

SOME LEVELS OF TRAGEDY IN THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

by

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One vogue among students of American literature for roughly a century has been to scoff at the works of James Fenimore Cooper, especially the five novels of the Leatherstocking series.¹ I heard the disgruntled complaints from my professors as an undergraduate student; heard them during my Ph.D. oral exams; hear them from my colleagues, and see them liberally sprinkled through scholarly articles. It is enough to say that many of these dismissals are justified; but many are not.

I quickly admit that when I include a Cooper novel in the reading list for a course, I offer it somewhat apologetically, with some embarrassment, for one cannot easily be serious, certainly not intellectually rigorous, with an author who is seen as a species of cosmic joke. However, I recently included The Last of the Mohicans in a reading list for a course in Native American Literature. My students came to the book after reading Stith Thompson's Tales of the North American Indians, Walter Dyk's Son of Old Man Hat, and John G. Neihardt's Black Elk Speaks. The day we met to begin our discussion of Cooper's book, I was, to say the least, surprised at my students' responses; in short, they found the book compelling and profound.

Since that day I have often puzzled over my students' enthusiasm and our subsequent discussion, a discussion which caused me to conclude that when The Last of the Mohicans is approached as a fully developed work of tragedy it does indeed become a profound and intellectually complex work of fiction.

Before one can approach the book as serious tragedy he must lay aside part of the critical baggage with which we moderns approach fiction. In our time we have been conditioned to approach a piece of discourse, fiction included, with a "sentence sense." If one approaches Cooper non-holistically, he is bound for disappointment, for Cooper cannot be read from sentence to sentence, nor in a logical linguistic ordering, because his sentences lack an essential clarity. His vision is, so to speak, not found in logical discourse, but must be approached from scene to scene.² Cooper's vision is contemporary, and tragic, but it is not conveyed with language we have come to associate with the tragic, such as the terse, expository prose of Hemingway, or the fluid, complex prose of James or Faulkner. Precise images and clear pictures are seldom found in Cooper's sentences.

When defining tragedy in its Hellenic context Aristotle, of course, saw language as an important component. One of his six parts of tragedy is diction,³ and in his general definition of the genre he wrote:

Tragedy is, then, an imitation of a noble and complete action, having the proper magnitude: it employs language that has been artistically enhanced by each of the kinds of linguistic adornment, applied separately in the various

parts of the play; it is presented in dramatic, not narrative form, and achieves, through the representation of pitiable and fearful incidents, the catharsis of such pitiable and fearful incidents.⁴

Since Aristotle asserted later in the *Poetics* that the most virtuous diction is the clearest (see Chapter XXII) it seems unlikely he would have praised Cooper's sentences, but, "linguistic adornment" certainly is not lacking in Cooper.

Aristotle's method in defining tragedy was essentially descriptive--he worked from the plays, prose and poems of his contemporaries and predecessors. His values were largely drawn from current examples. These facts are important--important when assessing and interpreting the tragic in the literature of the essentially modern Western World, a world in which the tragic may be significantly different from the tragic in Aristotle's world. Nonetheless, Aristotle's perceptions of the nature of tragedy are enduring, and they are useful (if not always definitive) tools for understanding tragedy in American literature.

In delineating the tragic hero (a term which he did not use) Aristotle focused not so much on the peculiar or particular attributes of the hero, but on the effects the hero has on those observing the tragedy. Pity and Fear were essential tragic elements to Aristotle; the tragic hero should, by undeservedly falling into misfortune, arouse pity in the observer; also, by encountering the tragic misfortune, the hero should evoke fear in those who watch or read, because we recognize that someone like ourselves is suffering. Finally, Oedipus-like, the hero is one who enjoys reputation and great good fortune before the fall.⁵ Beyond effect, there should, according to Aristotle, be a change of fortune from good to bad "not because of depravity, but through some great miscalculation" by the hero.⁶

The main problem I see in Aristotle's perceptions of tragedy is that they are so closely bound to the historicity of Greek drama they become dated. If history does not repeat itself, as Don D. Walker asserts,⁷ then historical events and perceptions are not necessarily valid tools for measuring the present (relatively speaking) or the future. Once again, this is not to suggest that Aristotle's judgements are not useful, but it is to suggest that in the continuum of time there may be other tools as valid or as useful or as definitive to deal with tragedy.

Focusing on the literature of the West, Levi S. Peterson has given us an organic tool for the measurement of tragedy in a given work. According to Peterson, "tragedy depends upon the valuation we place upon things we lose."⁸ This definition is genuinely prehistoric; that is, it does not depend upon the historicity of a genre for meaning, as do Aristotle's perceptions. Obviously, if tragedy depends on the proportionate relationship between value and loss, there may be genuine literary tragedy without a tragic hero, or without pity, or even without Aristotle's three part plot of reversal, recognition, and suffering.⁹

If the frontier experience in America has embodied a loss of something highly valued, then that experience alone, as Peterson suggests, "is the cloth in which the West drapes its grief,"¹⁰--or its fear and pity.

This is especially true if one sees the frontier as fluid interface between culture and savagery.¹¹ In that sense loss is continually experienced as savagery (or wilderness) gives way to civilization. In Western Literature, where landscape is so important (at times an end in itself¹²) it is possible that nature per se can assume the role (or at least a role) of tragic hero, especially as the frontier experience illuminates or magnifies the characters of people whose destinies are shaped by the land. Thus Meriwether Lewis could feel, in 1805, near the confluence of the Medicine and Missouri Rivers, that "all the beasts of the neighbourhood had made a league to destroy me, or that some fortune was disposed to amuse herself at my expense."¹³ He saw the landscape, at least on that June 14 evening, as animated and purposeful, as capable of malevolent action. Thus Lewis' apprehensions were caused by the land and its inhabitants; their malevolence (in his mind at least) could have approached the tragic--in action and effect.

In a recent article on Michael Straight,¹⁴ Don Graham has admirably shown how Straight has worked out a bona fide Aristotelian tragedy in A Very Small Remnant. But Graham does not stress the fact that the event around which the tragedy of the novel pivots is the Sand Creek Massacre. This particular historical "tragedy" is important in the novel because it is part of the frontier process, and thus in itself can and does embody tragic elements, especially those of pity and fear.

The same can be said for The Last of the Mohicans: its historicity does not stifle the perpetration of tragedy, but rather enhances it. But before discussing the tragic import of history in the novel, some other levels of tragedy should be listed. They are or may include:

- 1- The Battle of Fort William Henry itself
- 2- The loss of wilderness
- 3- The demise of the Native American
- 4- Cora's miscegenation
- 5- Uncas' death
- 6- Leatherstocking's predicaments
- 7- The triumph of Fate
- 8- Cooper's ill health
- 9- Aristotle's formal tragic elements
- 10- And probably others; lists are seldom complete.

William Charvat has called the condition of Leatherstocking and the Indians "tragic: it is the doom of natural man in the new world."¹⁵ Cooper himself, in the introduction of the New York, 1850, edition of the novel strongly implies Natty is a tragic hero, calling him a "man of native goodness," betraying weaknesses as well as virtues, and of a high moral elevation.¹⁶ Interestingly, few, if any, of Cooper's critics have seen the novel (the most popular in the world for a century after its publication¹⁷) as essentially tragic. Conversely, most of Cooper's critics

are genuinely puzzled by both the popularity and the purpose of the book. Robert H. Zoellner claims that it is the lack of complexity which accounts for the novel's tremendous popularity.¹⁸ But in some respects (the battle scenes, the reversals of pursuit) the novel is very complex. One critic claims that Cooper was not in control of the book,¹⁹ that Mohicans is his most ambiguous novel,²⁰ and that the ambiguities are a result of moral anarchy.²¹ In my opinion, the novel has enjoyed unprecedented popularity because it embodies the tragedy inherent in the American, the Western, the frontier experience.

In the novel the frontier experience is closely tied to an historical event, the battle of Fort William Henry. At least two critics have noted that Cooper's historical details are reliable,²² but a careful reading of Parkman's Montcalm and Wolfe raises some questions, at least in my mind, of historical authenticity. At any rate, it seems likely that at an impressionable age, Cooper learned of Montcalm's attack and its results.²³ Of all the Leatherstocking novels, Mohicans is the only one that is not subtitled either a tale or romance; rather Cooper chose to call it a narrative, which also very probably reflects his interest in the history of Fort William Henry, and in making the historical events the core of the novel.

It is true that Aristotle distinguished between tragedy and narrative, seeing narrative as in inferior form, and noting that the composition of incidents in the narrative should not be similar to that found in our histories.²⁴ However, if Cooper's historical narrative in Mohicans involves a problem of the frontier, his narrative becomes tragic, since, once again, the frontier experience was one of loss. It is right to assert that in the death and destruction and pain of the battle itself lies a kind of tragedy, but certainly one level of historical tragedy, one which Cooper dwells on at some length, is that Montcalm and his officers, although using every effort to restore order²⁵ during the massacre were finally impotent. If one uses Aristotle's criteria for defining a tragic hero, Montcalm probably comes closer as a complete hero than anyone in the novel.

But there is another level of history in Mohicans, one which is inherently tragic because it is not bound by the chronology of events, and which focuses on the nature of man. In his Montcalm and Wolfe Parkman liberally uses journal entries from participants in the battle and siege of William Henry to establish tone and feeling. At one point he quotes the journal of Bougainville, one of Montcalm's officers, who wrote:

I sang the war-song in the name of M. de Montcalm, and was much applauded. It was nothing but these words, "Let us trample the English under our feet," chanted over and over again, in cadence with the movements of the savages.²⁶

This statement carries not the force of history, but the power of ritual. It was, finally, the movements of the savages which led to the slaughter on the shores of Lake George. Seen as tragic hero, Montcalm's flaw was his inability to control the actions of his Indian allies, partly because he did not understand their nature. Since, in the eyes of the French, the Indians were indispensable in the warfare of the American forests,²⁷ Montcalm should have taken better stock of his Indian allies; the fact that he did not led to the tragedy of the massacre. The battle of

Fort William Henry definitely involved frontier expansion, and thus, in tragedy, the battle produced a two-fold loss: lives of the English, and a bit more wilderness.

It seems ironical, especially since Cooper stayed so close in the novel to the historical implications of the battle, that some scholars have been confused about the purposes of the book. If Cooper's approach is basically historical--even narrative--then his purpose is clear: to play the predicaments and problems of romantic characters against the backdrop of history. But Mohicans is not so clear, and Cooper's history, at important moments, transcends chronology. One element of the novel which richly complicates the narrative (and thus infuses it with tragic significance) is Cooper's treatment of the Indians. It is true that Cooper's Indians are part of the historicity of the battle of Fort William Henry, but their presence in the novel is basically prehistoric. In the preface to the first edition, Philadelphia, 1826, Cooper wrote that "the greatest difficulty with which the student of Indian history has to contend, is the utter confusion that pervades the names (of the Indians)."²⁸ Cooper went on to explain that the complexities of naming were complicated by the French, Dutch, and English who, independently, named the tribes, as well as individual Indians. This seems to me convincing evidence of the problem of explicating the prehistoric²⁹ in a work grounded in historical authenticity.

As Claude Levi-Strauss has noted, "the savage mind totalizes."³⁰ Since Levi-Strauss made the statement in his chapter titled "History and Dialectic," in The Savage Mind it is right to assert that to him "totalization" has a good deal to do with history and prehistory. Since the characteristic feature of the savage mind is timelessness,³¹ it is quite literally impossible to understand primitive man (Cooper's savages)³² from an historical perspective. In his comment on names, it seems fairly clear that Cooper's own, novelistic, perception of the Native American was basically prehistoric; the names given him by the respective conquerors were meaningless (thus confusing) because they were grounded in the historicity of European civilization, not the prehistoric nature of the American aborigines.

What all this produces in Last of the Mohicans is a schism between history and prehistory. Cooper's whites (except possibly Natty) cannot minutely approach an understanding of the redskins because they are prisoners of history: culture, manners, society, etc. What this eventually produces in the novel, and I have trouble believing this is an unconscious product of Cooper's imagination, is a binding (or chaining) of history to prehistory, of European cultural mores to primitive ways. In the novel this joining produces high tragedy; but the essential tragedy of this predicament can only be understood with the frontier experience (loss) firmly in mind. Manifest destiny in the novel (and all its cultural paraphernalia) drags along a primitive society whose destiny (in 1826 at least) had never been manifest. As Natty so cogently remarks near the beginning of the novel, "everything depends on what scale you look at things."³³ Or, in other words, tragedy depends upon the valuation we place upon things we lose. And loss in Mohicans involves the demise of the frontier, and the inability of historical man and prehistorical man to even approximate mutual understanding. Such predicaments inevitably produced, the world round, the fear and pity of misfortune Aristotle discussed. If readers see Mohicans basically as melodrama, not tragedy, it is (likely) because they either

approach the book through our modern perception of sentence-sense, or that they fail to see the tragic implications in Cooper's manipulation of history.

Beyond the tensions of the historical-prehistorical problem, there are certainly other levels of tragedy in The Last of the Mohicans; not the least of these is Cooper's perception of the hero. Wrestling with Natty's status in the novel, Robert Zoellner calls Bumppo a mythic or epic hero,³⁴ and hints that because Leatherstocking has "no rapport whatever with the essence of the American experience,"³⁵ his alienation creates a hero basically existential. Like most other critics, Zoellner makes no attempt to define Natty as a basically tragic hero in the novel; ironically, however, Zoellner clearly defines Natty's tragic flaw, which grows entirely from the frontier experience. He says: "Only Natty insists to the bitter end that the wilderness remain inviolate. . . ." ³⁶ It is foolish to assume that Natty, unlike Montcalm in the novel, is a fully formed Aristotelian tragic hero. There, for example, seems to be no reversal, recognition and subsequent suffering, although in the context of the frontier Natty suffers a good deal from the loss of wilderness, personified to an extent here, though not fully formed as in The Pioneers, by the woodsman's axe.³⁷ The destruction of the forest and defilement of the land create in Natty the Pity and Fear of tragedy, as well as within his readers, especially if one recalls that to Natty wilderness affirms the existence of God.³⁸ So that his very theological base is felled by the axe or turned under by the plow. For Natty the encroachment of civilization will destroy the beauty of both hunting and war.³⁹ Subsequently, of course, this means destruction of his whole reason for being.

Natty's world view is as tragic as Oedipus' or Antigone's; he insistently comments on a person's gifts ("I would have been a cruel and an inhuman act for a whiteskin; but 't is the gift and natur' of an Indian."⁴⁰) saying time and again that the purposes and affairs of men are controlled by Fate--a man has his gifts; they are unalterable. Man's gifts will even determine his status in the hereafter. "I believe," says Natty, "that paradise is ordained for happiness; and that men will be indulged in it according to their dispositions and gifts."⁴¹ Further, according to Natty, "Providence is partial in its gifts."⁴² Thus the god of Mohicans is as arbitrary, in his way, as the gods of Antigone, even if paradise is ordained for happiness.

Through the imminent destruction of wilderness (a possible reversal in Mohicans) Natty is forced to recognize that hunting and war, in their states of primitive glory, will be destroyed, and that he will experience the suffering unto death, the total alienation he later faces in The Prairie. Even Natty's statement, persistently offered throughout the novel, that he is a man without a cross⁴³ has tragic implications. If the lack of a cross signifies that he is "a man of absolute and somehow lethal purity,"⁴⁴ his very being is again doomed. Absolute purity on the American frontier suggests absolute inability to compromise--there is no escape for Natty from the inroads of civilization, and his westward movement is a journey toward physical and spiritual death; his existence, his realizations, offer no escape from the horrors of encroaching civilization. He is doomed.

The historical and human problems in the book, and Natty's predicaments and realizations sharply create a tragic effect that is genuinely cathartic. Perhaps the catharsis accounts mainly for the popularity of the book around the world. But in America the book may have functioned as a

salve for sore consciences--as an alleviation from the destructive implications of manifest destiny. Nature is, says Natty, sadly abused by man when he gets the mastery.⁴⁵

If, as Levi Peterson suggests, affirmation and relief arise, paradoxically, from pain and despair,⁴⁶ then the alchemy of catharsis found in Mohicans may have allowed some Americans and others to view the destruction of the landscape as essentially positive. Most Americans believed religiously in manifest destiny, but today we normally assume that exaltation over the expanse of empire produced the booster-club joys of looking far west, when it seems very possible those joys were cathartic rather than naively positive. The truth of this assertion seems plausible if one remembers that on virtually all levels of society, Cooper had captured the national imagination.⁴⁷ What the catharsis became was the "myth meaning" D.H. Lawrence attributed to the novel.⁴⁸ Lawrence saw the novel divided between narrative and romance, calling the narrative chiefly record, but the romance full of the meaning of myth. Possibly, myth meaning, reinforced by the tragic implications in the historical narrative, led to the catharsis, which finally took the form in the minds of many of seeing Cooper's landscape as a place of Mythic reality, a place where destruction bred joy.⁴⁹

Another tragic element in The Last of the Mohicans is the demise of the Native American, not just the Mohicans. The novel's last paragraph, spoken by the legendary Tamenund, is a dreary indictment of the whites. Divine judgement has fallen upon the "children of the Lenape." The pale-faces are masters of the earth; the redman's time has not yet come again.⁵⁰ Despite the suggestion that the Indian may sometime rise to power again, the gods are displeased, their children have been punished; it is the tragic movement of the frontier that has crushed the old ways. It is significant that Cooper chose to end the book on such a note; his choice suggests that the demise of the Indian ranked high, possibly highest, on his scale of tragic hierarchy.

In a piece dealing with Uncas as hero in Mohicans, Donald Darnell claims that Natty's role as hero in the book is usually usurped by Uncas.⁵¹ Although Darnell correctly asserts that "to understand the significance of Uncas his race must be known,"⁵² he does not convincingly establish Uncas' place as essential hero in the novel. Because Henry Nash Smith has written that Natty fails to qualify as a "technical hero of romances"⁵³ Darnell seeks for a substitute hero and finds him in Uncas. Uncas then becomes a mythic, messianic hero, a prophet.⁵⁴ Darnell finally claims that through death Uncas achieves true tragic stature.⁵⁵ However, there are problems with both Smith's and Darnell's ideas of the hero in Mohicans. Natty's inability to qualify as a technical hero of romance does not mean he is not a tragic hero. While it is true that Uncas achieves a heroic status, as the title of the novel suggests, he does not necessarily become the book's tragic hero. The mantle of prophethood may have enabled him to tell truth, even to predict what will be, but a messianic calling does not make a tragic hero; Sophocles showed this in the character of Teiresias, the prophet, in Oedipus Rex. Because Cooper does not focus primarily on Uncas, he is a secondary hero, not unlike Montcalm, although more important to the issue of the novel. Natty is really the only irreplaceable character in the book, which produces, in part, his tragic nature. Unlike the Indians, who are dying, and the whites, who are returning to the settlements, Natty is doomed to remain in the midst of the destructive forces

of the frontier, in the no-man's land between savagery and civilization, in the interface of becoming; he is a man without a cross.

Speaking of The Big Sky, Levi Peterson claims the novel celebrates the loss of wilderness values, thus bringing into "full expression a feeling submerged in the American consciousness from Cooper forward."⁵⁶ The feeling submerged in the American consciousness, assuming Peterson is correct, from Cooper forward is one of catharsis--catharsis growing from the tragic predicament of Natty Bumppo. Our celebration exalts not the frontier, but wilderness before there was a frontier, not the felling of the forests, but the silence that hung between the trunks before the axe was conceived. We accomplish our celebrations only through catharsis. Even Thoreau's famous celebration of wilderness came only after he discussed the situation of the American backwoodsman and the "westward star of empire." It was a cathartic longing for the wild, perhaps sparked by Cooper, that brought Thoreau to say: "The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in Wilderness is the preservation of the World."⁵⁷ Ironically, Thoreau's statement about wildness grew from an enthusiastic discussion of the Great Western Pioneer pursuing his manifest destiny.

As for tragic influences in Mohicans, a few matters remain: Cooper's ill health during the writing of the novel, and Cora's miscegenation. Evidently, Cooper wrote parts of the novel during his bout with a lingering fever, in almost a fit of passion. Although Philbrick claims that Cooper's poor health "significantly influenced the texture and tendency of the book as a whole,"⁵⁸ there is, I think, little cause to believe his sickness influenced his perception of the frontier, and thus his important statements about tragedy in the novel.

Cora's miscegenation, as meat for tragedy, is another matter. Cora, whose grandmother was mulatto,⁵⁹ could have functioned much more prominently as tragic hero had Cooper chosen to exploit her racial predicament. Although there are brief allusions in the novel to her racial status, they serve only to make her seem slightly taboo. There is little myth or magic connected with her actions or her personality; unfortunately, her defiance and pluck in the face of danger are not closely connected to her genealogy; although her death is tragic, she certainly does not attain the status of tragic hero to the extent that Montcalm and Uncas do.

Although Aristotle gave us important tools for assessing the extent and worth of tragedy in literature, his tools are not necessarily definitive when dealing with tragedy in Western Literature, for the frontier experience in America so complicated the possibilities for tragedy that other tools, other ways of interpreting history in modern culture are needed. Using new and old tools to interpret tragedy in The Last of the Mohicans not only helps us see the essentially tragic nature of the book, but hopefully offers one reason for the book's remarkable popularity.

I have no way of knowing how many of my students in the Indian Literature course actually saw the novel's tragic implications, but I am reasonably certain they enjoyed the book largely because it is a complex work of tragedy, and in that tragedy their own catharsis was realized in Cooper's portrayal of the frontier experience.

NOTES

¹ Eighty-one years ago Twain's "Fentmore Cooper's Literary Offenses," was published. It was, I think, Twain who began the full-scale scoffing.

² For a textual example of this lack of sentence sense see pp. 200-201 of Mohicans (Boston: The Riverside Press, 1958), ed. William Charvat. In this scene Uncas and Natty and Heyward discuss moccasin prints. The point of the scene (not the sentences) is that the Indians are wise; Heyward is ignorant.

³ The remaining five parts are plot, character, thought, spectacle, and melody.

⁴ Aristotle, Poetics: A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature, eds. Leon Golden and O. S. Hardison (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 11.

⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

⁷ Don D. Walker, "Riders and Reality: A Philosophical Problem in the Historiography of the Cattle Trade," The Western Historical Quarterly IX (Spring 1978): p. 173.

⁸ Levi S. Peterson, "Tragedy and Western American Literature," Western American Literature 6 (Winter 1977): p. 244.

⁹ Poetics, p. 20.

¹⁰ Peterson, p. 249.

¹¹ The words here are mine, but the ideas come essentially from Book 3, "The Garden of the World," of Henry Nash Smith's Virgin Land (New York: Random House, 1950).

¹² Thomas Hornsby Ferril has noted that "Rocky Mountain literature is devitalized by a low-grade mysticism dictated by landscape." He finds this "God-finding" destructive and non-artistic. See "Writing in the Rockies," Rocky Mountain Reader, ed. Ray B. West, pp. 395-403. Ferril's article was originally published in the Saturday Review of Books.

¹³ See Mertwether Lewis, Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition: 1804-1806, ed. Reuben G. Thwaites (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1904), Vol. 2, pp. 155-159.

¹⁴ Graham's article, "Tragedy and Western American Literature; The Example of Michael Straight's A Very Small Remnant," is forthcoming in the Denver Quarterly.

¹⁵ Mohicans, p. xviii.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

17 *Ibid.*, p. v.

18 Robert H. Zoellner, "Conceptual Ambivalence in Cooper's *Leatherstocking*," American Literature 31 (January 1960): p. 407.

19 See Thomas Philbrick, "The Last of the Mohicans and the Sounds of Discord," American Literature 42 (March 1971): p. 25.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 27. For a discussion of moral anarchy see Donald Davie, The Heyday of Sir Walter Scott (London, 1961), p. 111.

22 See David P. French, "James Fenimore Cooper and Fort William Henry," American Literature 32 (March 1960): pp. 28-38 and Thomas Philbrick, "The Sources of Cooper's Knowledge of Fort William Henry," American Literature 36 (1964): pp. 209-214.

23 French, p. 29.

24 Poetics, XXIII.

25 See Francis Parkman, Montcalm and Wolfe (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924), Vol I, p. 527. Montcalm and his officers could do little or nothing to allay the blood-lust of the Indians.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 490.

27 It was Bougainville who claimed that "here in the forests of America we can no more do without them than without cavalry on the plain." Montcalm and Wolfe. Vol. I, p. 499.

28 Mohicans, p. 3.

29 By prehistoric I simply mean that which existed before, or independently of, history--like the practice of naming among primitive peoples.

30 Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 245.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 263.

32 Some may argue that Cooper's savages are not savage or primitive in the anthropological sense of the terms, but merely cardboard romantics drawn from the era of the Noble Savage. There is some truth to this argument, but there is also a great deal of untruth. Cooper seems to have captured the folkways of the Eastern tribes in some remarkable ways. The importance, for example, of the emblem of the turtle to the Delawares is presented in an ethnographically first-rate fashion. There is evidence that Cooper was an observer of the real Indian in the woods of New York. See J.A. Russell, "Cooper: Interpreter of the Real and the

Historical Indian," Journal of American History 23 (1929): p. 44.

³³ Mohicans, p. 37.

³⁴ Zoellner, p. 398.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 402.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 404.

³⁷ In a note to the text Cooper wrote: "Thus in a new country, the woods and other objects, which in an old country would be maintained at great cost, are got rid of, simply with a view of 'improving,' as it is called." Mohicans, p. 52.

³⁸ Mohicans, p. 127.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 226.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 149.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 206.

⁴² Ibid., p. 233.

⁴³ Philbrick, in his article, "the Sounds of Discord," calls the expression a boast. I see it as a statement of angst and despair. See p. 39.

⁴⁴ This is Thomas Philbrick's assertion in "The Last of the Mohicans and the Sounds of Discord," p. 39.

⁴⁵ Mohicans, p. 132.

⁴⁶ See p. 54 of Peterson's "Juanita Brooks: The Mormon Historian as Tragedian," Journal of Mormon History 3 (1976): p. 54.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the importance of Cooper's works to early perceptions of the West, see my article, "Femimore Cooper and the Exploration of the Great West," Heritage of Kansas: A Journal of the Great Plains 10 (Spring 1977): pp. 15-24.

⁴⁸ D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), p. 58.

⁴⁹ I am not claiming Cooper was responsible for manifest destiny. He obviously wasn't. But his works directly affected many Americans' thinking about the westward movement.

⁵⁰ Mohicans, p. 372.

⁵¹ Donald Darnell, "Uncas as Hero: The Ubi Sunt Formula in The Last of the Mohicans," American Literature 37 (November 1965): p. 259.

⁵² Ibid., p. 263.

- 53 See Virgin Land, pp. 59-70.
- 54 Darnell, p. 265.
- 55 Ibid., p. 266.
- 56 "Tragedy and Western American Literature," p. 248.
- 57 Henry David Thoreau, "Welking," in The Writings of Henry David Thoreau (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1893), Vol. 9, pp. 266-267.
- 58 "The Last of the Mohicans and the Sounds of Discord," p. 28.
- 59 Mohicans, p. 172.