CHAPTER- III
SECOND NOVEL OF LEATHERSTOCKING TALES
THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS: INDIANS AS VICTIMS
OF THE ABUSES OF CIVILIZATION

The novel The Last of the Mohicans, more than any of the other Leatherstocking Tales, focuses on Indians against the background of the French and Indian War (1754-1763), and of the older conflict between Huron and Delaware Indians, Hawkeye and his friends struggle against the evil Magua. Violence plays a large part in the story, and the novel comes close to equating Indian culture with a love of violence, revenge, and torture. The Indians have to bear the abuses of civilization and the constant warfare between them and the whites in the Lake George country but the Indians finally continue to advance in civilization to maturity.

In order to understand its presentation of Indian life four different aspects of the novel can be examined, its picture of Indian character, doctrine of race, the discussion of Indian land rights; and the elegaic mood it develops in connection with the Indians. The total portrayal of Indians in the novel is greatly influenced by the predominant role of the treacherous Huron, Magua. Magua speaks of his past contact with whites and blames the white man's alcohol for his depraved condition:

Magua was born a chief and a warrior among the red Hurons of the lakes; he saw the suns of twenty summers make the snows of twenty winters run off in the streams, before he saw a pale-face; and he was happy! Then his Canada fathers came into the woods, and taught him to drink the fire-water, and he became a rascal. The Hurons drove him from the graves of his fathers, as they would chase the hunted buffalo . . . .
"Was it the fault of Le Renard that his head was not made of rock? Who gave him the fire-water? Who made him a villain? 'Twas the pale-faces." (M, 91)

Once, in the service of the British, Magua had become drunk and insubordinate; the whipping which the British officer, Major Munro, gave as punishment still offends the Indian's sense of justice:

"Is it justice to make evil, and then punish for it? Magua was not himself; it was the fire-water that spoke and acted for him! but Munro did not believe it. The Huron chief was tied up before all the pale-faced warriors, and whipped like a dog" (M, 92).

This whipping provides Magua with his deepest motivation, the desire for revenge. In order to achieve this revenge he seeks to enslave Munro's daughter, Cora, in an Indian marriage. The major part of the novel describes the attempts by Hawkeye and his friends to free Cora and her sister, Alice, from Magua and his fellow Hurons. Magua's malignant qualities are superimposed upon the traditional picture of the Indians. Magua is described with such stock words and phrases as "characteristic stoicism," "sullen fierceness," "swarthy lineaments," "native wildness," "cunning," and "disdain" (M, 8). Cora's first sight of him calls forth "an indescribable look of pity, admiration, and horror" (M, 9). These three emotions are not mutually exclusive, but neither are they in easy harmony with one another. Together, they form a complex emotional attitude which, perhaps, typified the 19th century response to the Indian. The Indian arouses pity because he stands in the way of westward expansion and is doomed to see his own way of life disappear. He is admired because of his physical grace, his closeness to nature, and because he is perceived to enjoy the kind of primal heroic society which is no longer possible for those people who live under the influence of a centuries-old civilization. He inspires horror in border warfare because
he often exacts a heavy price from those who, in the vanguard of western expansion, are attempting to take his lands. The bloody quality of his warfare produce an underlying attitude of horror.

Although Magua blames his moral failure upon his weakness for the white-man's alcohol, Huron suffers from a much more basic corruption of spirit. "Far above the more vulgar superstitions of his tribe" (M 315), Magua does not adopt any of the positive values of the white man as a replacement for the discarded reverence of his fellow tribesmen. On the contrary, as shown by his pious attitude towards the beaver colony, he develops a Machiavellian character which knows how to counterfeit belief for its own ends. On three different occasions, Magua makes cunning and artful speeches in which he deliberately plays on the emotions of his Indians. On two of these occasions, he successfully seeks to arouse desire for revenge.

The Indian answere his melancholy and mourning by sympathy and sorrow, his assertions by gestures of confirmation and his boastings, with the exultation of savages. When he speaks of courage their looks are firm and responsive. When he alludes to their injuries, their eyes kindle with fury. When he mentions the taunts of the women, they drop their heads in shame but when he points out their means of vengeance, he strikes a chord which never fail to thrill in the breast of an Indian:

He paused, and looked about him in affected veneration for the departed, but, in truth, to note the effect of his opening narrative....

Then Magua dropped his voice, which had hitherto been clear, strong, and elevated, and touched upon the merits of the dead. No quality that was likely to command the sympathy of an Indian escaped his notice.... He so managed his allusions, that in a nation, which was composed of so few families, he
contrived to strike every chord that might find, in its turn, some breast in which to vibrate ....

Magua had so artfully blended the natural sympathies with the religious superstition of his auditors, that their minds, already prepared by custom to sacrifice a victim to the manes of their countrymen, lost - every vestige of humanity in a wish for revenge. (M, 234-235)

On the third occasion, when several of the younger Huron chiefs wish to launch an immediate surprise attack on the Delawares, Magua persuades them to choose his more devious policy:

When he perceived that, while the old men applauded his moderation, many of the fiercest and most distinguished of the warriors listened to these politic plans with lowering looks, he cunningly led them back to the subject which they most loved. He spoke openly of the fruits of their wisdom, which he boldly pronounced would be a complete and final triumph over their enemies. He even darkly hinted that their success might be extended, with proper 'caution, in such a manner as to include the destruction of all whom they had reason to hate. In short, he so blended the warlike with the artful, as to flatter the propensities of both parties, and to leave to each a subject for hope, while neither could say it clearly comprehended his intentions . . . .

All perceived that more was meant than was uttered, and each one believed that the hidden meaning was precisely such as his own faculties enabled him to anticipate. (M, 265-66)

In Magua, therefore, there is the Indian not simply as a savage, but as a corrupt and even diabolical being:
While others slept ... he neither knew nor sought any repose. Had there been one sufficiently curious to have watched the movements of the newly elected chief, he would have seen him in a corner of his lodge, musing on the subject of his future plans.... Occasionally, the air breathed through the crevices of the hut, and the low flame that fluttered about the embers of the fire, threw their wavering light on the person of the sullen recluse. At such moments, it would not have been difficult to have fancied the dusky savage the Prince of Darkness, brooding on his own fancied wrongs, and plotting evil. (M, 267)

Hawkeye's Indian friends differ from Magua chiefly in the fact that their association with white men has not corrupted them. They still retain the older Indian virtues. While Magua's treachery dominates his total personality and all of his relationships, the two Mohicans are treacherous only to that degree which Hawkeye would call normal for an Indian. Thus, after Chingachgook murders and scalpes a French sentry, Hawkeye comments philosophically, "'Twas not an inhuman act for a white-skin; but 'tis the gift and natur• of an Indian, and I suppose it should not be denied!" (M, 125). Similarly, the feelings of Duncan Heyward, Cora, and Alice, when they first meet Uncas, are that while he "might be a being partially benighted in the vale of ignorance," he "could not be one who would willingly devote his rich natural gifts to the purposes of wanton treachery" (M., 43).

Physically, Uncas is described in terms which suggest the "noble savage": At a little distance in advance stands Uncas, the whole person is thrown powerfully into view. The travellers anxiously regard the upright, flexible figure of the young Mohican, graceful and unrestrained in the attitudes and movements of nature. Though his person is more than usually screened by a green and fringed hunting-shirt, like that of the white man, there is no concealment to his dark, glancing fearless eye, alike
terrible and calm. The bold outline of his high, haughty features, pure in their native red, the dignified elevation of his receding forehead, together with all the finest proportions of a noble head, bared to the generous scalping tuft. It is the first opportunity possessed by Duncan and his companions, to view the marked lineaments of either of their Indian attendants, and each individual of the party feel relieved from a burden of doubt, as the proud and determined, though wild expression of the features of the young warrior force itself on their notice. . . . The ingenuous Alice gazes at his free air and proud carriage, as she would have looked upon some precious relic of the Grecian chisel, to which life had been imparted by the intervention of a miracle while Heyward, though accustomed to see the perfection of form which abounds among the uncorrupted natives, openly expressed his admiration at such an unblemished specimen of the noblest proportions of man.

Apart, however, from the hunting shirt, the dignified elevation of his receding forehead and the generous scalping tuft, the picture is altogether lacking in specifics. For its effect it depends upon the emotional appeal of adjectives such as: "graceful," "fearless," "terrible and calm," "bold," "haughty," "dignified," "proud and determined, though wild," "uncorrupted," and "unblemished."

Like Magua, Uncas is no ordinary Indian but whereas Magua is described in terms that suggest a repudiation of older beliefs with nothing to put in their place, Uncas is said to be a person who has been raised above other Indians by the finer quality of his emotional life—the very part of Magua's personality which had been so badly corrupted. It is the "sympathy that elevated him far above the intelligence, and advanced him probably centuries before the practices, of his nation" (M, 104). Again, however, apart from imputing to Uncas a romantic attraction and devotion to Cora, The Mohican's conversation or action justifies this description. The attractive qualities
of Uncas are precisely those heroic virtues traditionally associated with Indian society, loyalty, great physical endurance, and courage. Uncas can enter into American civilization on terms of dignity and equality, to the extent that Uncas becomes civilized he becomes less than he already is.

Uncas does have no dignified part in American civilization because of the implicit doctrine of race. Cora Munro presents the most liberal viewpoint on race-relations—a viewpoint which is invalidate. When her sister, Alice, and their friend, Duncan Heyward, show their distrust of Magua, Cora asks, "'Should we distrust the man, because his manners are not our manners, and that his skin is dark?'" (M, 11).

Cora's open attitude, is aware that her confidence is sadly misplaced because Magua has already been described in negative terms. Cora wants-people to be judged on their own merits, rather than on the basis of race. As she has given the benefit of this doubt to Magua, so she demands it for herself when the Huron accuses the whites of destroying his character, "'Am I answerable that thoughtless and unprincipled men exist, whose shades of countenance may resemble mine?'"(M, 91).

Similarly, in her interview with Tamenund, the aged Delaware chief, Cora introduces herself as, "'A woman. One of a hated race, if thou wilt—a Yengee. But one who has never harmed thee, and who cannot harm thy people if she could; who asks for succour'"(M, 287). Since Cora, herself, has mixed blood, the phrase, "hated race," has a double reference. As her white ancestry is hated by the Indians, so her black ancestry is hated by the whites. By speaking in this way, Cora indicates awareness of a darker and more tragic aspect of race. As the interview continues this understanding comes to the fore, "'Like thee and thine, venerable chief . . . the curse of my ancestors has fallen heavily upon their child'" (M, 288). Here race is seen in a
deterministic context, but is overshadowed by the idea of divine displeasure at certain races.

In one situation, relating to black-white rather than Indian-white relations, there is the understanding of the deep roots of racist attitudes. When Major Munro accuses Duncan Heyward of prejudice towards Cora because of her mixed race, the omniscient narrator comments on the young officer's denial, "Heaven protect me from a prejudice so unworthy of my reason!' returned Duncan, at the same time conscious of such a feeling, and that as deeply rooted as if it had been ingrafted in his nature" (M, 147). However, this flaw in Heyward's character is not pursued, nor does it allow to influence the picture of Heyward as generally admirable.

Heyward has this concern for racial purity. Hawkeye repeatedly speaks of himself as a "man without a cross." The Delawares, Mohicans, and other Wapanachki Indians call themselves the "Lenni Lenape" which means an "unmixed people." Against this background, Duncan Heyward articulates the attitude when he says that the thought of Cora being forced into marriage with Magua "is worse than a thousand deaths!" (M, 98). Magua's desire to make Cora his wife, a mixture of sexual passion and the desire for revenge, contrasts with the love, devotion, and admiration which Uncas shows for her. But, in spite of his admirable qualities, any proposed union between Uncas and Cora would have caused Major Munro, Heyward, and Hawkeye almost as much anguish and disapproval as did the idea of her forced marriage to Magua. Hawkeye's opposition to a mixed marriage, even when it involves Uncas whom he loves as his own son, reveals itself at the time of mourning for Cora and Uncas; when the Indian girls hint strongly of their heavenly union and future happiness with Hawkeye." (M, 325).
Although Hawkeye is the close friend of Chingachgook and Uncas, he constantly maintains the distinction between the white man and Indian. Always emphasizing that he himself is a white man, he explains differences in terms of his doctrine of divinely appointed racial gifts. Thus he excuses Indian practices such as scalping by saying that this is in accordance with Indian gifts. While he uses the concept of racial gifts to justify the action of his friends, Hawkeye usually abandons such sophistry when he refers to his Huron enemies:

"A Huron! ... they are a thievish race, nor do I care by whom they are adopted; you can never make anything of them but skulks and vagabonds." (M, 27)

"A Mingo is a Mingo, and God having made him so, neither the Mohawks nor any other tribe can alter him." (M, 29)

"'Tis a safe thing to calculate on the knavery of an Iroquois." (M, 30)

Through its emphasis on racial purity, its understanding of the deep roots of racial strife and prejudice, and its concept of racial gifts can be understood. It suggests that Indian and white races cannot exist harmoniously in close contact with each other. At the same time the ever advancing frontier of white settlement make close contact between the two races more and more frequent. Several of the Indians refer to this advancing frontier as the white man's insatiable greed for land and they are the victims of the abuses of civilization. They believe that they cannot resist the border warfare.

Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook who are the friends discuss the opposing rights of Indians and whites to the land. The physical setting, within "that breathing silence, which marks the drowsy sultriness of an American landscape in July" (M,18), where the two friends use the discussion to pass time while they await the arrival of Uncas, give the discussion the atmosphere of an interesting debate rather than that of
a vital question of justice. By accepting Chingachgook's tradition that the Mohican people have originated west of the Mississippi and have taken their land in the east by conquest, Hawkeye attempts to justify the white conquest:

"'Your fathers came from the setting sun, crossed the big river, fought the people of the country, and took the land; and mine came from the red sky of the morning, over the salt lake, and did their work much after the fashion that had been set them by yours; then let God judge the matter between us, and friends spare their words!' (M, 20). The discussion then degenerates into an argument about the relative superiority of white over Indian weapons. When Chingachgook mentions the white man's fire-arms, Hawkeye replies that an Indian with a bow and arrow is more dangerous than the average settler with a rifle. In a more generous mood, he then admits his own ignorance of white history and asks Chingachgook to tell him "What passed, according to the traditions of the red men, when our fathers first met" (M, 21).

Chingachgook's response brings an air of romantic pathos of his people's disinheritance:

"The first pale-faces who came among us spoke no English. They came in a large canoe, when my fathers had buried the tomahawk with the red men around them. Then Hawkeye,... we were one people, and we were happy. ... The salt lake gave us its fish, the wood its deer and the air its birds. We took wives who bore us children; we worshipped the Great Spirit; and we kept the Maquas beyond the sound of our songs of triumph! . . .

"The Dutch landed and gave my people the firewater; they drank until the heavens and the earth seemed to meet, and they foolishly thought they had found the Great Spirit. Then they parted with their land. Foot by foot they were
driven back from the shores, until I, that am a chief and a sagamore, have never
seen the sun but through the trees, and have never visited the graves of my
fathers! . . .

"Where are the blossoms of those summers!—fallen, one by one: so all of my
family departed, each in his turn, to the land of spirits. I am on the hill-top, and
must go down into the valley; and when Uncas follows in my footsteps, there
will no longer be any of the blood of the sagamores, for my boy is the last of
the Mohicans." (M 23)

Chingachgook’s account gives very little detail about the way his people were
"driven back from the shores;" instead it singles out their inability to handle liquor as
the reason for their loss of the land. Emotionally, Chingachgook arouses a nostalgic
sympathy for a dispossessed and dying race. This sympathy, however, cannot become
more than false sentiment since, intellectually, the Indians' own claim to the land is
based on past violence and the dispossession of other people, and further, the Indians' weakness for alcohol is partly responsible for their loss of the land. Chingachgook feels that it is because of the whites that they have lost their identity and have to suffer discrimination.

In a moving speech Tamenund, the ancient Delaware chief, states the fact of the
white man's "thirst" for land but does not condemn it; like the dialogue of Hawkeye
and Chingachgook, this speech deals in nostalgic pathos rather than in detailed
assessment of Indian rights and white wrongs. Only the villain, Magua, states the
Indian case against the whites with any vigour, and this is done within the discrediting
context of demagogy:

"With his tongue, he stops the ears of the Indians; his heart teaches him to pay
warriors to fight his battles; his cunning tells him how to get together the goods
of the earth; and his arms enclose the land, from the shores of the salt water, to the islands of the great lake. His gluttony makes him sick. God gave him enough, and yet he wants all. Such are the pale-faces." (M, 284)

The death of Uncas at the end of the novel illustrates the difficulty involved in romanticizing the Indian in Cooper's day. Magua dies ignobly in accordance with the dictates of popular art. He is evil, and evil has to be vanquished. But Uncas was noble and heroic; he died because he was not civilized and could not become civilized without becoming less than he was. A civilized and educated Uncas, within the romantic tradition, could do no more than cry with Holderlin's Hyperion: "I reflect, and find myself and I was before—alone, with all the griefs of mortality; and my heart's refuge, the world in its eternal oneness is gone; Nature closes her arms, and I stand like an alien before her and understand her not.

Ah! had I never gone to your schools! The knowledge which I pursued down its tunnels and galleries, from which, in my youthful folly, I expected the confirmation of all my pure joy—that knowledge has corrupted everything for me.

Among you I became so truly reasonable, learned so thoroughly to distinguish myself from what surrounds me, that now I am solitary in the beautiful world, an outcast from the garden of Nature, in which I grew and flowered, drying up under the noonday sun."

The nature of Hyperion is looking back at his natural childhood which has been lost forever in the interests of a more mature, if less satisfying, adulthood. Uncas appeals because he represents that childhood. In The Pioneers, this concept of maturity is justified. In The Last of the Mohicans, it is shown why childhood has to be left behind.
Uncas dies in accordance with his father's pathetic understanding of the demise of his people. At the time when Uncas is introduced, his father foreshadowes his death when he says that Uncas is the Last of the Mohicans—he does not suggest even the possibility that Uncas might have children. Uncas has to die because, in a growing America, there is no place for him which would not diminish his stature, make his nobility irrelevant, or pervert his generosity into a meanness and contempt similar to Magua’s. The only other possibility is that he might degenerate into a drunken memory of things past—as his father is shown to be in The Pioneers.

Although in his 1826 "Preface," Cooper refers to the Delawares as the "greatest and most civilized of the Indian nations, that existed within the limits of the present United States, the book gives no evidence to support this statement. Neither Chingachgook nor Tamenund make any references to fields or agriculture. The reader, therefore, infers that the "most civilized of the Indian nations" lived entirely by hunting. For all the nobility which Cooper ascribes to him, Uncas remains a heroic savage whose political allegiance is to the "right" cause for very inadequate reasons. In spite of generalized statements about his nobility, Uncas has no qualities which would allow him to become either a happy, or a welcome, member of civilized American society.

The novel The Last of the Mohicans presents the picture of Indian character, the doctrine of racial purity, the discussion of Indian land rights, and the elegaic aura due the disappearance of Indian people. The land rights and the picture of a dying tribe of Indians both help to generate a sympathetic understanding of Indian problems. However, both of these tend to vague feelings of good will rather than to any political commitment. At the same time they are overshadowed by the negative picture of Indian character and the emphasis upon racial purity. These aspects of the novel
indicate that the Indian could find a firm place in a truly civilized society and not face
the abuses of civilization.

In *Pages and Pictures* from the Writing of James Fenimore Cooper (1861), her
survey of her father’s literary career, Susan Cooper tells that *The Last of the Mohicans*
was the result of a pledge Cooper made to Edward Stanley during an 1825 tour to
Lake George region of New York. Cooper, Stanley, and five other British gentlemen
were impressed by the natural splendor of Glenn’s Falls, and when Stanley observed
that “here was the very scene for a romance,” Cooper promised to compose such a
work at his earliest convenience. Immediately after the conclusion of the tour, Cooper
set himself to work on *Mohicans* and completed a draft of the novel four months after
his return. He chose to set the tale in 1757 rather than in contemporary New York,
Susan recalls, first, because he wanted to eliminate the dams which marred the beauty
of the falls, and second, because he was interested in writing a romance which would
be “essentially Indian in character,” his determination to reintroduce Natty Bumppo
and Chingachgook as principal characters was apparently more difficult decision. He
realized, Susan explains, that a work which featured characters “already familiar to
the reader” was “a dangerous experiment,” but after seeking his wife’s advice, “the
step was taken and Natty and Chingachgook were once more brought before the
reader.” (M, 21)

Copper’s rationale for reintroducing Natty and Chingachgook in *Mohicans* is,
however, less significant than the effect of that decision. Their presence in both *The
Pioneers* and in *Mohicans* establishes a particularly intimate relationship between the
two novels, one which both enriches and circumscribes the reading. Natty’s and
Chingachgook’s destinies are presented from the moment of their initial appearances
in *Mohican’s*. Their values and their cultural roles have been clearly defined. They
survive their adventures, that the battlefields they cross become the sights of
“beautiful and thriving villages,” and that their brotherhood anticipate the cultural
synthesis Oliver Effingham ultimately achieves. To some degree the prescience is a
product of Mohicans’ status as a historical novel. The decline of Indian nations and
the disruption of European hegemony are matters of public record. But the prior
knowledge of the narrative progress of Mohicans is more precise than that. It can be
understood that the tribes and the Europeans armies of the novel are displaced by
American settlers, but whatever closure Cooper may affect in Mohicans, its
resolutions are prefatory to the model of cultural development he advances in The
Pioneers.

By restoring Natty and Chingachgook to the prime of their lives, Cooper presses
his investigation of American’s origins beyond an autobiographical context to a more
distant, pre-Revolutionary era of the national past. Rather than beginning Mohicans,
by describing the wilderness as a place of renewal and progress, as he does in The
Pioneers, Cooper associates the America of 1757 with chaos and destruction.

“There was,” as he writes, “no recess of the woods so dark nor any secret
place so lovely, that it might claim exemption from the inroads of those who
had pledged their blood to satiate the vengeance, or to uphold the cold and
selfish policy of the distant monarchs of Europe.” Peace was “unknown to this
fatal region… its glades and glens rang with the sounds of martial music” (M, 2).
America, Cooper observes, was never innocent history. The Europeans
who settled the continent did not leave their pasts behind them but transported
their rivalries to the frontier. Although the final stage of the French and Indian
Wars (1756-1763), which Mohicans recounts, began in America and spread to
Europe, the seventy-five-year course of that conflict (1698-1763) was, as
Cooper reminds us, only a provincial episode of five centuries of French and British conflict.

The French and Indian Wars were -like the colonial period. They spanned- an extension of the European past, but they were the fullest expression of the barbarity which marked that history. Far from tempering Old War conflicts, the American setting exacerbated them. The military codes which had somewhat restrained the ferocity of European warfare rapidly deteriorated in the wilderness. Massacres and scalpings replaced pitched battles and the exchange of colors. Traditional conceptions of honor yielded to the exigencies of the forests. More important, in the wilderness, British and French combat was no longer a source of national unity but a diverse conflict in which loyalties were compromised and cultural values repeatedly transgressed.

The warfare which Mohicans recounts is as corrosive for Indian values as it is for those of Europe. In much the same way that British and French conventions fall prey to expediency, Indian honor is a casualty of interracial combat. The Mohicans and Iroquois warriors of the novel do not contend for territorial rights but for the favor of their European paymasters. Fueled by whisky and honorary medallions, they violate their treaties and offer their services to the highest bidder. The taking of scalps becomes a commercial rather than a ceremonial practice; hereditary leaders are displaced by renegades who pander to the greed of their followers. Tribal involvement in a European feud is, of course, self-destructive. As allies of the British and the French, the Indians become the agents of their own annihilation. “White cunning,” as Natty observes, has thrown “the tribes into great confusion, as respects friends and enemies; so that the Hurons and the Oneidas, who speak the same tongue…take each other’s scalps” (M,183).
American settlement is not, then, a beacon of hope for human progress but the culmination of centuries of discord. Within the nation’s forests, violence is unchecked by either principle or convention. Regression and not renewal is the product of Europeans encounter with the primitive. Cooper buttresses this assessment of American’s origins of Mohicans’ initial episode, a scene which epitomizes the dislocation implicit in the European adventure in the wilderness. In setting off from Fort Edward adventure to escort Alice and Cora Munro to their father’s encampment at William Henry, Duncan Heyward, an officer of the Royal Americans, recapitulates the thrust of European settlement in the New World. Persuaded by Magua, his Indian guide, that the Munro sisters will be safer apart from the main body of his troops, Heyward abandons the demarcations of the British road for the uncharted paths of the forests. His decision to trust Magua is manifestly foolish. He knows that the scout is a renegade from a tribe allied with the French and that he has been publicly lashed at Munro’s order for his drunkenness, but he refuses to suspect Magua’s motives because he is a fellow servant of the British empire.

In the beginning of Mohicans, two fundamental assumptions are made. First, Heyward’s rash decision establishes the controlling force of history. As vulnerable in the forests as General Braddock, Heyward is indeed a Royal American, a living example of the New World’s failure to effect difference and separation. Second, Heyward’s journey into the wilderness to argue that historical inscription is as damaging as it is limiting. Heyward’s reliance on European convection not only impairs his judgment but also leaves him incapable of either defending Alice and Cora or preserving his own life. Bound by the past, Heyward has no future. The only prospect of his survival and for that of the nascent culture he represents is a denial of history, a renunciation of the European assumptions that have polluted the forests
with blood. That independence cannot be realized by adopting native customs. The British and the French armies of Mohicans only accelerate their destruction by forging alliances with the Indians. Montcalm and Webb are faced with the loss of their reputations and not only because they fail to adapt to American circumstances but also because they link their destines to the savage practices of the tribes. By enlisting the Indians in their conflict, they become regardless of their imagined detachment, the sponsors of bloodshed and destruction.

The European position in America is presented as untenable. By rigidly preserving an Old World perspective, the British and the French fail to realize the New World’s potential for the renewal and become the victims of their obstinacy. But by abandoning civilized restraints to fight with and like the Indians, they become savages unworthy of any victory they might achieve. In Mohicans’ however, there is the framing of a third possibility for American development. As Magua leads Heyward, Alice and Cora deeper into the forest, the party encounters the camp of Natty, Chingachgook, and Uncas, Chingachook’s son. Natty immediately detects Magua’s treachery and warns Heyward of his danger. Unswayed by Heyward’s assurance that Magua “serves with our forces as a friend” (M, 27), Natty argues that “a Mingo is a Mingo” and tells Heyward that a single glance has been sufficient to convince him of Magua’s intentions(Mohicans, IV, p. 29). Natty is capable of certain judgment because he has repudiated both the conventional assumptions of Heyward and Braddock and the moral relativism of Colonel Munro. He has not been, as he later tells Heyward, “too proud to learn from the wit of a native” and can, therefore, prosper in the wilderness (M, 192). But in acquiring that knowledge, Natty has not lapsed into savagery. As he continually insists, he is “a man without a cross,” a
character whose values are determined by the natural law of the forests and not by the historically bound codes of either Europeans or the Indians (M, 60).

In The Last of the Mohicans, an organic conception of time is promoted, but here much greater stress is placed on Natty’s independence from history. His separation from the contending cultures of the novel and not his synthetic function is the crucial aspect of his character. Regardless of this shift in emphasis, Natty’s primary function remains constant. He is, as he was in The Pioneers, a figurative as well as a literal guide whose immunity from the temptations of both the forests and the camps defines a model for national growth. Only by adopting Natty’s uncoded vision can Heyward and young America survive the destruction which claims Mohicans’ European and Indian warriors.

Natty’s capacity to redirect the course of national history is again restricted by his celibacy. Childless and unsuited to the settlements, he cannot directly promote cultural progress. If his life is to have meaning, his values must be assimilated by a socially engaged character. Initially, that transmission seems impossible within the narrative frame of Mohicans. Unlike Oliver Effingham, whose kinship with Natty predates the opening of The Pioneers, Duncan Heyward is resistant to Natty’s influence. Even after he has been convinced of Magua’s treachery, he refuses to permit Natty to kill the renegade because “he may be innocent” (M, 30). Rejecting Natty’s argument that “whoever comes into the woods to deal with the natives must use Indian fashions,” he attempts unsuccessfully to overpower Magua and hold him captive until a court martial can be convened (M, 30). Superficially, Heyward’s scruples suggest his moral superiority. In fact, his reluctance to kill Magua is only another example of his unquestioning adherence to European conventions. Heyward’s chivalry, like that of Montcalm, is a mask which disguises the savage enterprise in
which he is involved. He may wish to treat Magua fairly, but his ultimate mission is the destruction of the tribes.

Natty serves with the British forces, but unlike Heyward and his superior officers, he understands that, “nothing but vast wisdom and unlimited power should dare to sweep off men in multitudes” (M, 170). He is ready to “exterminate” hostile warriors (M, 100) and can, without hesitation, drive his knife through an enemy’s “naked bosom to the heart,” but he predicates that violence on abstract notions of good and evil and not on political or economic imperatives (M, 71). As rigorous as the wilderness circumstances that have formed it, Natty’s virtue is militant, but it is virtue nonetheless.

Heyward’s inability to act on the basis of a similarly unclouded perspective continues to compromise his security. Spared by Heyward’s reliance on alien convections, Magua rallies his war party and intercepts the company as they continue on their way to William Henry. Surrounded at Glenn’s Falls by Magua’s braves and out of ammunition, Natty and Heyward again quarrel over strategy. The women, Natty argues, must be temporarily abandoned while new ammunition is secured. Cora supports Natty’s judgment and tells Heyward that “this is not a time for idle subtleties and false opinions, but a moment when every duty should be equally considered. To us you can be of no further service here” (M, 70). Heyward admits that he is powerless, but he insists on remaining with the sisters while Natty and the Mohicans escape. Natty’s wisdom is, of course, confirmed. Heyward, Alice, Cora, and David Gamut, a choirmaster who has joined their party, are captured and prepared for torture. But Natty, Chingachgook, and Uncas have rearmed and, at a climatic moment, burst into Magua’s camp and free his prisoners.
In *The Last of the Mohicans*, the dual conception of American history as a departure from, and an extension of, the past become explicit. Heyward’s rite of passage presents by choosing between the two options available to him, but offers instead parallel accounts which record, in turn, Heyward’s failure to separate himself from the past and his achievement of an independent identity.

The first of these completing levels of discourse begins immediately after Natty has freed Duncan, Alice, and Cora from Magua’s camp and climaxes in the William Henry massacre. Natty, who has demonstrated his authority by rescuing Heyward and the Munro sisters, charts the path they must follow in the forests. “Better and wiser would it be,” he tells them, “[if] men could understand the signs of nature, and take a lesson from the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field” (M, 112). Books, and the inherited wisdom they record, he concludes, are unreliable guides which only obscure the truth he finds expressed “so clear in the wilderness” (M, 106). Natty’s advice is consistent with the call for the establishment of a distinctive American perspective, but his position is undermined during the rest of the journey to William Henry.

Because the landscape the party crosses has been broken by war, nature’s “signs” no longer transmit eternal verities. The placid water of Lake George is not a model of divine harmony but is an icon which recalls the brutal British victory over Baron Dieskau earlier in the war. The lake, which now bears the name “Bloody Pond,” is haunted by history. The spirits of the dead and dying who were cast into its depth purportedly walk its shores and disrupt the forest’s calming with their shrieks. Nor is the secluded mound on which Alice and Cora recline an instructive emblem of nature’s tranquility. It is instead, Natty tells the sisters, a mass grave which he helped to dig some years before. The only lesson it can teach is the constancy of man’s barbarism. Although “it seemed as if a vast range of country lay buried in eternal
sleep,” nightfall in the forests is not a harbinger of peace but a time of increased
danger (M, 122). “A mighty army,” Natty cautions Heyward is “at rest among yonder
silent trees and barren mountains” (M, 122). That presence redefines the significance
of the “fleecy mantle” of fog that materializes as the dawn approaches. This curtain of
rest becomes a shroud which masks the road to William Henry. There is, in short, no
possibility of reading nature in the way Natty recommends. The signs of providential
order which Natty once detected in the forest have been overlayed by history’s
impenetrable gloss. With the arrival of man, nature’s transcendental code has receded
to a point of absence. Not only is Duncan unable to “take a lesson” from the
wilderness, but Natty, too, is now powerless to interpret its message. Confounded by
what he terms man’s “abuse of nature,” he mistakes his direction and leads Heyward,
Alice, and Cora away from William Henry and into the line of battle.

The Indians’ guilt is not mitigated. They serve as “raging savages” who hover
“at a distance like virtues” and, at Mauga’s command, descend on the fort’s women
and children with unrestrained ferocity. “Heated and maddened” by the flow of
English blood, they “kneeled to the earth, and drank freely, excitingly, hellishly, of
the crimson tide” (M, 162). But regardless of the extravagance of Cooper’s rhetoric,
the Indians are only the agents of the novel’s carnage. Montcalm, who addresses them
as his “children”. Munro, who also enlists the support of the tribes and ultimately the
governments the two leaders serve are the true authors of the William Henry
massacre. The chivalric conceptions of the French and British may disguise the horror
of warfare more effectively than the codes of Indian combat, but the reality of their
mission is the same. By scalping their victims and drinking their blood, the Indians
unmask the violence at the core of human identity. Montcalm and Munro are defined
as parallel figures whose differences are inconsequential, the white and the red warriors at William Henry are people driven by an identical will to power.

Cooper extends this assumption of the universality of human motivation to its logical conclusion by arguing that both the Indians and the Europeans of Mohicans are bound by same historical process. Both cultures are, he maintains, organic entities subject to death. The youth of the tribes is spent; their dissolution is imminent. Temenund, the ancient Mohican chieftain, whose great age is emblematic of the status of tribal life, recognizes the inevitability of that eclipse and mourns the passing of his race. “In the morning,” he tells his diminished people, “I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans” (M, 330). Cooper’s European characters have not entered their final night of cultural experience, but their day too had passed. “The imbecility of her military leaders abroad, and the fatal want of energy in her councils at home,” Cooper observes, “had lowered the character of Great Britain from the proud elevation on which it had been placed by the talents and enterprise of her former warriors and statesman. No longer dreaded by her enemies, her servants were fast losing the confidence of self-respect” (M, 3). Britain’s “mortifying abasement” and “degraded fortunes” are paralleled by the failure of the “restless enterprise of the French” (M, 2). Impelled by his “attention to the forms of courtesy,” Montcalm, Cooper writes, was induced two years after the events of the novel, “to throw away his life on the Plains of Abraham” (M, 141). With that defeat, French hopes for a world empire were dealt a fatal blow. Their Americans conflict is, for the French and British, both a futile exercise—neither side “was destined to retain” the territories they contested— and a preamble to the eventual destruction of imperial power in the French and American revolutions.
There is the reinforcement of the symmetry of the two halves by duplicating in almost exact detail Heyward’s initial dealings with Magua. When Natty identifies a sniper who has fired on the party as an Oneida, a tribe allied with British, Heyward repeats the error of his first encounter with the scout. “The poor fellow,” he tells Natty, “has mistaken us for French or he would not have attempted the life of a friend” (M, 182). Natty efforts to disabuse of his naïve conception of Indian loyalty are as futile as his earlier insistence that Mauga should be killed. Demonstrating the same inappropriate chivalry that permitted Magua to escape, Heyward condemns Natty’s willingness to kill Oneida as “an abuse of his treaties and unworthy of Magua’s character”

When Natty then attempts to avoid a band of Oneida warriors, he again contends with Heyward’s obstinacy.

“Our presence,” Heyward tells him, “the authority of Colonel Munro would prove a sufficient protection against the anger of our allies…I trust, in Heaven, you have not deviated a single foot from the direct line of our course, with so slight a reason” (M, 188).

Natty’s response further illuminates Heyward’s distorted judgment and aligns it with the European blindness which has provoked the William Henry massacre.

“Do you think,” he asks Heyward, “the bullet of that varlet’s rifle would have turned aside, though his sacred majesty the King stood in its path!...Why did not the grand Frencher, he who is captain general of the Canadas, bury the tomahawks of the Hurons, if a world from a white can work such a magic on natur’ of an Indian?” (M, 188)

In reproducing the opening of Mohicans, there is the return to the same point of decision he framed just prior to Heyward’s and Natty’s arrival at William Henry.
Once more the fate of the people and the course of American history depend upon Heyward’s ability to redirect his vision. Rather than preserving the deterministic thesis of the first half of Mohicans, Heyward demonstrates his capacity for growth and achieves a level of autonomy. Instead of advocating a rash assault when the rescuers discover Mauga’s camp, Heyward volunteers to enter the village as a spy. “You have the means to disguise,” he tells Natty, “change me; paint me too, if you will; in short alter me to anything – a fool” (M, 212). Natty reacts to Duncan’s request with “speechless amazement.” Not only has Heyward resigned the chivalric convections which he had maintained at the risk of his life, but he has also abandoned his identity as a Royal American. By donning a disguise, Heyward doesn’t become an Indian but a civilized version of Natty Bumppo – a man capable of surviving in the wilderness while he preserves the “moral courage” without which, Cooper insists, “no man can be truly great” (M, 166).

Heyward’s masquerade is effective. He releases Alice and, with Natty’s help, takes her to a Mohican camp where Mauga has installed Cora. There, he displays his newly won self – reliance. In Heyward’s presence, Mauga tells the Mohican that Natty, whom he describes as an enemy of the tribe, is in their midst. When the Mohicans demand that the scout identify himself, Heyward claims to be “La Longue Carabine,” the name the French have given Natty. His intentions are twofold. First, he seeks to save Natty’s life by offering his own in its place; and second, he attempts to force Mauga’s hand in front of the Mohicans. Heyward, then, has become Natty not only by appropriating his name but also by acquiring his identity through an exhibition of marksmanship, but Heyward’s scheme is successful nonetheless. By delaying Mauga’s vengeance, he gives Uncas sufficient time to win the trust of his tribesmen and secure Natty’s release. Cooper has in this scene effected a thematically
significant exchange. Natty has preserved his identity at the potential cost of his life, while Heyward has abandoned his name to rescue his friend.

In *Mohican’s* Heyward’s cultural paternity is affirmed. The Indian nation has been broken. Uncas, the last hope of his people, and Mauga, the firebrand of their potential revolution, have been killed in the battle. Colonel Munro witnesses the burial of Cora, who has also been slain in the struggle, and is, like major Effingham, consigned to senility and death. Natty and Chungachgook pledge their brotherhood and retreat to the forest to await the final dispossession of The Pioneers. Heyward and Alice seal their engagement and, as others characters depart, they remain as the founders of American future.

As in *The Pioneers*, Cooper secures the promise implicit in their marriage by describing the contemporary condition of the novel’s setting. “There are fashionable and well – attended watering – places,” he tells us, “at and near the spring where Hawk-eye halted to drink, and roads traverse the forests where he and his friends were compelled to journey without even a path. Glenn’s has a large village; and while William Henry, and even a fortress of later date, are only to be traced as ruins, there is another village on the shore of Horican” (M, 7). In a later passage, he reports that “tourist, the valetudinarian, or the amateur of the beauties of nature, in the train of his four-in-hand, now rolls through the scenes we have attempted to describe, in quest of information, health, or pleasure” (M, 134). Within fifty years “the wealth, beauty, and talents, of a hemisphere, were to assemble in throngs,” at one of Natty’s camp sites to enjoy the virtue of Ballston Spa (M, 111).

In *Mohicans*, then, Cooper offsets the skepticism of the novel’s preliminary assumptions. He is not repetitive. Man can escape the determining power of the past. A precursor of the founding fathers of the revolution, Heyward has broken with
Europe to launch an independent national destiny. But regardless of the absolute
terms in Heyward’s triumph, his historical perspective is no less ambiguous in
Mohicans’ than it was in The Pioneers. Two competing paradigms are there. On one
hand, Heyward’s conversion advances a resounding defense of American originality-
from the destruction of the French and Indian Wars, a new national consciousness has
emerged. In Richard Slotkin’s terms, regeneration has been achieved through
violence. And yet, in the Mohicans, a static conception of time. Every culture is
governed by a cyclic process of growth and decline. America’s future, therefore,
necessarily recapitulate the European and the tribal past.

Natty’s rejection of historically bound codes of conduct establishes him as the
fountainhead of American freedom. By following his example, Duncan Heyward has
secured the nation’s departure from the past. Natty’s ability to exempt himself from
human weakness is certainly a consistent feature of his character. Judge Temple,
argues that Natty is “an exception,” a man for whom the restraints of civil law were
unnecessary. Natty is an exception, not in the sense that his self-control is stronger
than that of other men, but in the sense that he is not a man. By distancing himself
from qualities implicit in the centuries of Indian and European warfare which inform
the novel – Natty ceases to be a character and becomes an emblem of unrealizable
desire.

Natty’s exceptional status is transmitted to Duncan Heyward and, Heyward
becomes the progenitor of a race of exceptions. Natty’s transcendent relation with
nature cannot withstand the intrusion of civilizations has been abrogated. The
originality Natty can only enjoy in the pristine wilderness has, become a societal
hallmark. The development of Heyward, is not the result of rite of passage but of a
suspension of logic.
A stubborn but able reliance on convection and not historical necessity becomes the source of cultural decline. The tribes collapse because they refuse to abandon their ancient enmities to oppose the European invasion as a unified force. The English and French armies are destroyed because their leaders are unwilling to adjust their strategies to the circumstances of the frontier. Britain eventually loses its American holdings because it is reluctant to align its colonial policy with progressive developments in North America. The “imbecility” in European dealings in the New World is the product, not of organic decay but of particular mistaken decisions. The difficulty is that the arguments about the constancy of human nature and the viability of reform are not linked. These perspectives operate quite independently in Mohicans. First there is a melancholic view of man’s aspirations and then there are encouragements to celebrate his rebirth and renewal.

Colonel Munro’s authority is broken at William Henry. Heyward succeeds precisely because he repudiates his example and ceases to be a Royal American. By marrying Alice he frees her not only from Indian captivity but from her dependence on her father as well. Heyward’s friendship with Uncas is for a similar purpose. Although the two men are closely aligned Uncas’s death terminates any prospect that he will join with Heyward to reproduce Natty and Chingachgook’s fraternal bond. Indeed, the potential of even a metaphoric racial communion is rejected. There Munro witnesses the burial of Cora & Uncas and asks Natty to tell the gathered Indians that “the time shall not be distant, when we may assemble around his throne without distinction of sex, rank or colour.” Natty scorns Munros request and insists that “to tell them this would be to tell them what the snows come not in winter, or that the sun shines fiercest when the trees are stripped of their leaves” (M, 328). Heyward is not a mediator like Oliver Effingham but a man whose identity is predicated on his
independencer from the Mohicans and the Iroquois, the British and the French. His hard-won particularity by insisting that America’s history will retrace the course of Old World is to seriously misread his intentions.

In taking savage allies one cannot, at crucial moments, control, one risks, almost invites, ruthless measures of warfare. Since the Indians have their own code of battle, to fight alongside then against a common enemy is to become a party to the result. To hope for the best, to hope that they will, in civilized terms, behave themselves, is at best self-delusion, at worst hypocrisy. There levies a heavy responsibility on Montcalm for the massacre. Aware of the danger, Montcalm mentions his Huron allies to Duncan Heyward during a peace talk by saying, “I find it difficult, even now, to limit them to the usages of war.” The remark, which is meant as a warning to force the British to an early surrender, serves also as an admission of limited authority. In this sense it is a confidence from one civilized man to another that danger is to be apprehended from the forces of savagery—the ultimate enemy. On the night before the battle Montcalm muses over the “deep responsibility they assume who disregard the means to attain their end, and of all the danger of setting in motion an engine which it exceeds human power to control.” But he shakes off such reflections as evidences of weakness in the moment of triumph and takes no steps to avert the impending disaster.

When Leatherstocking and his party are making their way toward the Fort, for example, they are challenged in the darkness by a young French sentry. Answering in French (as only the gentleman hero could), Heyward succeeds in fooling the sentry. The young Frenchman gallantly bids the ladies good-night, assures them of Montcalm’s hospitality, and hums a gay tune to himself as the party moves away. A moment later, Leatherstocking and Heyward hear a terrible groan, and Heyward
notices that Chingachgook is missing from their group. While they hesitate in uncertainty, Chingachook glides out of a thicket and rejoins them:

“with one hand he attached the reeking scalp of unfortunate young Frenchman to his girdle, and with the other he replaced the knife and tomahawk that had drunk his blood. He than took his wonted station, with the air of a man who believed he had done a deed of merit.”

The sudden and shocking nature of the deed has its effect on Leatherstocking. He leans on his rifle, “musing in profound silence. Then shaking his head in a mournful manner, he muttered, “’t would have been cruel and an inhuman act for a white-skin; but’t is the gift and natur’ of an Indian, and I suppose it could not be denied. I could wish, though, it had befallen an accursed Mingo, rather than that gay young boy from the old countries.’” There are the dangers inherent in taking Indian allies and prefigures the larger massacre in which Montcalm is involved. In any struggle between the good guys and the bad guys one feels able to count Chingachgook, a warrior of experience, bravery, wisdom, and craft. And, indeed, one can. Yet suddenly the sentry seems kind, generous, and civilized, while Chingachgook’s violent deeds prove embarrassing and saddening. Leatherstocking sees this clearly and can do nothing about it (except to wish that the victim had been an enemy Indian).

The Huron allies of the French exemplify the wild and savage violence that Montcalm’s (and Cooper’s) civilization has supposedly grown beyond, that it has harnessed, repressed, or made latent by means of self-protective rules of warfare. When such violence, however latent, is unleashed, and Montcalm stands by, a spectator to the massacre, Cooper blames him as if he were participating in the atrocity. And Montcalm is of course participating: he has allied himself with savage
forces, against which, when they erupt, the forms of civilization are helpless and meaningless.

Leatherstocking, Uncas, and Chingachgook are re-admitted to the narrative three days after the savage massacre at the Fort. They survey a scene barren and desolate: the weather has undergone such a “frightful change” that corpses “which had blankened beneath the fierce heats of August, were stiffening in their deformity, before the blast of a premature November.” Cooper’s imagination has worked, with moral distress up to and through a moment of history.

Together with Heyward and Major Munro, Leatherstocking and the Mohicans spend a night among the ruins of the Fort while deciding on a plan of pursuit which will control the action from this point onward. The father is “in quest of his children.” Thus the pattern of the chase is inverted and reinvigorated. Major Munro, however, has almost as little to do in the wilderness as Leatherstocking and the Mohicans had to do in the Fort. In a trance-like state, he is virtually dragged along on the “quest” because his presence is demanded by the plot. The chief work falls to Leatherstocking, Heyward, and, of course, Uncas, who assumes an increasingly important role moves the ruins of history toward a final world of legend and romance.

The novel *The Last of the Mohicans* is a novel with three kinds of protagonists, one savage, one civilized, one standing between. Despite the fact that they stand on either side of Leatherstocking at the time of his death, neither Hard Heart nor Middleton figure as importantly in *The Prairie* as do their counterparts in *The Mohicans*. The three protagonists are almost as a unit. With few exceptions they are together throughout the story, each acting out his own kind of heroism, each complementing the others even as he is complemented by them. During a fierce
skirmish with Hurons (in which Heyward arms himself with a tomahawk), the three
dispatch an enemy in a trinity of violence.

Uncas, the last of the Mohicans and the savage hero, is significantly exempt
from much of the violence and ferocity which pervade the novel. After the above
mentioned skirmish with Hurons, Chingachgook moves silently about, taking the
scalps of the enemy dead. “But Uncas,” says Cooper, “deyying his habits, we had
almost said his nature, flew with instinctive delicacy, accompanied by Heyward, to
the assistance of the females.” The sight of Cora and Alice in each other’s arm moves
Heyward to manly tears. As for Uncas, he “stood fresh and blood-stained from the
combat, a calm, and, apparently, an unmoved looker-on, it is true, but with eyes that
had already lost their fierceness, and were beaming with a sympathy that elevated him
far above the intelligence, and advanced him probably centuries before the practices
of his nation.”

Uncas lacks nothing in the way of bravery, manliness, and an Indian thirst of
battle. In the forest he repeatedly displays greater perception than either his father or
Leatherstocking; in battle he is athletic and fearless. Uncas does take a scalp. In the
ruins of Fort William Henry, when a Mingo shoots at Chingachgook from the dark,
Uncas conquers the world—be assassin and returns to the campfire with a fresh scalp at
his belt. Cora and Alice are not present there and perceive further that Cooper never
has Uncas never performs such an act of violence when the ladies are present. Uncas,
the image of Indian nobility, is made an exception to qualify him for his special place
and in the world. For Uncas, is attracted to Cora, whom he admires silently,
courteously, but unmistakably. In waiting on the girls, Uncas shows a preference for
Cora. In the first rescue of Heyward’s party he leaps instinctively to her assistance;
during the final pursuit of Mauga and Cora, he bounds far ahead of Heyward and Leatherstocking, is impelled by a more personal if otherwise unexpressed feeling.

The trio protagonists, Uncas, Leatherstocking, and Heyward, ably assisted by Chingachgook, present a formidable array of intelligence and craft, strength and determination. Combating them is Mauga, who certainly has his work cut out for him. In attempting to solve his problem, to have permitted Mauga’s conception is reshaped. At first, Mauga appears base, almost cowardly, a hopeless renegade. His tribe has cast him out, apparently because of his conduct while he is repeatedly drunk. He joins the British forces fighting against his own tribe, but is humiliated by a whipping administered on orders from Major Munro. He is an outcast who lives by treachery and betrayal, who seems only a foil for the Indian virtues of Uncas. After the battle at Glenn’s Falls, however, Mauga is somehow in command of a band of Hurons. Before the massacre at Fort William Henry he appears mysteriously in the dark to a brooding Montcalm, a virtual embodiment of Montcalm’s uneast conscience, and speaks to the French commander in authoritative tones. Later, in his tribal village, he is revealed as a powerful orator, crafty and overly conscious of his skill, to be sure, but capable of influencing the decisions of his tribe; he is said to be intelligent, “far above the vulgar superstitious” of his people. He is a chief, who has completely regained the confidence of his tribe, and he has become, “in truth, their ruler.” At this point he is even compared to “the Prince of Darkness, brooding on his own fancied wrongs and plotting evil,” an image far from that of the early Mauga skulking treacherously through the forest. The enemy of Leatherstocking, Chingachgook, and Heyward, Mauga ultimately stands opposed to Uncas, whose nobility of character demands a significant antagonist.
When the Indian maidens chant of their re-union in another world

Leatherstocking shakes his head negatively, “like one who knew the error of their simple creed.” Happily for the self-command of Heyward and Munro, “they know not the meaning of the wild sounds they heared.” Cora’s mixture of blood, which allows for the admiration of Uncas, proves in the end a fatal inheritance. For Uncas is himself the last of a high race, a warrior of “unmixed” blood, whose purity of descent accounts for his dignity and nobility. He exemplifies a principle of order in the midst of the wild disorder of the world in which he lives, where tribes in a hopeless confusion of loyalties caused by the influx of civilization.

Mauga, on the other hand, is an example of how the vices of civilization may corrupt savage nobility. With features of potential greatness about him. Mauga has fallen, victim, end-product, and finally breeder of disorder. Since social order seems to depend upon solidarity, unity, and purity of race, Cora, the dark lady introduces her own legacy of disorder which involves Mauga and precipitates the death of the high-born Uncas.

The sense of absolute finality in Uncas’ death and burial has the most powerful effect. A feeling of shock pervades the end. Without the ponderous and formal movement of the death ritual, it is as if the men might freeze in attitudes of woe. At the grave of Uncas stands the opposite pole from those involving Fort William Henry. The men who derive from domesticity fiction have departed for the settlements. They, in their turn, have been dismissed from the novel. History has given way to legend, manners to ritual. At times clumsily, at times adventitiously, in *The Last of the Mohicans* a change from conventional romance to a moment of history which, by means of violence and atrocity, burns itself to ruins. Then, with all preparations made, the ruins of history to mourn the death of Uncas is put in the most exalted world of
romance. And in the course of all this Cooper has managed to uncover issues and concerns which are of startling relevance to the American (and human) experience.

Thus the Indians have to loose their land because the whites snatch everything from them. They suffer abandonment in their own land and have to give up everything to the whites. The irony is that a person becomes destitute in his own land because someone more powerful have come to take their happiness, possessions and whatever is theirs.