

WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

The Last of the Mohicans

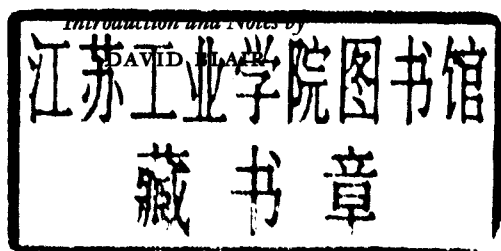
J. FENIMORE COOPER



COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

James Fenimore Cooper



WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

In loving memory of
MICHAEL TRAYLER
the founder of Wordsworth Editions

7

Readers who are interested in other titles from
Wordsworth Editions are invited to visit our website at
www.wordsworth-editions.com

For our latest list and a full mail-order service contact
Bibliophile Books, 5 Thomas Road, London E14 7BN
TEL: +44 (0) 207 515 9222 FAX: +44 (0) 207 538 4115
E-MAIL: orders@bibliophilebooks.com

This edition published 1993 by Wordsworth Editions Limited
8B East Street, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 9ET
Introduction and Notes added 2002

ISBN 978-1-85328-049-0

Text © Wordsworth Editions Limited 1993
Introduction and Notes © David Blair 2002

Wordsworth® is a registered trade mark of
Wordsworth Editions Limited

All rights reserved. This publication may not be
reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or
transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic,
mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without the prior permission of the publishers.

Typeset by Antony Gray
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Wordsworth Classics are inexpensive editions designed to appeal to the general reader and students. We commissioned teachers and specialists to write wide ranging, jargon-free introductions and to provide notes that would assist the understanding of our readers rather than interpret the stories for them. In the same spirit, because the pleasures of reading are inseparable from the surprises, secrets and revelations that all narratives contain, we strongly advise you to enjoy this book before turning to the Introduction.

General Adviser
KEITH CARABINE
Rutherford College
University of Kent at Canterbury

INTRODUCTION

The Last of the Mobicans (hereinafter *Mobicans* for short) was published in 1826 and was the second of the group of five novels, known as 'the Leatherstocking Tales', for which James Fenimore Cooper is now best known. The name derives from the central character who appears in all of them at various stages of his life and under various titles. In the first of the novels to be published, *The Pioneers* (1823), he is called Leatherstocking; in *Mobicans* he is Hawk-eye; in the third of them, *The Prairie* (1827), he is known as the Trapper. The two later novels in the series, *The Pathfinder* (1840) and *The Deerslayer* (1841), take their titles from his other aliases.

Cooper's first novel, *Precaution*, had been written in 1820 when he was in his thirty-first year, and it had been published in 1821, a year which also saw the appearance of his second novel, *The Spy*. The first represented something of a false start – in subject and in manner it

was female and very 'English', as its closeness in title to Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1818) might suggest – but *The Spy* was a novel set amid the American Revolution, and in it Cooper discovered and demonstrated the possibilities of the historical novel using American materials. It was instantly popular, going through three editions in six months, and *The Pioneers*, his next novel, sold 3,500 copies on the day after it was published. Cooper's popularity was sensational, and by his death in 1851, one day short of his sixty-second birthday, he had written thirty-two novels besides other books and essays. The instantaneous nature of Cooper's literary success is the more remarkable in that, as Stephen Railton remarks, 'publishing a novel in Cooper's America was a lot like pioneering a settlement in the wilderness'.¹ Even more remarkable was the success that his novels enjoyed beyond America. Cooper was not the first American novelist, as is sometimes claimed on his behalf, but he was the first to gain popularity and a degree of critical recognition on an international scale. He was not merely a national figure, therefore, but, as Daniel Peck writes, 'a national hero' (Peck, p. 3).

Cooper's igniting of the American historical novel can be thought of as the second defining moment of interaction between British and American fiction in the first half-century of American independence. The first had occurred in the 1790s, when the Philadelphian Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810) had possessed and Americanised the materials of the Gothic novel, then at its peak in England, combining these with the prose style and the politics of the radical philosopher and novelist William Godwin (1756–1836), author of the quasi-Gothic *Caleb Williams* (1794). The result was a series of novels, *Weiland*, *Ormond*, *Arthur Mervyn* and *Edgar Huntley*, all published in 1798 and 1799, which probed, sometimes bizarrely, the possibilities of 'Gothic' being realised in American settings and the American experience, and whose status as early American novels has grown considerably since Leslie Fiedler's influential discussion of Brown's work at a time when his reputation was, as Fiedler reflected, 'still moot' (Fiedler, p. 153).

By the time Cooper turned to novel-writing some twenty years after Brown's best work had been published, the British novel had been transformed by the work of Sir Walter Scott, and the label of

1 Railton, p. 69. For publication details see the Select Bibliography that follows this Introduction. In subsequent references to items in the Bibliography the author's surname and page number will follow the citation in parentheses.

'the American Scott' is one that has persistently attached itself to Cooper from the time of *The Spy's* publication. Contemporary reviewers both in America and in Europe were obsessed with the comparison, as the selection of early commentary on Cooper's novels edited by Dekker and McWilliams amply illustrates; and these commentators very often explored the comparison in order to arrive at a lofty critical assertion of the artistic superiority of one or other of the two (usually but not invariably Scott). More pertinent for the modern reader of *Mobicans* and Cooper's other historical novels is the way in which Cooper appropriates Scott's literary techniques and his imaginative engagement with history.

Scott's novels are no longer read universally as they were in the nineteenth century, and this facet of Cooper's writing, which arguably over-exercised his contemporaries, is therefore in danger of being under-appreciated by modern readers. Scott's importance in shaping the practice of the American historical novel has been the subject of an extensive and probing study by George Dekker (Dekker, 1987), and readers who want a fuller account of this should turn to his work. For purposes of approaching *Mobicans*, however, a number of specific aspects of Scott's work can be more briefly discussed and their influence identified in Cooper's novel.

Novelists before Scott had *set* novels in the past, but what Scott distinctively did was to use historical settings not just with a more meticulous attention to detail but as a means of reflecting deeply on the forces that shaped history and therefore shaped the present. In his first novel, *Waverley* (1814), he looked back on the events of 1745-6, the era of the Second Jacobite Rebellion in Britain, when forces loyal to the exiled House of Stuart, which had been disempowered at the 'Glorious Revolution' in 1688, made their last, doomed attempt by armed struggle to reclaim the British throne. For Scott, a political conservative by instinct, this final resolution of the post-1688 tensions in British history represented a defining moment, one that had determined the world his readers occupied and determined it for their benefit. Much of the glamour, the loyalism and the older, chivalric heroism which had coloured the Jacobite cause had been jettisoned along with its ideology, which was in one sense regrettable, but the final defeat of Jacobitism marked the definitive emergence of Britain into constitutional modernity, as Scott implicitly invited his readers to see it. Part of *Waverley's* agenda, therefore, was to reflect on the balance between real loss and real progress that accompanied historical change; part was further to suggest that 'modern', post-Jacobite Britain had

expunged the models of monarchic power and feudal prerogative that had characterised pre-Revolutionary France, and consequently that the forces in Scott's Britain that advocated radical, even revolutionary, change were fundamentally mistaken in their reading of their present and their past.

In this way the model of the historical novel that Scott launched with *Waverley* set out not just to recapture and reanimate the past, but to involve the readers in a reflective engagement on the relationship between that past and their reading present. As with *Waverley*, Cooper in *Mohicans* sets the action of the novel not quite seventy years prior to the date of its publication. In an American context, of course, this crucially places the action in a colonial rather than an independent America, and the novel is in this way narrated across the divide represented by the successful Revolution against British colonial power. Even as original American readers of the novel imagined the smoke of French and English cannon floating across the shores of Lake George, therefore, they could not do so without a consciousness of the futility with which the two ancient European powers were contesting possession of what history and the spirit of American independence had since made their own.

This ironic historical perspective is pointedly built into Cooper's opening pages: England and France are seen waging a war 'for the possession of a country that neither was destined to retain' (p. 3) and this remark is closely followed by disparaging comments on the 'mortifying abasement' of Britain as a military and colonial force. A glimpse of the young George Washington's role at Fort Duquesne (see Cooper's footnote on p. 3) adds to the sense that in this tired combat of the colonial dinosaurs lie the seeds of the liberation of a more vigorous, more youthful America. For Munro, the (historical) British commander of Fort William Henry, Cooper has some sympathy: his role as the (fictional) father to the two heroines, Alice and Cora, places his paternal feelings close to the sentimental heart of the novel; but he is embattled, militarily betrayed by his own side, and even by the middle of the book he is a broken man. In Montcalm, the French commander, on the other hand, Cooper embodies old-European patrician presumption unelevated by any consistent moral sense or sentiment. The responsibility that the novel lays at his door for events at Fort William Henry is compounded by reflection on his previous career (see p. 157 and Note 106). Cooper in fact deliberately omits any mention of the historical Montcalm's efforts to avert the course of the massacre and restrain the brutalities of his Indian allies.

In other ways too Cooper reminds his readers of the ways in which

historical change has rapidly overwritten the landscape of the novel. The high-impenetrable wilderness of the opening paragraph, against which the would-be colonial powers had struggled, has now been opened up by the vigour and westward expansion of an independent America. The 'tourist' can now traverse in a four-in-hand the landscapes described in the novel, or can 'float' through them on the recently-constructed Erie Canal (see p. 132 and Note 80). The scene of the first fight to recapture Cora and Alice from Magua is now a spa-town of fashionable resort (see Cooper's footnote on p. 111). The frontier has moved west: in *The Pioneers*, set in the 1790s, Cooper had imagined a part of this landscape of upstate New York, near to which *Mobicans* takes place and in which he had grown up, being settled and townscaped. To rediscover this pioneering moment he would take the action of his next Leatherstocking tale far into the mid-western prairies opened up to American enterprise by the Louisiana purchase of 1803. There, in *The Prairie*, Leatherstocking/Hawk-eye/Bumppo reappears, now over eighty years old, to continue his reflections on, and troubled negotiation with, the ethics and imperatives of white American expansionism.

This kind of reflection on the processes of historical change, as it occurs in Scott's novels, is vitally underpinned by the currency in the imagined world of the novel of oral history. As soon as we arrive in the version of the past that Scott has reconstructed we begin to hear his characters rehearsing their own ideas of an earlier past, often to validate their own ideological positions. History has been handed down to his characters in the forms of chronicle, anecdote, hearsay, legend, genealogy, sometimes – for the older characters – personal recollection, imperfect as that may be. As we hear competing groups of figures reflect in their different ways on a shared past, we are made aware that national history is not one monolithic, consensual narrative but is plural and contested. This in Cooper's hands becomes a defining feature of *Mobicans*. We hear his white characters doing a certain amount of this retrospective work in the novel – Hawk-eye, for example, recalls earlier phases of the colonial wars in which he was engaged, Munro narrates how his two daughters originate respectively from post-Union Scotland and from British colonial expansion in the Caribbean. However, it is through the currency of oral history in the world of the novel that Cooper explores what is arguably its central historical issue, the effect of colonial and post-colonial expansion on the Native American peoples. It is through their historical narratives in *Mobicans* that we are made to feel the great, problematic tension between the phase of the American past

that the novel reanimates and an older past that in part antedates even colonial enterprise.

In Chapter 3 of the novel, after the formal descriptive introduction of Hawk-eye and Chingachgook, the dialogue that Cooper 'translates' for us plunges straight into this issue. Chingachgook's oral traditions speak of his ancestors coming east across the Mississippi and taking by force from the 'Maquas' (see Note 26) the lands they subsequently occupied as their own. Hawk-eye argues that this is essentially comparable to the white man's more recent conquest of those same lands; but Chingachgook challenges this – a war between naked Indians similarly armed cannot be equated with the white man's conquest by gun and bullet. Hawk-eye is obliged to concede that his race's ways of conquest have not been and are not entirely creditable, a reflection that is echoed in Cooper's 1826 Preface (see Appendix, pp. 331–4). Chingachgook then takes Hawk-eye and the reader, in Cooper's version of his people's own idiom, through these narratives of possession and dispossession, recalling a past that he himself never experienced: the 'salt lake', the Dutch, their 'fire-water', the Mohicans 'driven from the shores' and diminished now to himself and Uncas.

This is the first of the loops of tribal historical narrative that Cooper weaves around the action of *Mohicans*. Later in the novel we will hear other oral historians of the tribal past: the Hurons too have their versions of the past and their distinctive grievances, as we hear in part from Magua in Chapter 29, although consistently with his pejorative portrayal of them in the novel, Cooper gives them a less coherent and philosophical, more fragmented oral tradition. In Tamenund, however, Cooper resurrects a figure in whom the history of the Delaware people is embodied and by whom, in virtue of his improbable longevity, much of it has been lived. Confronting him, Cora strives to make him recall recent events as his memory shifts back to the time when, as a boy, he 'stood upon the sands of the sea-shore, and saw a big canoe, with wings whiter than the swan's . . . come from the rising sun' (p. 287). Note that in the narrative that Chingachgook possesses as part of tribal memory the sea is 'the salt lake', a phrase that endeavours to construct the unknown in terms of the known; but Tamenund knew it at first hand and for him it carries its own name. Tamenund thus brings deliberate authority to the narratives of displacement, dispossession and debasement that are central to these strands of oral history in Cooper's novel; and just as Hawk-eye found himself nonplussed on behalf of his race by Chingachgook's arguments in Chapter 3, so here, at what is a vital

dramatic crisis for the plot, Cora is baffled and defeated not merely by Tamenund's seeming indifference to her prompting but by the way in which his reception of her case is coloured by the role that her race has played in his life and the lives of his people. One kind act by her father cannot undo a century and a half of injury; and it is with a 'head nearly crushed to the earth with shame' (p. 288) that she hears his denunciations.

To Cooper's handling of the 'Indian' subject matter in *Mobicans* and the controversies surrounding it I shall return later in this Introduction. Meanwhile, however, in the context of his reading of Scott, what invites attention is the way in which Cooper has brilliantly dismantled the materials that he found in the original and reassembled them in a way that allows the American historical novel to participate in Scott's investigation of the balance between the desirability of historical progress and its inevitable accompaniments of loss and dispossession. In Chapter IX of Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817), the Catholic, Jacobite heroine, Diana Vernon, laments that 'persons of birth and rank' should be subject to official sanction 'merely for believing as the whole world believed not much above a hundred years ago'; and the feudalists and Jacobites of Scott's Scottish novels, and the Saxons of his *Ivanhoe* – looking back plaintively to a time when they were in uncontested possession of the world – have been reinvented in *Mobicans* as Cooper's Native Americans. As Dekker points out, one of the key roles of the Leatherstocking/Hawk-eye figure in these novels by Cooper is thus to act as an 'interpreter or mediator', operating across a 'cultural gulf' between the Natives and the forces of 'progress' which Dekker suggests is even wider than that observed in Scott's novels (Dekker, 1987, pp. 40–1).

As Scott could combine a romanticist's elegiac homage to ancient political and racial traditions with a recognition of the inevitability of their sacrifice to the evolution of the modern British state, so Cooper's sympathetic engagement with tribal narratives of ancestral possession and his critical engagement with the uglier aspects of white expansionism have their political limits. The sidelong glances at the Erie Canal and the elegant enjoyments of Ballston Spa remind us of this: if the title of the novel strikes an elegiac note, we need also to notice that we are being invited, in however plangent a tone, to see 'the last' of something whose disappearance was inevitable. *Mobicans*, as already mentioned, is what in recent years has become known as a 'prequel' to *The Pioneers*, where Cooper had already observed the beginnings of westward expansion and the clearing of the wilderness by post-Revolution America, where 'each new clearing furnished a

sign of the increasing temporal greatness of the nation; and each new clearing also signified, quite palpably, the sacrifice of an ancient and in some ways noble race and way of life' (Dekker, 1967, p. 65). This is what another commentator on *Mohicans* has more recently labelled 'the tragedy of inexorable process' (Terence Martin, in Peck, p. 47), and in the 1820s it derived an additional topicality from the acceleration of programmes for dispossession and resettlement of the native tribes. The territory in which the novel is set is the site of older struggles for possession than that between France and Great Britain, but like these more recent colonisers neither the Delaware nor the Iroquois have been 'destined to retain' it.

In *Waverley* and his other major novels, Scott had demonstrated a striking imaginative boldness, and it was this boldness of conception, as much as the subtler philosophical strands of his project, that had rapt the attention of readers and other writers like Cooper. By making them conscious interpreters of their own history, Scott had endowed fictional characters, moving round the edges of 'official' history, with historical identity: the most compelling of his figures are not just types or universals but are subtly the product of their distinctive past and present, and for Marxist critic Georg Lukacs, this encapsulation through character of 'social trends and historical forces'² was Scott's defining contribution to the historical novel. More specifically, however, Scott had engineered brilliantly the interaction between fictional characters and actions on the one hand and 'real' historical characters and actions on the other. At the centre of *Waverley*, the titular hero, after spending half the novel in a fictionalised version of the hinterland of the Jacobite world, meets face to face and is acknowledged by the Young Pretender, Prince Charles Edward. He then goes on to fight (albeit not very vigorously) in the Battle of Prestonpans (21 September 1745), which Scott carefully reconstructs. This splicing of the fictional into the historical was something of an artistic coup, and in *Mohicans*, possibly the most *Waverley*-esque of all his novels in this respect, Cooper places at the centre of the novel his reconstruction of the infamous massacre at Fort William Henry on 9 August 1757.

Cooper approaches this much as Scott might have done, with a concern for authenticity and so with detailed research. Two books in particular provided much of his geographical and historical material, Timothy Dwight's *Travels in New England and New York*

² Georg Lukacs, *The Historical Novel*, translated by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, Merlin Press, 1962, p. 33

(1821-2) and Jonathan Carver's *Three Years' Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America* (1784), the latter providing the detailed account of the massacre that Cooper follows closely in the novel. The resultant account of the events leading up to the massacre and the massacre itself is arguably as compelling as anything in Scott – not merely authentic and persuasive, but brilliantly paced and exhilaratingly written. The thoroughness of Cooper's reimagining of the scene of the historical event is also striking: he reconstructs meticulously the terrain around Lake George at this historical moment, and when in Chapter 14 Cooper has the party comprising Hawk-eye, Chingachgook, Heyward, Alice, Cora and Gamut ascend a summit to get a better view of the surroundings of the fort as they approach it, he describes the whole scene as lying 'like a map beneath their feet' (p. 129). As we follow Cooper's extended description of the scene, the permanent, recognisable features of the landscape are, on this 'map', meticulously overlaid by the local signifiers of the historical conflict, the armies, the camp, 'the lurid smokes, that were easily to be distinguished from the purer exhalations of the springs', and the fort itself. Here, as at the earlier scene at Glenn's falls, the appropriation of places that he himself had visited in the 1820s and found deeply marked by subsequent human use, involves, as Wayne Franklin points out, Cooper having imaginatively to 'erase the signs of human possession from nature' (in Peck, p. 35), bringing these scenes back to their 'original state' before reinscribing them with the episodes of his narrative. On the shores of Lake George his brilliant reconstruction of the fort and the colonial armies is itself a momentary illusion prior to their destruction and erasure through the massacre itself, leaving the spot once more in 'wildness and desolation' (p. 168).

Engineering the intrusion of the fictional romance plot into the historical moment embroils Cooper in other difficulties, however. He clearly recognises the problems, but his considered solution to them has been often criticised. For Munro, the British commander of the fort at the moment of the massacre, he chooses to invent two fictional daughters, Alice and Cora, the one fair, the other dark – a cliché that Cooper could have found in Scott's *Waverley* (Rose and Flora) or *Ivanhoe* (Rowena and Rebecca) or elsewhere. Wherever he found it, he would have found also the operation of a decorum that determines that there is a romantic hero (Edward Waverley, Wilfred of Ivanhoe) who has to marry the fair heroine; so he provides Heyward as escort to both daughters but as the sentimental lover of the perpetually trembling and frequently prostrate Alice. Further

prompted by hints in Scott, Heyward is endowed with an imaginative disposition that leads him often to fantasise his guardianship and romantic interest in terms borrowed from chivalric romance, as in his dream in Chapter 13, where he is 'a knight of ancient chivalry, holding his midnight vigils before the tent of a recaptured princess' (p. 117). These tropes of romantic plotting, while enjoying general currency at the time, do not transfer altogether comfortably to Cooper's more rugged setting; but clichés notwithstanding, Cooper then has to have this grouping of fictional characters, in whom the romance plot of the novel is invested, inserted into the William Henry scenario on the eve of the historical massacre. This necessitates an absurdity that did not escape the novel's earliest readers. Cora and Alice 'very naturally select this as the most convenient moment for paying Papa a visit', sneered one hostile commentator (quoted in Dekker & McWilliams, p. 86); but even a friendly reviewer felt obliged to note that 'filial piety' was a 'motive . . . scarcely sufficient to justify leaving the safer quarters of Webb, for a besieged and ill-prepared fortress; where, however amiable on any other occasion, they could do no possible good' (in Dekker & McWilliams, p. 93). This implausibility is further compounded by the fact that the daughters are allowed to make the journey by a short-cut and under the guidance only of Heyward and an Indian runner, Magua. Gamut, furthermore, is inexplicably tacked on to the party for no other purpose than to replicate the garrulous comic-eccentric character that was one of Scott's stocks-in-trade.

The plotting of the novel has several awkward contrivances, of which these are the first. Some of the feats of tracking in the novel, for example, especially on the journey north in search of the captured sisters, have attracted scepticism, as has the ludicrous over-complication, as some have seen it, of the multiple devices and disguises used to penetrate the Indian encampments in which the sisters are held – 'no chases more thrilling and absurd . . . no rescues more hair-raisingly ridiculous', as one critic has remarked (Fiedler, p. 201). The presence of Munro in the second half of the novel is also an embarrassment. As the historical Munro he need have no part in the novel after the massacre, but having grafted fatherly sentiment on to his historical role, Cooper has to keep him going, transplanting him from the historical plot into the romance plot. Broken, therefore, by the historical events (see Note 102), and further enfeebled, rather than energised, by paternal anxiety, Munro is 'slumbering and unconscious' as Hawk-eye, Chingachgook and Uncas discuss their strategy for pursuit (p. 185), and he

subsequently has to tag along with nothing much to do except occasionally to express his concerns for his 'babes' (p. 195, p. 207). The narrative effectively has to 'hide' him much of the time during these passages of the novel.

If Munro's continued presence constitutes one of the more awkward transitions between the two halves of the novel, pre- and post-massacre, in other ways Cooper uses this division strategically and interestingly. Something of how he conceives of this diptych structure can be gleaned from looking at some aspects of the 'hinge', as one might think of it, comprising Chapter 18, during which the central figures re-enter the scene of the massacre prior to commencing their northward journey.

The chapter opens pointedly with the narrator having for the moment completely stepped away from conducting the novel: the first paragraph starts almost in the idiom of one of Cooper's footnotes or of the earliest sentences of Chapter 1. Cooper is here in a sense formally restarting the novel, and in so doing he is able to redefine his narrative territory and his methods. At the novel's opening, the reflection on 'the colonial wars' (p. 1) set up a first half which would climax with one of the most infamous incidents of those wars. At this mid-point recommencement, however, the reflection on the massacre's role in 'the pages of colonial history' (p. 166) opens a paragraph which ends with a formal withdrawal from the 'sacred precincts' of Clio, the Muse of History (see Note 114). The occasion of this divorce is overtly the failure of written history to reflect properly the failings of Montcalm's character, but Cooper's explicit reversion to '[his] own humble vocation' announces that the trajectory of the second half of the novel is going to be different, and that henceforward fiction's engagement with history will be more tangential.

At the start of the novel all the characters were invariably observed and described – in some cases via their horses – before speaking or being named, and now again at this restart the remaining characters are rather oddly reintroduced as five unnamed figures seen crossing the landscape around the ruined fort before the narrative reacknowledges their identities (p. 169). Most striking, however, is the way in which this passage of the novel reinscribes the landscape that the figures cross. It is marked not only by the inevitable signs of human violence but by the 'frightful change' in the season: in three days August has become November. It is safe to say that Cooper did not research the weather around upstate New York in the first fortnight of August 1757: his regretful adieux to Clio over, Cooper has liberated himself

to overlay historical landscape with mythic landscape – as he urges the reader to notice, this is now ‘like some pictured allegory of life’ (p. 167). If the sudden, premature onset of winter is symbolically resonant of the brutalities of the massacre, on another level it seems also to reflect the disappearance of the young women. The capture of Cora and Alice takes on in the passage some of the same mythic force as the snatching of Persephone into the underworld: with them and the female energies that they embody have disappeared all the ‘favouring light’ and ‘genial temperature’, all fertility and pleasing ‘shadowing’. The undertaking of their recovery in this second half of the novel, as distinct from the rescue from their first and briefer captivity in the first half, accordingly takes on some of the characteristics of a quest as well as an adventure, and appropriately it takes the reader and those questing into the heart of a kind of another, nether world.

The role played by Chingachgook and Uncas alongside Hawk-eye in the novel’s first half initiates, as has already been seen, the discourse of tribal history and dispossession in the novel. The inimical role played by Magua and his ‘Mingoes’ equally initiates anxieties about the fragmentation of the ‘Indian’ character, and about violence and ‘savagery’ which find one apocalyptic culmination in the William Henry massacre itself. It is in this second half of the novel, however, that these issues are most fully examined by Cooper. The quest for Cora and Alice is made to function as the channel of penetration into the social and political centre of the tribal cultures, whereas the adventures and horrors of the first half were encounters only with their runners, outriders and mercenaries.

In an important review of *The Spy* for the *North American Review* in July 1822 (reprinted in an edited form in Dekker & McWilliams, pp. 55–66), the influential literary commentator W. H. Gardiner had proposed a number of areas of American history that might be addressed by the historical novel. Among these he suggested that the Indian peoples were an appropriate, ‘highly poetical’ subject:

Gradually receding before the tread of civilization, and taking from it only the principle of destruction, they seem to be fast wasting to utter dissolution; and we shall one day look upon their history with . . . emotions of curiosity and wonder . . . At any rate we are confident that the savage warrior . . . tracking his foe through the pathless forest, with instinctive sagacity, by the fallen leaf, the crushed moss, or the bent blade, patiently enduring cold, hunger and watchfulness, while he crouched in

the night-grass like the tiger expecting his prey, and finally springing on the unsuspecting victim with that war-whoop . . . is no mean instrument of the sublime and terrible of human agency. And if we may credit the flattering pictures of their best historian, the indefatigable Heckewelder, not a little of softer interest might be extracted from their domestic life . . . [p. 62]

The suggestions in this passage that point towards *Mohicans* are unmistakable, even if without Gardiner's prompting Cooper might have gone on to examine 'Indian' subject matter in a later novel. Here Gardiner outlines the elegiac possibilities, the potential for adventure and suspense, and the interest that might be found by penetrating into the 'domestic' life of the 'aborigines', as he calls them elsewhere in the passage. And it was indeed to 'Heckewelder' that Cooper turned as the principal source for his account of the culture of the Native Americans that occupies much of the second half of the novel.

John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder, despite his name, had been born in Bedford, England in 1743, had emigrated with his parents to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1754 and had later become a Moravian missionary working among the Native American tribes in Pennsylvania and Ohio. After a career which combined missionary work with some work among the tribes on behalf of the US government, he retired to write about the life and culture of the Native Americans, most famously his *Account of the History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations, Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania* (1819).

The Indian nations who had inhabited Pennsylvania, as Chingachgook's and Tamemund's narratives in the novel make clear, were the Delaware/Lenape. Coming to Heckewelder's book, Cooper found an account of their character and culture that was detailed, colourful and sympathetic, one that consciously set out to combat many of the prevailing prejudices against 'Indian' peoples. However, to adopt the spirit as well as the detail of Heckewelder's account of Delaware culture Cooper had to confront some awkward historical facts. The Delaware, although officially neutral during the struggle between Britain and France, had been very much inclined to side with the French, and had even on occasions fought with them against the British. The Iroquois, the traditional enemies of the Delaware, had, on the contrary, been in large part pro-British, in part as a result of the work undertaken by William Johnson (see Note 55). Here Cooper makes a deliberate choice to override the historical facts, with two results. One is that his Delaware-Lenape-Mohican tribal grouping

appear in the novel either to be actively engaged on the British side (Uncas and Chingachgook) or to be at the very least unsympathetic to the French. The other is, consequently, that the very complex cross-currents of allegiance and neutrality that characterised the positions of the Iroquois-Six Nations-Huron tribal grouping, the Delaware's enemies, are over-ridden in order to present all of that grouping as uniformly pro-French and morally reprobate.

If Heckewelder's sympathetic account of the Delaware in part pushed Cooper towards this tampering with historical truth, it is possible that more recent history also played a role. During the American Revolution the Iroquois-Six Nations-Huron grouping had been predominantly and actively pro-British, and their role in attempting to suppress the emergent American republic may therefore have made it easier for Cooper retrospectively to mischaracterise and to stigmatise their part in the events of the 1750s.

Whatever his reasons, the effect of his characterisations of the Delaware and Iroquois is to plunge the novel into a profound equivocation in its representation of the native peoples. The Delaware are contemplative, profound, heroic, blessed with a history and a mythology, humane (within the limits of their 'gifts', to use one of Hawk-eye's terms), even politically sophisticated, and they don't threaten violence or sexual molestation to white women, the latter a pathological fear – the 'evil worse than death' of which Hayward speaks 'hoarsely' to Cora at Glenn's falls (p. 70) – that has underpinned many of the negative images of Native Americans in American art, literature and, in the early twentieth century, cinema. The dispossession and impending eclipse of the Delaware, as has been seen, is placed by Cooper at the heart of the novel and enables him to replicate something of the romantic/elegiac timbre in some of Scott's work. The 'Mingoes' on the other hand are allowed to embody most of these negative images – all 'skulks and vagabonds' in Hawk-eye's words (p. 27) – and central to Cooper's pejorative representation of them is the sexual threat posed to Cora by Magua. That this 'split view' of the Native American character and culture existed more broadly in white society at the time is a truism; but it finds a particularly ironic expression in the way in which *Mohicans* was received by the same critic, W. H. Gardiner, whose review of *The Spy* had offered Cooper so many hints towards his treatment of 'Indian' subject matter in the novel. Having directed Cooper to Heckewelder as the 'best historian' of the native peoples, Gardiner now sneered at the noble Delawares of *Mohicans*, based, he wrote, 'exclusively on the narrations of the enthusiastic and visionary