proper caution, while he himself still adhered to the river path, which led

through clusters of willows directly to the point where he supposed the enemy to lie. Having examined the priming of his gun, he crept cautiously through the bushes, until he had a view of the point of embarcation. Here lay two canoes, empty and apparently deserted. Being satisfied, however, that the Indians were close at hand, he relaxed nothing of his vigilance, and quickly gained a jutting cliff, which hung immediately over the canoes. Hearing a low murmur below, he peered cautiously over, and beheld the object of his search. The gigantic Big Foot, lay below him in the shade of a willow, and was talking in a low deep tone to another warrior, who seemed a mere pigmy by his side.

Adam cautiously drew back, and cocked his gun. The mark was fair— the distance did not exceed twenty feet, and his aim was unerring. Raising his rifle slowly and cautiously, he took a steady aim at Big Foot's breast, and drew the trigger. His gun flashed. Both Indians sprung to their feet with a deep interjection of surprise, and for a single second all three stared upon each other. This inactivity, however, was soon over. Adam was too much hampered by the bushes to retreat, and setting his life upon a cast of the die, he sprung over the bush which had sheltered him, and summoning all his powers, leaped boldly down the precipice and alighted upon the breast of Big Foot with a shock which bore him to the earth.

At the moment of contact, Adam had also thrown his right arm around the neck of the smaller Indian, so that all three came to the earth together. At that moment a sharp firing was heard among the bushes above, announcing that the other parties were engaged, but the trio below were too busy to attend to any thing but themselves. Big Foot was for an instant stunned by the violence of the shock, and Adam was enabled to keep them both down. But the exertion necessary for that purpose was so great, that he had no leisure to use his knife. Big Foot quickly recovered, and without attempting to rise, wrapped his long arms around Adam's body, and pressed him to his breast with the crushing force of a Boa Constrictor! Adam, as we have already remarked, was a powerful man, and had seldom encountered his equal, but never had he yet felt an embrace like that of Big Foot.

He instantly relaxed his hold of the small Indian, who sprung to his feet. Big Foot then ordered him to run for his tomahawk which lay within ten steps, and kill the white man, while he held him in his arms. Adam, seeing his danger, struggled manfully to extricate himself from the

folds of the giant, but in vain. The lesser Indian approached with his uplifted tomahawk, but Adam watched him closely, and as he was about to strike, gave him a kick so sudden and violent, as to knock the tomahawk from his hand, and send him staggering back into the water. Big Foot uttered an exclamation in a tone of deep contempt at the failure of his companion, and raising his voice to its highest pitch, thundered out several words in the Indian tongue, which Adam could not understand, but supposed to be a direction for a second attack.

The lesser Indian now again approached, carefully shunning Adam's heels, and making many motions with his tomahawk, in order to deceive him as to the point where the blow would fall. This lasted for several seconds, until a thundering exclamation from Big Foot, compelled his companion to strike. Such was Adam's dexterity and vigilance, however, that he managed to receive the tomahawk in a glancing direction upon his left wrist, wounding him deeply but not disabling him. He now made a sudden and desperate effort to free himself from the arms of the giant and succeeded. Instantly snatching up a rifle (for the Indian could not venture to shoot for fear of hurting his companion) he shot the lesser Indian through the body.

But scarcely had he done so when Big Foot arose, and placing one hand upon his collar and the other upon his hip, pitched him ten feet into the air, as he himself would have pitched a child. Adam fell upon his back at the edge of the water, but before his antagonist could spring upon him, he was again upon his feet, and stung with rage at the idea of being handled so easily, he attacked his gigantic antagonist with a fury which for a time compensated for inferiority of strength. It was now a fair fist fight between them, for in the hurry of the struggle neither had leisure to draw their knives. Adam's superior activity and experience as a pugilist, gave him great advantage. The Indian struck awkwardly, and finding himself rapidly dropping to leeward, he closed with his antagonist, and again hurled him to the ground.

They quickly rolled into the river, and the struggle continued with unabated fury, each attempting to drown the other. The Indian being unused to such violent exertion, and having been much injured by the first shock in his stomach, was unable to exert the same powers which had given him such a decided superiority at first; and Adam, seizing him by the scalp lock, put his head under water, and held it there, until the faint struggles of the Indian induced him to

believe that he was drowned, when he relaxed his hold and attempted to draw his knife. The Indian, however, to use Adam's own expression, “had only been POSSUMING!”

He instantly regained his feet, and in his turn put his adversary under. In the struggle both were carried out into the current, beyond their depth, and each was compelled to relax his hold and swim for his life. There was still one loaded rifle upon the shore, and each swam hard in order to reach it, but the Indian proved the most expert swimmer, and Adam seeing that he should be too late, turned and swam out into the stream, intending to dive and thus frustrate his enemy's intention. At this instant, Andrew, having heard that his brother was alone in a struggle with two Indians, and in great danger, ran up hastily to the edge of the bank above in order to assist him. Another white man followed him closely, and seeing Adam in the river, covered with blood, and swimming rapidly from shore, mistook him for an Indian and fired upon him, wounding him dangerously in the shoulder.

Adam turned, and seeing his brother, called loudly upon him to “shoot the big Indian upon the shore.” Andrew's gun, however, was empty, having just been discharged. Fortunately, Big Foot had also seized the gun with which Adam had shot the lesser Indian, so that both were upon an equality. The contest now was who should load first. Big Foot poured in his powder first, and drawing his ram rod out of its sheath in too great a hurry, threw it into the river, and while he ran to recover it, Andrew gained an advantage. Still the Indian was but a second too late, for his gun was at his shoulder, when Andrew's ball entered his breast. The gun dropped from his hands and he fell forward upon his face upon the very margin of the river.

Andrew, now alarmed for his brother, who was scarcely able to swim, threw down his gun and rushed into the river in order to bring him ashore; but Adam, more intent upon securing the scalp of Big Foot as a trophy, than upon his own safety, called loudly upon his brother to leave him alone and scalp the big Indian, who was now endeavoring to roll himself into the water, from a romantic desire, peculiar to the Indian warrior, of securing his scalp from the enemy. Andrew, however, refused to obey, and insisted upon saving the living, before attending to the dead. Big Foot, in the mean time, had succeeded in reaching the deep water before he expired, and his body was borne off by the waves, without being stripped of the ornament and pride of an Indian warrior.

Not a man of the Indians had escaped. Five of Big Foot's brothers, the flower of the Wyandott nation, had accompanied him in the expedition, and all perished. It is said that the news of this calamity, threw the whole tribe into mourning. Their remarkable size, their courage, and their superior intelligence, gave them immense influence, which, greatly to their credit, was generally exerted on the side of humanity. Their powerful interposition, had saved many prisoners from the stake, and had given a milder character to the warfare of the Indians in that part of the country. A chief of the same name was alive in that part of the country so late as 1792, but whether a brother or son of Big Foot, is not known. Adam Poe recovered of his wounds, and lived many years after his memorable conflict; but never forgot the tremendous "hug" which he sustained in the arms of Big Foot.

From J. C. Fremont, *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842 and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1841-'44*. Washington: 1845.

As Howitt notes in Our Cousins*, 'Willy' was 'wholly absorbed' by Fremont's accounts of his western adventures (*Our Cousins *39). In one of his letters to his cousins, he wrote, 'I seemed to live amongst buffalos & Indians for many day after reading it' (*Writing Home *297-8). In spite of the cost of paper and postage, he copied extended extracts for inclusion in letters to cousin, including a portion of what is included in this appendix.*

At our evening camp, about sunset, three figures were discovered approaching, which our glasses made out to be Indians. They proved to be Cheyennes – two men, and a boy of thirteen. About a month since, they had left their people on the south fork of the river, some three hundred miles to the westward, and a party of only four in number had been to the Pawnee villages on a horse stealing excursion, from which they were returning unsuccessful. They were miserably mounted on wild horses from the Arkansas plains, and had no other weapons than bows and long spears; and had they been discovered by the Pawnees, could not, by any possibility, have escaped. They were mortified by their ill success, and said the Pawnees were cowards who shut up their horses in their lodges at night. I invited them to supper with me, and Randolph and the young Cheyenne, who had been eyeing each other suspiciously and curiously, soon became intimate friends. After supper we sat down on the grass, and I placed a sheet of paper between us, on which they traced rudely, but with a certain degree of relative truth, the water-courses of the country which lay between us and their villages, and of which I desired to have some information. Their companions, they told us, had taken a nearer route over the hills; but they had mounted one of the summits to spy out the country, whence they had caught a glimpse of our party, and, confident of good treatment at the hands of the whites, hastened to join company. Latitude of the camp 40° 39' 51".

We made the next morning sixteen miles. I remarked that the ground was covered in many places with an efflorescence of salt, and the plants were not numerous. In the bottoms was frequently seen *tradescantia*, and on the dry lenches [*sic*] were *carduus*, cactus, and *amorpha*. A high wind during the morning had increased to a violent gale from the northwest, which made our afternoon ride cold and unpleasant. We had the welcome sight of two buffaloes on one of the

large islands, and encamped at a clump of timber about seven miles from our noon halt, after a day's march of twenty-two miles.

The air was keen the next morning at sunrise, the thermometer standing at 44°, and it was sufficiently cold to make overcoats very comfortable. A few miles brought us into the midst of the buffalo, swarming in immense numbers over the plains, where they had left scarcely a blade of grass standing. Mr. Preuss, who was sketching at a little distance in the rear, had at first noted them as large groves of timber. In the sight of such a mass of life, the traveller feels a strange emotion of grandeur. We had heard from a distance a dull and confused murmuring, and, when we came in view of their dark masses, there was not one among us who did not feel his heart beat quicker. It was the early part of the day, when the herds are feeding; and everywhere they were in motion. Here and there a huge old bull was rolling in the grass, and clouds of dust rose in the air from various parts of the bands, each the scene of some obstinate fight. Indians and buffalo make the poetry and life of the prairie, and our camp was full of their exhilaration. In place of the quiet monotony of the march, relieved only by the cracking of the whip, and an '*avance donc! enfant de garce*!' shouts and songs resounded from every part of the line, and our evening camp was always the commencement of a feast, which terminated only with our departure on the following morning. At any time of the night might be seen pieces of the most delicate and choicest meat, roasting *en appolas*, on sticks around the fire, and the guard were never without company. With pleasant weather and no enemy to fear, an abundance of the most excellent meat, and no scarcity of bread or tobacco, they were enjoying the oasis of a voyageur's life. Three cows were killed to day. Kit Carson had shot one, and was continuing the chase in the midst of another herd, when his horse fell headlong, but sprang up and joined the flying band. Though considerably hurt, he had the good fortune to break no bones; and Maxwell, who was mounted on a fleet hunter, captured the runaway after a hard chase. He was on the point of shooting him, to avoid the loss of his bridle, (a handsomely mounted Spanish one,) when he found that his horse was able to come up with him. Animals are frequently lost in this way; and it is necessary to keep close watch over them, in the vicinity of the buffalo, in the midst of which t hey scour off to the plains, and are rarely retaken. One of our mules took a sudden freak into his head, and joined a neighboring band to-day. As we were not in a condition to lose horses, I sent several men in pursuit, and remained in camp, in the hope of recovering him; bu t lost the

afternoon to no purpose, as we did not see him again. Astronomical observations placed us in longitude 100° 05' 47", latitude 40° 49' 55".

July l. – Along our road to day the prairie bottom was more elevated and dry, and the hills which border the right side of the river higher, and more broken and picturesque in the outline. The country, too, was better timbered. As we were riding quietly along the bank, a grand herd of buffalo, some seven or eight hundred in number, came crowding up from the river, where they had been to drink, and commenced crossing the plain slowly, eating as they went. The wind was favorable; the coolness of the morning invited to exercise; the ground was apparently good, and the distance across the prairie (two or three miles) gave us a fine opportunity to charge them before they could get among the river hills. It was too fine a prospect for a chase to be lost; and, halting for a few moments, the hunters were brought up and saddled, and Kit Carson, Maxwell, and I started together. They were now somewhat less than half a mile distant, and we rode easily along until within about three hundred yards, when a sudden agitation, a wavering in the band, and a galloping to and fro of some which were scattered along the skirts, gave us the intimation that we were discovered. We started together at a hand [sic] gallop, riding steadily abreast of each other, and here the interest of the chase became so engrossingly intense, that we were sensible to nothing else. We were now closing upon them rapidly, and the front of the mass was already in rapid motion for the hills, and in a few seconds the movement had communicated itself to the whole herd.

A crowd of bulls, as usual, brought up the rear, and every now and then some of them faced about, and then dashed on after the band a short distance, and turned and looked again, as if more than half inclined to stand and fight. In a few moments, however, during which we had been quickening our pace, the rout was universal, and we were going over the ground like a hurricane. When at about thirty yards, we gave the usual shout, (the hunter's *pas de charge*,) and broke into the herd. We entered on the side, the mass giving way in every direction in their heedless course. Many of the bulls, less active and Jess fleet than the cows, paying no attention to the ground, and occupied solely with the hunter, were precipitated to the earth with great force, rolling over and over with the violence of the shock, and hardly distinguishable in the dust. We separated on entering, each singling out his game.

My horse was a trained hunter, famous in the west under the name of Proveau, and, with his eyes flashing, and the foam flying from his mouth, sprang on after the cow like a tiger. In a few moments he brought me alongside of her, and, rising in the stirrups, I fired at the distance of a yard, the ball entering at the termination of the long hair, and passing near the heart. She fell headlong at the report of the gun, and checking my horse, I looked around for my companions. A t a little distance, Kit was on the ground, engaged in tying his horse to the horns of a cow which he was preparing to cut up. Among the scattered bands, at some distance below, I caught a glimpse of Maxwell; and while I was looking, a light wreath of white smoke curled away from his gun, from which I was too far to hear the report. Nearer, and between me and the hills, towards which they were directing their course, was the body of the herd, and, giving my horse the rein, we dashed after them. A thick cloud of dust hung upon their rear, which filled my mouth and eyes, and nearly smothered me. In the midst of this I could see nothing, and the buffalo were not distinguishable until within thirty feet. They crowded together more densely still as I came upon them, and rushed along in such a compact body, that I could not obtain an entrance-the horse almost leaping upon them. In a few moments the mass divided to the right and left, the horns clattering with a noise heard above everything else, and my horse darted into the opening. Five or six bulls charged on us as we dashed along the line, but were left far behind; and, singling out a cow: I gave her my fire, but struck too high. She gave a tremendous leap, and scoured on swifter than before. I reined up my horse, and the band swept on like a torrent, and left the place quiet and clear. Our chase had led us into dangerous ground. A prairie-dog village, so thickly settled that there were three or four holes in every twenty yards square, occupied the whole bottom for nearly two miles in length. Looking around, I saw only one of the hunters, nearly out of sight, and the long dark line of our caravan crawling along, three or four miles distant. After a march of twenty-four miles, we encamped at nightfall, one mile and a half above the lower end of Brady's island. The breadth of this arm of the river was eight hundred and eighty yards, and the water nowhere two feet in depth. The island bears the name of a man killed on this spot some years ago. His party had encamped here, three in company, and one of the number went. off to hunt, leaving Brady and his companion together. These two had frequently quarrelled, and on the hunter's return he found Brady dead, and was told that he had shot himself accidentally. He was buried here on the bank; but, as usual, the wolves had tom him out, and some human bones that were lying on the ground we supposed were his. Troops of

wolves that were hanging on the skirts of the buffalo, kept up an uninterrupted howling during the night, venturing almost in to camp. In the morning, they were sitting at a short distance, barking, and impatiently waiting our departure to fall upon the bones.

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