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Visions of the Future; Notions of American Identity in James Fenimore Cooper's *The last of the Mohicans* and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* or, *Early Times in the Massachusetts*

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VISIONS OF THE FUTURE:
NOTIONS OF AMERICAN IDENTITY IN
JAMES FENIMORE COOPER'S
THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS
AND CATHARINE MARIA SEDGIWCK'S
HOPE LESLIE OR, EARLY TIMES IN
THE MASSACHUSETTS

By Cheryl M. Gioioso
May 10, 2010

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degree of Master of Arts of the City College of the
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thesis has been a labor of love. It began as a small seed of interest in American writers in the early 19th century. My idea grew into a work that explores the literary, political and social complexities of the 1820s and what those issues would mean for the future of the nation.

I owe special thanks to my dedicated advisor Professor Carla Cappetti. Without her guidance, assistance, and countless hours of review, my thesis would not be the work it is.

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Chapter I: Introduction

In a year when the 2010 United States Census is underway and the government begins to “count America” to find out “who we are and what we need,” the question “what is an American?” is as relevant today as it ever was. The census is said to help “understand who we are right now,” and it is the inclusion of the word “*now*” that is most telling (U.S. Census Bureau). The phrase reveals that the definition of “America” is dynamic; American nationhood is in constant flux and has been really since the discovery of the land. Although America has established itself as a leading world power, the deceptively simple question still exists: what defines American identity? As J. Hector St. Jean Crèvecoeur famously asked in 1782 in *Letters from an American Farmer*, “What then is this American, this new man?” (54). Since the founding of the nation, American writers have asked not only “what is America” but also “what will America become?”

Crèvecoeur himself answered:

He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He has become an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all races are melted into a new race of man, whose

labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.

Americans are the western pilgrims. (54-55, Crèvecoeur's emphasis)

Crèvecoeur might have been the first to publish the question, but he would certainly not be the last to ask it. The question of American identity was particularly at the forefront of the nation's collective consciousness as the new country established itself after the Revolutionary War (approximately 1780-1800). During this period, America struggled to create a nation that distinguished itself from its British heritage and colonial past (Clark 2). The newly-independent country sought to define itself politically, geographically, socially, culturally and morally. The nation's founders established a federal government and constitution. Two major political parties developed: the Federalists and the Republicans. The foundation for democracy was set but the young country struggled to put it into practice.

In post-Revolutionary America (1800-1840), America became a burgeoning nation, as it explored the frontier and expanded westward. During this time, questions about constructing an American identity focused on contentious issues such as the development of the unsettled wilderness, Indian displacement, slavery, and the definition of citizenship. The novel became an important voice in the debate over the American identity. American writers grappled with these topics in their novels, and authors' competing notions of American identity created a unique body of literature that laid the foundation for an American legacy

(Norton Anthology). The national literature and the country's identity became, and still are, inextricably linked.

As different political ideologies and artistic styles emerged, the Romantic writers in the early 19th century played out the political, social, and moral conflicts of the young country on the pages of their novels. Writers of this generation constructed a distinct American literature as they faced a changing landscape, both literally in terms of the expanding physical boundaries of the nation and politically as governmental reform began and political systems changed. Tensions grew over a recently centralized government after the war of 1812; people had to accept an institutionalized public order and experienced a restriction of individual independence (Schweitzer 137). During this period political leaders and literary authors provided their own answers to Crèvecoeur. Their answers shaped the future for generations to come.

James Fenimore Cooper and Catharine Maria Sedgwick were prominent, respected, and popular authors in the early 19th century. Both writers used the form of the historical novel to create their own versions of the national myth, to address contentious issues, such as westward expansion and citizenship, and to present their ideas for America's future. My thesis examines how Cooper and Sedgwick presented the destiny of America and defined American citizenship. By looking at the novels that made them famous – Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie or, Early Times in Massachusetts*

(1827) – I show that Cooper and Sedgwick were diametrically opposite on many issues of their day and the “America” they imagined answered Crèvecoeur’s question differently. Their visions of American identity also imagined drastically different futures for America. Cooper’s view was that of the white male American aristocrat. In Cooper’s America, wealthy, white men retain complete power; women, Native Americans, and slaves are excluded. Cooper’s American democracy is exclusive and restrictive. It is a privilege for few, not a right for all. Sedgwick’s view included the disempowered – women, Native Americans and even slaves. Sedgwick believed that America should be a true democracy, one that extends rights and freedom to all men and women.

I focus on *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Hope Leslie*, the authors’ most successful and popular works. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper presents his version of the French and Indian War (1754-1763). The main action revolves around the reunion of Cora and Alice Munro with their father, a colonel in the British army. The sisters are going from Fort Edward to Fort William Henry, with the aid of Major Duncan Heyward and Magua, an Iroquois Indian guide who turns out to be hostile and deceitful. Magua has planned an ambush to kidnap the Munro sisters. He is thwarted by Hawkeye, the frontier scout living in the wilderness, and Hawkeye’s two Mohican companions, Chingachook and Uncas, respectively father and son. Cooper presents a distorted view of the colonists, of Native Americans, and of the land during the time of the French and Indian War.

He explores the ownership of the land in an attempt to legitimize the settlers' expulsion of the Native Americans from their land. Cooper's viewpoint proclaims the rightful dominance of the privileged, property-owning white American man. Cooper imagines an America that is ruled by elite, white men and does not include a mixed race.

Catharine Maria Sedgwick's position serves as a counterpoint to Cooper's, and in one specific reference in *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick even responds to Cooper's novel. She comments that "a recent popular work," presumably *The Last of the Mohicans*, misrepresented the ways of Indians in the wilderness and states that "a thing had better not be done, than be ill-done" (HL 84).¹ In general, Sedgwick counters the biased notions Cooper presents. She writes a more accurate version of history in her examination of the Pequot War.

In *Hope Leslie*, Catharine Maria Sedgwick describes the life of early Puritan settlers in Massachusetts shortly after the Pequot War (1634-1638). William and Martha Fletcher escape from oppressive England to the American colonies in search of a better life for themselves and their son, Everell. Although wary of the dangers of the unsettled landscape and the "savage" natives that inhabit it, Fletcher moves his family away from the white settlement and establishes their home near the wilderness. Soon after, two new members enter the Fletcher household: the Pequot Indian Magawisca, a "noble savage" brought

¹ Hereinafter, all "HL" page notations refer to *Hope Leslie* and "LM" page notations refer to *The Last of the Mohicans*.

to the Fletchers as a servant, and Hope Leslie, the heroine, an orphan and daughter of Fletcher's first love. Hope, Magawisca and Everell grow up together and form bonds that defy race, religion and gender. The three characters are eventually separated; however their bond is not broken. Sedgwick presents the struggles of the nation as it considered the "Indian problem." Like Cooper, Sedgwick explores the conflicting claims to the land and to American identity. Unlike Cooper, she presents a more inclusive view of American society and offers a far more sympathetic treatment of Native Americans and women.

In their respective novels, Cooper and Sedgwick imagined American identity in very different ways. Cooper does not believe that all men are created equal or equally entitled to certain fundamental rights. Rather, *The Last of the Mohicans* shows that inequality defines Cooper's notion of America. The ending of *The Last of the Mohicans* leaves little hope of a bright future for the disenfranchised. Women have no power and no authority; their only purpose is to produce the next generations of Americans. Indians have no place in America. They are doomed to vanish in the face of superior white civilization.

Sedgwick's imagined nation lies at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum. In *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick envisioned a nation that embraces diversity and a democratic government that grants freedom and citizenship to all people. The result is a more balanced view of America at the time. Sedgwick championed for a just and righteous nation that would enact true democratic equality, include

as citizens men and women of all races, and protect all people, both weak and strong. Sedgwick cannot ignore Indian removal and subjugation of women and minorities. Instead, she confronts their mistreatment and questions the fairness of their treatment. The ending of *Hope Leslie* proclaims Sedgwick's beliefs in female independence, the fair treatment of Native Americans, and a more just society.

Chapter II: Biographical Information

James Fenimore Cooper and Catharine Maria Sedgwick produced works that created versions of America that were worlds apart. Both authors used their writing to express their beliefs and explore conflicts on the political, social and religious institutions developing in America during their lifetime. The details of their lives and careers reveal the experiences and contexts that shaped the differing views put forth in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*. The novels serve as well as a lens into the conflicted views of their time.

James Fenimore Cooper led life as an advantaged, educated white man. The Cooper family owned large tracts of undeveloped land in upstate New York, and Cooper grew up on the outskirts of "civilization" (i.e. organized white settlements). In this new country, he experienced the country's unmarred landscape and saw man's effect on this originally pristine setting as the land was settled and developed (Buonomo). As a result of his family's involvement in developing the land, Cooper had a proprietary view of nature as land to be claimed, owned, and developed. This proprietary view was expressed in his *Leatherstocking Tales*, which explored the expansion of the frontier during various times in early American history. Specifically, *The Last of the Mohicans* explores the necessary destruction of nature for the benefit of the white, privileged, property-own American men like Cooper himself. The novel grants

authority to the very group in which he was placed in order to protect the rights and privileges he worked hard to attain.

James Fenimore Cooper was born on September 15, 1789, in Burlington, New Jersey and into a family of wealth and privilege (Long 14). Cooper was the twelfth of the thirteen children of William Cooper and Elizabeth Fenimore. His mother came from an aristocratic family. Elizabeth was a refined heiress of a wealthy Burlington Quaker. His father, William Cooper, was the son of poor Pennsylvania Quakers (Clark 63). William became a prominent Federalist, a judge, and one of the most successful land developers of the early republic; he was also a fearsome wrestler (Long 13-14). William Cooper purchased large tracts of land and procured tenants to reside on and develop them. He was the epitome of the force that was staking claim to the land and developing the country's wilderness after stripping it from the original inhabitants (Buonomo).

After the Revolutionary War, William Cooper had acquired several thousand acres of land near Lake Otsego in what is now upstate New York. The land, originally inhabited by the Iroquois, had come into possession by the British through the Treaty of Fort Stanwix of 1768. The land was then divided into patents by colonial authorities (Clark 62). The patents passed through several hands before William Cooper and his partner purchased them through underhanded, and subsequently contested, means. William knew that someone else retained rights to the land through a bond; when he found out the tracts were

to be sold, he arranged for an auction that took place in an isolated location in the dead of winter. Practically no one else was aware of the auction. This allowed William to purchase the patent for a remarkably cheap price. When a legal battle ensued, William Cooper prevailed (Clark 63). Cooper encouraged the settlement of the lands, laying out the site for Cooperstown. In 1790, the year after James was born, William moved the family from New Jersey to this isolated settlement in the wilderness of New York (Long 13).

James received his early education at a private academy near Cooperstown. In 1803, at the age of thirteen, he enrolled at Yale University but was expelled in his third year for a prank. His father sent him to sea as a common sailor on a merchant ship with the hope that his son would eventually gain an important position in the navy (Long 15). James became a U.S. navy midshipman in 1808; he remained in the navy until 1811 but did not advance in rank (Long 16).²

In 1810, he became engaged to Susan DeLancy, the daughter of an eminent Westchester family, and the couple married in 1811. His new wife insisted he resign from the navy (Long 17). Cooper became a gentleman's farmer, and the couple and their family moved back and forth between Westchester, New York, and Cooperstown (Buonomo). The Coopers lived a comfortable life until

² During his time at sea, Cooper's father died. James' share of the inheritance gave him a considerable amount of money and property. Cooper immediately received \$50,000, and he also held a residual interest in the \$750,000 estate. Cooper thereby gained financial independence when he was only nineteen (Long 16).

the depression after the War of 1812 depreciated all the land owned by the Cooper family, and Cooper's fortune plunged.³

Chance intervened to jumpstart Cooper's writing career. As legend has it, Cooper started writing to make good on a claim to his wife that he could write a better novel than the one they were reading together. The story was memorialized by his daughter Susan in "Small Family Memories":

A new novel had been brought from England in the last monthly packet; it was, I think, one of Mrs. Opie's, or one of that school...It must have been very trashy; after a chapter or two he threw it aside, exclaiming, "I could write a better book than that myself." Our mother laughed at the idea, as the height of absurdity—he who disliked writing even a letter, that he should write a book!! He persisted in his declaration, however, and almost immediately wrote the first pages of a tale, not yet named, the same laid in England, as a matter of course. (*Correspondence of James Fenimore Cooper* 38)

These first few pages became *Precaution* (1820), a novel of manners set in England and modeled after writers like Jane Austen and Amelia Opie (Long 17-18). *Precaution* was not a commercial success but, encouraged by his wife and friends, and monetary need, he continued to write. In his second novel, *The Spy*

³ He gained the additional hardship of having to care for the families of his brothers, all four of whom had passed away by 1819 (Long 17-18). His own investments failed, putting a further strain on his finances (Kelly 46).

(1821), Cooper experimented with historical events by setting the action during the American Revolution. The book was an immense success, and it also won Cooper international acclaim. *The Spy* showed that American settings and characters could be used to create successful fiction (Buonomo).

His third venture, *The Pioneers* (1823), was the first of the Leatherstocking tales. *The Pioneers* takes place in 1793 and uses the frontier world in which Cooper was raised to confront issues he witnessed in his father's real estate ventures. The Leatherstocking tales raise questions of rightful ownership of the land and how to profit from frontier expansion (Clark 66). The stories featured the adventures of the resourceful frontiersman Natty Bumpo, or Hawkeye, as he is known in *The Last of the Mohicans*. In *The Pioneers*, Natty Bumpo stands in stark opposition to Judge Temple, the leader of the Templeton settlement where the story is set. The two characters symbolically battle over the American wilderness and its future (Buonomo). The Judge, modeled after Cooper's own dominant father, pushes for the right of the white settlers to tame the land and use the natural resources to expand the nation (Clark 68-70). On the other hand, Natty Bumpo disavows this outlook: man is free to journey through the wilderness but should leave it undisturbed in respect to its creator and original inhabitants. In *The Pioneers* and the rest of the Leatherstocking series, Natty and his native companions cannot stop "progress" and the development of the land (Buonomo).

Cooper's writing turned to the sea novel with *The Pilot* (1824), which was met with general critical acclaim and used his seafaring expertise gained during his years at sea (Long 19).⁴ After *The Pilot*, Cooper returned to the world of the frontier. *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) is the second novel, composition-wise, in the Leatherstocking series but takes place in 1757 before the setting of the first tale. The novel became the most famous of Cooper's work and also one of the most widely read American novels of the 19th century (Long 20). *The Last of the Mohicans* goes back to the third year of the French and Indian War, before America became an independent nation. Cooper explores the future by revisiting the war that gave possession of the land first to the British and thereafter to the Americans.

After the release of *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper and his family went on a trip to Europe that lasted for seven years (Long 20). They lived in Paris and made extended visits to England, Switzerland, Italy and other parts of France. While in Europe, Cooper published *The Prairie* (1827). This novel is the third Leatherstocking tale and the last one in the chronology of the action of the tales.

⁴ Cooper's other works in this genre, which he returned to throughout his career, were equally successful. Cooper also produced an extensive and authoritative history of the Navy, the two-volume *History of the Navy of the United States of America* (1839) (Buonomo).

Natty Bumppo this time is in the last stage of his life and the last survivor of the wild and romantic frontier.⁵

While abroad, Cooper's writing took a more political turn (Buonomo). The change is reflected in *Notions of the Americans* (1828) where he attempts to correct European misconceptions of Americans and American life (Long 23). Cooper subsequently wrote *The Bravo* (1831), *The Heidenmauer* (1832), and *The Headsman* (1833). All three had European settings and critiqued European oligarchies while touting the virtues of the American republic (Buonomo). European critics attacked Cooper and regarded him as a pompous American. American journals reprinted these negative reviews, and as a result, Cooper felt Americans blindly accepted foreign literary opinion. He returned to his homeland only to begin a long and bitter dispute with the American public (Long 24).

Cooper and his family returned to America in 1833. His view of American society and culture was now cynical and critical. In 1834, he wrote a *Letter to His Countrymen* in response to the criticism his European trilogy had received. In the pamphlet, he criticized his fellow Americans for being too deferential to foreign opinion and announced his intention to retire as a writer. Despite his announced "retirement," Cooper resumed to write even in the face of unrelenting criticism in the press and the commercial failure of his works (Buonomo).

⁵ This Leatherstocking tale was meant to be the last; however, later in his career, Cooper added two more novels to the series (Buonomo).

In 1836, Cooper and his family moved to Cooperstown and at once became involved in a contentious battle with the residents of the town (Long 25). Cooper claimed that public use of his family-owned property was unauthorized and illegal, and he reasserted his exclusive right to the land. The residents accused him of being arrogant, selfish, and elitist, despite his self-proclaimed title of being a champion of democracy. The press took the opportunity to attack Cooper who in turn sued for libel (Buonomo).

Cooper's subsequent writing reflects his battles with both the public and the press. Cooper published two novels in 1838, *Homeward Bound* and *Home as Found*, that portray the opinion of the masses as the "mob mentality." In Cooper's view, common public opinion is a threat to established law (Long 25). In the same year, Cooper published *The American Democrat*, his interpretation of what American democracy should be. Cooper claims that social distinction and restraints on citizen's freedom are necessary within a democratic system (Buonomo). Cooper's reflections in *The American Democrat* reveal his efforts to protect the rights and status of the privileged members of society, while stripping the masses of political control. His views reflect his legal battles with the public, his literary skirmishes with the press, and his reaction to the demands voiced by excluded groups for a more inclusive democracy.

To regain popularity, Cooper wrote two more Leatherstocking tales: *The Pathfinder* and *The Deerslayer*. These works, published in 1840 and 1841

respectively, were the last written in the series. Chronologically they both come first as they go back to Natty Bumppo's young manhood. The two novels were well-received by the public and praised by critics (Buonomo).

Cooper continued to publish novels until 1850, the year before his death. He never regained the critical or commercial success he had achieved in the first stage of his career. In the last decade of his life Cooper published an astonishing sixteen novels, from the historical background of the Anti-Rent disputes of New York State in the 1840s to an allegory concerning a utopian society (Long 26-27). In his twilight years, he also wrote his only play: *Upside Down; or, Philosophy in Petticoats*, a satire on socialism which played for a short time in New York (Buonomo). Cooper died in his home on September 14, 1851, one day before his sixty-second birthday (Long 28).

Cooper led life as an "aristocratic" white man. Throughout his life, Cooper faced increased challenges to the privileges he was afforded as a white American man. These challenges created a desire to protect his position and power in society. His entitled attitude manifests itself in the American identity he presents in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Cooper's America will be racially pure, will be defined by white men, and will protect the rights and power of men like him.

Catharine Maria Sedgwick was Cooper's contemporary and his counterpart. Like Cooper, Sedgwick grew up in an environment of privilege. Her family was a prominent member of the New England "aristocracy." Yet as a

woman in the early 19th century, Sedgwick was denied rights that Cooper was afforded as a white man. Sedgwick rebels against the restrictive environment of her privileged class and develops increasingly liberal views throughout her lifetime. These values are expressed in her vision of America in *Hope Leslie*. Sedgwick combats the idea that white men, such as Cooper and her own father, should maintain control of society. Sedgwick suggests that Indians have a right to citizenship; she challenges the right of the white settlers to the land and even questions whether any being but God can truly “own” the land.

Sedgwick’s novels convey democratic ideals and create a country in which rights and independence are granted for all people. These beliefs and values were unusual at the time but not extreme in Sedgwick’s cultural and intellectual world. Sedgwick was born only a few months after Cooper, on December 28, 1789 in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Stockbridge was near Boston – a few hundred miles and a world away from Cooper’s origins in New Jersey and New York (Foster 15). Both authors grew up in environments of privilege, came from Federalists backgrounds, had strong and powerful fathers, and had access to books and an education that later aided them in their writing careers. However, Sedgwick differed from Cooper politically, religiously, and philosophically. Sedgwick’s identity as a woman and her life experiences shaped her to be a liberal thinker.

Sedgwick was the sixth of seven surviving children of Theodore and Pamela Dwight Sedgwick. Sedgwick’s family on her maternal side was more

socially distinguished than on her father's. Her mother's family was a part of the Connecticut aristocracy, the group known as the "River Gods." The Dwights were one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Connecticut (Foster 24). Her father's family could be traced back to the founding of Massachusetts but was otherwise unknown (Karcher xii). Pamela's family was quite displeased when Theodore, "an unaccomplished lawyer from the hills" declared his intention to marry their daughter (Foster 25). However, Theodore became one of the most powerful political leaders in the Berkshire region. He was elected to the Continental Congress, became Speaker of the House, and served for ten years as a Justice on the Massachusetts Supreme Court (Elmore). In one of the most important events in his legal career, he took on the case of the slave Elizabeth "Mumbet" Freeman. In 1781, he won her freedom in a Massachusetts court in a lawsuit that helped to abolish slavery in the state (Elmore).⁶ As it turned out, Mumbet, appreciative of Theodore's efforts on her behalf, devoted herself to the Sedgwick family as housekeeper and nanny, remaining with them until her death (Foster 29). Catharine became very close to Mumbet who effectively raised the girl and helped to fill the void left by her absent parents (Elmore).⁷

⁶ A website has been created in honor of Mumbet and in celebration of her story: www.mumbet.com. Among the various links are the actual transcript of her trial proceedings, a proposed manuscript for a mini-series based on Mumbet's life, and a petition to "help put Mumbet on a postage stamp!" (Barrows).

⁷ Although Theodore loved and was devoted to his family, he was often physically absent from home, away sometimes for months at a time because of his demanding career (Elmore). Sedgwick's mother was always home but she suffered from severe and often prolonged bouts of

Sedgwick rebelled against many of the things her parents represented. Catharine's parents impressed upon her a sense of their wealth and social status. Her mother preached the need for "feminine deportment" and deference (Karcher xii). Her father voiced his Federalist views that wealthy aristocrats should run the country (Foster 21). Sedgwick satirized and criticized her own class of the wealthy aristocracy in her writing (Foster 21). She proclaimed female independence in opposition to the submissive position of women promoted by her mother and class. She abandoned the strict creed of Calvinism, the religion of her parents and ancestors, and converted to Unitarianism. She included Unitarian principles in many of her novels (Foster 22).

Sedgwick showed from a young age that she was gifted and eager to learn. She received a basic education at various schools for young women in Albany and Boston but was denied a university education (Foster 26). Sedgwick made up for her deficient education by teaching herself; she was fostered by the intellectual environment of her family and guided by her father and brothers. She appreciated the knowledge she accumulated as a result of her schooling at home and made the best of a limited situation (Foster 26). Sedgwick, despite the lack of a formal

mental depression, leaving her unable to manage her household and care for her children (Foster 33). With so little parental guidance, Catharine also developed close relationships with three of her older brothers: Henry, Robert, and Charles. Catharine would remain extremely close with her brothers throughout her life. As an adult she spent a good deal of time at Charles' home in Lenox, Massachusetts, maintaining living quarters there as well as in their childhood home in Stockbridge, Massachusetts (Elmore). These strong family ties are reflected in Sedgwick's writing, both in her emphasis on family life and in her liberal political outlook, influenced by her Jacksonian Democratic brothers (Foster 34).

education, was a well-read, extremely intelligent woman. Her understanding of American history, literature, and political theory comes across in her writings.

Sedgwick's first novel, *A New-England Tale; or, Sketches of New-England Character and Manners*, was published anonymously in 1822. As would become the standard for her novels, the book featured a clever, young and charming female protagonist. The work began as a pamphlet on the reasons she turned away from Calvinism when she was thirty years old (Foster 31). Despite its unknown authorship, the novel received critical acclaim and was especially respected for its critique of religious hypocrisy (Elmore). Cooper himself gave the novel high praise in his review. In the May, 1882 issue of *The Literary and Scientific Repository*, he stated that "Of books that profess to illustrate American society and manners, we have never met with one which so perfectly and agreeably accomplishes that design," (Kalayjian 2-3).

Sedgwick used the same formula – a religious theme and an independent, smart heroine – in her second novel, *Redwood, A Tale* (1824). The work was published anonymously, and at first, people imagined Cooper to be the author.⁸ *Redwood* foreshadows the great controversy over slavery. It features two fugitive slaves and the attempts of New England residents to prevent the slave owners from capturing them. *Redwood* also reflects the author's political abandonment of

⁸ In the United States this mistake was quickly corrected but in some parts of Europe, the title was actually printed under Cooper's name, causing Sedgwick to amusingly comment in her autobiography that she "hoped Mr. C's self-complacency was not wounded by this mortifying news" (qtd. in Foster 69).

her father's Federalist beliefs. Sedgwick rejected the conservative, elitist values of the Federalists; she believed in the people, not the aristocracy (Foster 21).

Influenced by her brothers, she adopted the political ideals of the Jacksonian Democrats.⁹

These liberal views shaped Sedgwick's third artistic venture *Hope Leslie* or, *Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827), her most successful work. Originally it was published as "by the author of 'Redwood'" but by 1827, Sedgwick's identity as the author of both novels was widely known. The plot again features a charismatic, intelligent heroine, Hope Leslie. It explores the controversial topics of Indian removal and female independence. *Hope Leslie* embodies Sedgwick's ideas of what a democratic and righteous America should be. Despite such divisive subject matter and the fact that some people found the description of the "noble savage" Magawisca to be unrealistic, the novel was a great success, loved by Sedgwick's public and well-received by critics at the time.¹⁰

In her fourth novel, *Clarence; or, A Tale of Our Own Times* (1830), Sedgwick explored additional contentious issues of her own time in which American ideals were falling short. *Clarence* discusses financial and legal inequalities in relation to women and families and the injustices such inequity produced (Elmore).

⁹ The Jacksonian Democrats considered themselves to be the "guardians" of the Constitution and of democratic ideals (Blau xi).

¹⁰ One critic noted "indeed, no other novel written by an American, except, perhaps, the early work of Cooper, ever met with such success," (Foster 95, quoting *Women's Record* 1853).

The Linwoods; or "Sixty Years Since" in America was Sedgwick's fifth novel (1835). In this historical novel, she explores the history of the United States, beginning in the period just before the American Revolution. *Linwoods* follows the struggles of a young heroine during the Revolution. Sedgwick accurately explores both the loyalist and revolutionary sides of the conflict. The novel examines the motivation of both sides of the revolutionary conflict and foreshadows the problems the independent nation would soon face in putting its democratic ideals into practice (Elmore).

In 1835, Sedgwick also published *Home*, one of three "instructive" novels that dealt with class, poverty, labor, and wealth. The other novels of this didactic group were *The Poor Rich Man, and The Rich Poor Man* (1836), *Live and Let Live; or, Domestic Service Illustrated* (1837). *Means and Ends, or Self-Training* followed in 1839 and it continued the educational tone adopted in the other three works (Foster 124). Sedgwick also wrote many short stories and non-fictional pieces that appeared in various periodicals of the time. Her first volume of short stories, *Tales and Sketches*, was published in 1835, and another volume, *Tales and Sketches, Second Series*, followed in 1844 (Foster 126).

Married or Single? was Sedgwick's last novel and was published in 1857 when she was nearly seventy years old. The novel challenges the notion that marriage is the best and only option for a woman (Foster 129). Sedgwick discusses the circumstances under which it is better for a woman to get married or

remain single, an issue raised at the end of *Hope Leslie*. Sedgwick herself never married but her life was filled with friends and family. She was particularly close to her siblings and was an active part of their lives, as well as their spouses and children's lives (Elmore).

In addition to her family, she was influenced by an intellectual milieu that included many important writers of the time. She played an important role in the community of the American Lake District (as the Stockbridge and Lenox areas in Massachusetts were called) and was considered to be its social leader (Foster 20). She included among her friends and acquaintances William Cullen Bryant, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Herman Melville. At one time, even Cooper was a frequent visitor to the Sedgwick home; he was also a friend of Sedgwick's brother, Robert, until a financial dispute ended the relationship (Kalayjian 4). Sedgwick was influenced by these innovative thinkers; she held a respected position among the writers and exerted her own opinions and influence over the community (Foster 21).

Even though she never immersed herself in the abolitionist or the women's rights movements, Sedgwick openly expressed her troubles with the moral problems of slavery and the domination of women in her novels. Sedgwick's social consciousness never faded, and later in life, she dedicated herself to prison reform and the treatment of female prisoners. She learned that an association was going to be formed on behalf of the prisoners in her area and

attended one of the first meetings (*Life and Letters* 292). There she befriended Abigail Gibbons, daughter of Isaac T. Hopper, an abolitionist Quaker who had founded The Prison Association of New York (*Life and Letters* 293; Women's Prison Association). In 1845, Sedgwick began her work with the Female Department of the New York Prison Association. She became its first director in 1848 and served in that role until 1863 (Elmore).

Catharine lived to be the last of the Sedgwick siblings. In her old age and failing health, she was cared for by Kate Minot, her niece and namesake. She died on July 31, 1867 at the age of 77. Sedgwick was buried in a cemetery in Stockbridge, Massachusetts in the Sedgwick "family pie" gravesite, which consists of a circle of ten "wedge" gravesites of the Sedgwick parents, their seven children, and Elizabeth Freeman, the freed slave and subsequent housekeeper for the Sedgwicks (Elmore).

Cooper and Sedgwick were contemporaries but opposites in so many important ways. Most interesting are their divergent philosophies and attitudes, as reflected in *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Hope Leslie*. One author valued development of the lands and expansion of the country. The other valued the democratic ideals to which the new nation should be adhering. One author creates female characters who are weak and passive and whose role it to be the mothers of white citizens. The other author paints a picture of strong, intelligent women

who do not necessarily need marriage to be fulfilled and happy. In the course of their lifetime, one grew more conservative, the other more liberal.

Chapter III: The Wilderness & Nature

Despite similar social beginnings, Cooper and Sedgwick developed radically different notions of what America and American identity should be. Their different visions for America are reflected in their treatment of the land and their views of the wilderness in *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Hope Leslie*. Their portraits of nature lay bare their views about conquest, expansion, and Indian removal from the land, at a time when these issues were highly controversial.

Cooper's attitude toward nature is Romantic but proprietary. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper uses The French and Indian War and the area of Glen Falls, New York (the site of many battles of the war) to legitimize the settlers' claim to the land. Sedgwick challenges Cooper's viewpoint. Her attitude toward nature is Romantic and Transcendentalist. She questions that anyone but God could really "own" the land. In *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick uses the newly-founded settlement of Springfield, Massachusetts in 1643 and the Pequot War to recall the violent encroachment over Indian territory by the settlers. She questions the settlers' right to the land and the ethics of removing Native Americans from their land.

Cooper's description of the Lake George region reflects his Romantic notion of nature. According to Cooper's daughter, her father wrote *The Last of the Mohicans* after a trip to the Lake George region in 1825 with his friend Sir Edward Stanley the 11th Earl of Derby, and some other British gentlemen. They

were impressed with the scenery, stating it was “the very scene for romance.” Cooper pledged to Stanley to write such a work (Kelly 45-46). Cooper’s treatment of nature in *The Last of the Mohicans* is Romantic. He writes about nature with reverence and awe, praising its beauty and majesty. He describes it as a wondrous, untouched place: a “secret place so lovely” (11). He celebrates Glen Falls as wild and unspoiled.

Cooper’s Romantic treatment rests on his depiction of the area as uninhabited and ready to be claimed as part of the new frontier. The “desolate wilderness” Cooper created was not an accurate portrayal. Many Native American nations inhabited the lands of upstate New York. In particular, the Iroquois nation had established upstate New York as their homeland (Sultzman, “Iroquois History”). The Iroquois had in place a complex and civilized society in the region.¹¹ By erasing the Iroquois from Glen Falls, Cooper enables the myth that the settlers had the right to take the land because the area was unoccupied. Cooper’s depiction of nature stems from two conflicting, places: a true Romantic love of nature and a desire to possess it and legitimize ownership. He merges the

¹¹ In fact, Europeans learned from the Iroquois political system: “It was the Iroquois political system [that allowed them to dominate] the first 200-years of colonial history in both Canada and the United States. . . Although much has been made of their Dutch firearms, the Iroquois prevailed because of their unity, sense of purpose, and superior political organization. Since the Iroquois League was formed prior to any contact, it owed nothing to European influence. Proper credit is seldom given, but the reverse was actually true. Rather than learning political sophistication from Europeans, Europeans learned from the Iroquois, and the League, with its elaborate system of checks, balances, and supreme law, almost certainly influenced the American Articles of Confederation and Constitution” (Sultzman, “Iroquois History”).

two views by depicting the land as serene and untouched, ready for the white settlers to develop and make use of it.

Cooper creates a framework for the takeover of the land by the Europeans even before the narrative of his story begins. In his introduction, he states that the area in which he sets his tale has seen “little change” since the French and Indian war. His portrait of the area ignored the existence – well known to him – of the civilized society that the Iroquois had established in upstate New York. His introduction also states that the “native forests” must yield to the “inroads of civilization” as the settlers “improve” the land. The dark “recess of woods” awaiting conquest is a living force to battle with: “armies larger than those that had often disposed of the scepters of mother countries, were seen to bury themselves in these forests, whence they rarely returned but in skeleton bands, that were haggard with care, or dejected by defeat” (LM 12). Cooper’s European male characters show little fear and no hesitation as they literally plunge into the vast forest. The “wilderness” is theirs for the taking. He erases the forcible removal of the Indians and their long time settlement in the area.

Cooper very deliberately includes long descriptions to pay homage to nature in all of its forms, active and wild, stalwart and serene. Hawkeye’s description of Glenn Falls highlights this untamed aura:

If you had daylight, it would be worth the trouble to step up on the height of this rock, and look at the perversity of the water! It falls by no rule at

all; sometimes it leaps, sometimes it tumbles; there, it skips; here, it shoots; in one place 'tis white as snow, and in another 'tis green as grass; hereabouts, it pitches into deep hollows, that rumble and quake the 'arth; and there away, it ripples and sings like a brook, fashioning whirlpools and gullies in the old stone, as if 'twas no harder than trodden clay. The whole design of the river seems disconcerted. First it runs smoothly, as if meaning to go down the descent as things were ordered; then it angles about and faces the shores; nor are there places wanting, where it looks backward, as if unwilling to leave the wilderness, to mingle with the salt! ... I can show you, where the river fabricates all sorts of images, as if, having broke loose from order, it would try its hand at every thing. (LM 55)

Hawkeye is a cultural hybrid, a white man living among Indians. He therefore can read the landscape as the natives do, yet also convey a description as a white man would. Hawkeye's nearly page-long description of Glenn's Falls is filled with a respect for and love of nature but it also emphasizes the disorganized state of nature. It is "disconcerted" and has "no rule." His words imply that this force could, and should, be tamed. Cooper's footnote to this passage foreshadows the time when this raucous force will be controlled: "[t]he description of this picturesque and remarkable little cataract, as given by the scout, is sufficiently correct, though the application of the water to the uses of civilised life has

materially injured its beauties” (LM 55). Cooper predicts what has already happened in Cooper’s time so as to rationalize the destruction of a beautiful setting as necessary to create “civilized” life.

In another scene, Hawkeye and his companions climb a mountain to seek a better view of the French camp. They experience the untouched, splendid vista:

The mountain on which they stood...was a high cone, that rose a little in advance of that range which stretches for miles along the western shores of the lake, until meeting its sister piles, beyond the water, it ran off towards the Canadas, in confused and broken masses of rock, thinly sprinkled with evergreens. ...To the north, stretched the limpid, and, as it appeared from that dizzy height, the narrow sheet of the “holy lake,” indented with numberless bays, embellished by fantastic head-lands, and dotted with countless islands. At the distance a few leagues, the bed of the waters became lost among mountains, or was wrapped in the masses of vapour, that came slowly rolling along their bosom, before a light morning air. But a narrow opening between the crests of the hills, pointed out the passage by which they found their way still farther north, to spread their pure and ample sheets again, before pouring out their tribute into the distant Champlain. ... Along both ranges of hills...clouds of light vapour were rising in spiral wreaths from the uninhabited woods, looking like the

smokes of hidden cottages, or rolled lazily down the declivities, to mingle with the fogs of the lower land. (LM 140)

Here the element of danger infused in Hawkeye's previous depiction of the landscape is absent. Nature is not only beautiful but also easy to tame and inhabit. An untouched nature was charming and enchanting but it was also useless. In Cooper's time these lands had been cleared of the forest and built up. Cooper acknowledges that this uncorrupted, majestic state of nature cannot and will not last. His Romantic view of nature also serves to put it in the past.

In his childhood Cooper witnessed the white settlers' appropriation of the frontier. His family's land had been ceded by the Iroquois to the British in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix after the French and Indian War (Clark 62). The patent for the land had come into the hands of George Croghan, an "Irishman, Indian trader and agent, and land speculator" by questionable means. It was acquired by William Cooper through equally clouded ways (Butterfield). Despite legal action brought against William Cooper over his procurement of the patent, he considered it his rightful property. Cooper went on to successfully develop this land and became wealthy as a result. William Cooper's actions impressed on his son a sense of entitlement to the land that Cooper expresses in *The Last of the Mohicans*.

James' upbringing and the origins of the family lands placed him in a unique position. Having grown up on this new settlement removed from "civilization," Cooper felt at home with nature and the inhabitants of the

wilderness, be it man or beast. Nature represented comfort and prosperity as his father made both a home for his family and a financial living from the land. It was his home and property and not a place of potential danger or harm. Cooper justifies sacrificing nature, such as the “holy lake” and the “pure and ample” hills (LM 140), to develop the land. His pledge to write a work that celebrated “the very scene of romance” turned into a celebration of the white man’s procurement of the land. Cooper has no qualms about white settlers taking the land from the Indians. In his *Notions of the Americans* (1828), Cooper explicitly defends the dispossession of the Indians:

That neither the United States, nor any individual State, has ever taken possession of any land that, by usage or construction, might be decreed the property of the Indians, without a treaty and a purchase, is, I believe, certain...I fancy that these bargains are quite as just as any that are ever driven between the weak and the strong, the intelligent and the ignorant. It is not pretended that the value of the territory gained is paid for; but the purchase is rather a deference to general principles of justice and humanity, than a concession to a right in the Indians, which itself might admit of a thousand legal quibbles. The treaties are sufficiently humane, and, although certain borderers, who possess the power of the white man with the disposition of the savage, do sometimes violate their conditions,

there is no just reason to distrust the intentions or the conduct of the government. (282; vol. 2)

Following his father's precedent, Cooper felt it was his right, as a white man, to assert power and control over the land.

Cooper's ease with the unsettled land was not the prevailing sentiment during the French and Indian War or during his own time. Most people feared the wilderness, as it still presented the threats of hostile Indians, the dangers of wild animals, and even the superstitious notions of a European ancestry that proclaimed the forest to be evil. Cooper's novel makes wild nature a charming place. His description reads in part a sales pitch to the American public to not be afraid of the unsettled wilderness. Mastery and conquest will result in physical and economic benefits that will enrich the nation. One of his footnotes sounds like a travel brochure:

The beauties of Lake George are well known to every American tourist. In the bright of the mountains which surround it, and in artificial accessories, it is inferior to the finest of the Swiss and Italian lakes, while in outline and purity of water it is fully their equal; and in the number and disposition of its isles and islets much superior to them all together. ...

The state of New York is remarkable for the number and beauty of its lakes. One of its frontiers lies on the vast sheet of Ontario, while Champlain stretches nearly a hundred miles along another. ...On most of

these lakes, there are now beautiful villages, and on many of them, steam-boats. (LM 203)

Where there once was nothing, there are now “beautiful villages” and “steam-boats.” Cooper’s proprietary attitude lays claim to the land, asserts control over nature, and transforms the wild landscape into ordered property. He highlights the positive role that development has had. Cooper’s entitled voice contributed to the idea that Americans should expand the country from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific Ocean. Cooper’s view looked forward to the idea of Manifest Destiny, the popular belief in the second half of the 19th century that America was destined, even divinely chosen, to occupy the land.¹² This myth ultimately promoted the taming and destruction of nature.

Cooper was extolling the beauty and virtue of the countryside as he was promoting a view that would desecrate its majesty. Cooper saw it as the right, almost the responsibility, of the white man to capitalize on the “unused” land to create a “civilized” society, even if it meant displacing an entire race:

¹² The concept of Manifest Destiny was first expressed by journalist John O. Sullivan in an article that appeared in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* entitled, “The Great Nation of Futurity” (1839). Sullivan painted a glorious picture of America’s future: “so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be *the great nation of futurity*” (426, Sullivan’s emphasis). He later coined the phrase “Manifest Destiny” in an 1845 article in the same magazine. In his article “Annexation,” Sullivan opposed the annexation of Texas and wrote that its annexation would “[limit] our greatness and [check] the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions” (5).

The Mohicans were the possessors of the country first occupied by the Europeans in this portion of the continent. They were, consequently, the first dispossessed; and the seemingly inevitable fate of all these people, who disappear before the advances, or it might be termed the inroads, of civilization, as the verdure of their native forests falls before the nipping frosts, is represented as having already befallen them. (LM 7)

Cooper places the unscathed wilderness in the past. He also relegates Indians to this remote time. Ignoring Indian resistance, Cooper presents a “natural” and unavoidable turnover of the land from the Indians to the British.

In casting the change as an “inevitable fate,” Cooper removes blame or agency from the British settlers. In fact, the British are innocent victims during the massacre at Fort William Henry. Cooper’s murderous Hurons are blamed, as well as the French soldiers who did not stop the Indians, for tainting the land with blood. Nature itself judges and decries the Indian massacre of the retreating British, which creates a “scene of wilderness and desperation”:

The curling and spotless mists, which had been sailing above the hills toward the north, were now returning in an interminable dusky sheet, that was urged along by the fury of a tempest. The crowded mirror of the Horican was gone; and, in its place, the green and angry waters lashed the shores, as if indignantly casting back its impurities to the polluted strand. ...[T]he clear fountain...reflected only the somber gloom that fell from the

impending heavens. That humid and congenial atmosphere which commonly adorned the view, veiling its harshness, and softening its asperities, had disappeared, and the northern air poured across the waste of water so harsh and unmingled, that nothing was left to be conjectured by the eye, or fashioned by the fancy.

...The whole landscape, which, seen by a favoring light, and in a genial temperature, had been found so lovely, appeared now like some pictured allegory of life, in which objects were arrayed in their harshest but truest colors, and with the relief of any shadowing.

[T]he eye even sought relief, in vain, by attempting to pierce the illimitable void of heaven, which was shut to its gaze by the dusky sheet of ragged and driving vapour. (LM 181)

The narrator reports the scene in a disembodied and semi-divine voice that imposes judgment on and creates distance between the corruption of nature and the British characters. The Indians and the French are not worthy of the land. Cooper thereby grants the English permission to conquer the land in the name of civilization (Milder 424).

In Cooper's view, the English should impose order and structure the land by creating designated property out of the chaotic wilderness. They must "rescue" the land from the wild natives who do nothing with it. In the introduction, he falsely claims that the Indian tribes "who have done so much in other places have

done little here” (LM 8). Cooper portrays the Hurons as a lazy people who do not work or develop the land; he proclaims them unworthy of the land and therefore rationalizes a takeover by the more “deserving” English. The Indians cannot create Sullivan’s “great nation of futurity” because their society is viewed as uncivilized, stagnant, and backwards compared to American society of Cooper’s time (Milder 418).

Although Cooper respected and admired the grandeur and beauty of nature, he understood it had to be destroyed to expand the nation. In fact, as members of the land aristocracy, his family took an active part in building up the land to create a “civilized” society. Persons such as Hawkeye and Chingachook walk off into the sunset because they will have no place in such a country. They stood in the way of the spirit of American progress, which leveled forests and exterminated the Indians in order to enrich the nation and Americans like Cooper.

In contrast to Cooper’s romantic, idyllic scenery, Sedgwick describes the landscape as “dark and turbulent” (HL 3) and questions the settlers’ entitlement to the land. In her novel nature is both dangerous and divine. In emphasizing the dangers in the forest, Sedgwick comments that the forest was the domain of the Native Americans. The settlers did not belong there, both because of their own ignorance of the land and because they had no right to displace the native inhabitants. Sedgwick’s nature is the home of the natives but ultimately belongs to God. Human beings should care for but not necessarily own the land.

Sedgwick first paints a dangerous, harsh, and unforgiving wild in which the settlers did not belong. She draws on the contrasts between the unsettled wilderness and the safety of a “civilized” settlement. Sedgwick is wary of the forest; her characters, aside from Fletcher, are fearful of its dangers. Her initial wariness of the unsettled land and her ambivalent descriptions reflect the trouble the colonists face to conquer the land. Her white female characters are afraid of it. Dame Grafton epitomizes this viewpoint when she is horrified to be moving away from Boston (a place she did not like in the first place) to Bethel, the Fletcher’s home that is in between the “habitation of civilized man” and the “savage howling wilderness” (HL 17). The removed home presented “inconveniences” for the family, but Dame Grafton sees this life as “not only more rude and inconvenient, but really dangerous” (HL 29). She was of the opinion that “the resolution...to go to the wilderness, had no parallel in the history of human folly and madness,” (HL 29). Dame Grafton’s caution reveals the perils of the wild and the folly in the settlers’ encroaching on Indian territory.

William Fletcher removes his family from the “civilized” city and closer to the home of the “savage.” For William Pynchon it was the cause of the massacre at Bethel: “[Pynchon] saw in this scene of violent death, not only the present overwhelming misery of the family at Bethel, but the fearful fate to which all were exposed who had perilled their lives in the wilderness; but he could give but brief space to bitter reflections, and the lamentings of nature” (HL 70).

Pynchon even points out to Fletcher that he had “counted the cost before you undertook to build the Lord’s building in the wilderness” (HL 74).

Elsewhere, Digby is bitten by a snake and faces death because neither he nor Hope knows how to treat a snakebite, both being ignorant of the ways of the wilderness. Without the help of the “savage” Nelema, Digby would have been doomed to die. Sedgwick highlights the dangers of nature to question the settlers’ right to inhabiting it. The settlers were unfamiliar with the ways of the wilderness and did not belong there. They had no claim to the land and no authority to remove the Indians from their home.

Sedgwick notes that the settlers adopted the ways of the Native Americans to take away the natives’ own land. To create the village of Springfield, the “first settlers followed the course of the Indians, and planted themselves on the borders of the rivers” (HL 16). Sedgwick suggests the hypocrisy of the settlers’ actions. The settlers call the natives “savages” and deem them to be uncivilized. However the settlers used the knowledge of these “savages” to create the white settlements. Therefore, in describing the settlers’ actions, Sedgwick is not actually celebrating the removal of the Indians nor is she advocating the desecration of the unspoiled wilderness. Rather, she is pointing out that the wilderness was the home of a people, and it was brutally taken from them.

Sedgwick also romanticizes nature as does Cooper and depicts nature as serene, beautiful and beneficent. These scenes occur when Sedgwick discusses the

Indian reverence for nature. The Native Americans had the utmost respect for nature because it was not only their home but also their religion. They have a better understanding of the “sublime powers of nature” and its “holy mystery” than the settlers. Nature is portrayed as the realm of the Native American and as a force that the white settlers do not truly understand but wish to overtake. The Indians see nature as the ultimate master, a great and mysterious force that humbles us all.

Sedgwick uses Magawisca as the vehicle to express a Romantic veneration for nature. Magawisca’s “imagination breathed a living spirit into all the objects of nature” (HL 85). In nature, she finds her vision of God: “the Great Spirit is visible in the life-creating sun. I perceive Him in the gentle light of the moon that steals in through the forest boughs” (HL 198). Magawisca makes her most impassioned proclamation of these views at the end of the novel when she is leaves to live with her people, apart from “civilization.” Hope is dismayed that Magawisca’s “noble mind” will be “wasted in those hideous solitudes.” Magawisca assures Hope that she will not be alone because, to her, God is omnipresent:

“Hope Leslie, there is no solitude in me; the Great Spirit, and his ministers, are every where present and visible to the eye of the soul that loves him; nature is but his interpreter; her forms are but bodies for his spirit. I hear him in the rushing winds—in the summer breeze—in the

gushing fountains—in the softly running streams. I see him in the bursting life of spring—in the ripening maize—in the falling leaf. Those beautiful lights,” and she pointed upward, “that shine alike on your stately domes and our forest homes, speak to me of his love to all,” (HL 351-352).

Magawisca worships nature not only because it is a creation of the Great Spirit, but it is the Great Spirit himself. Sedgwick’s depiction here is markedly Romantic. In fact, Magawisca’s homage to nature echoes the voice of the Transcendentalists who emerged in New England in the 1830s. The Transcendentalists thought nature to be symbolic, and in nature, the divine can be found. Sedgwick gives her “savages” a spiritual way of thinking about nature that the white settlers did not possess.

Sedgwick’s settlers do admire the physical surroundings of the country. In chapter VII of Volume I, the settlers directly speak of nature’s beauty. Hope and some companions hike to another settlement, and they admire the majesty of the landscape:

I had gazed on the beautiful summits of this mountain, that, in this transparent October atmosphere, were as blue and bright as the heavens themselves, till I had an irrepressible desire to go to them; ...
[W]e looked down upon a scene that made me clap my hands, and my pious companions raise their eyes in silent devotion. I hope you have not forgotten the autumnal brilliancy of our woods. They say the foliage in

England has a paler sickly hue, but for our western world—nature’s youngest child—she has reserved her many-coloured robe, the brightest and most beautiful garments. Last week the woods were as green as emerald, and now they look as if all the summer-spirits had been wreathing them with flowers of the richest and most brilliant dyes. (HL 103-104)

Sedgwick allows the settlers a romantic appreciation of the land; she uses their descriptions of nature to note the gentility and majesty of the unspoiled landscape. Although the settlers do not worship nature as the Indians do, their “pious devotion” of nature acknowledges God’s presence in it. His divine creation should not be ruined; nature is His and cannot be claimed by man, as Cooper suggests.

In several instances, Sedgwick describes the landscape as it was, undisturbed and unsettled, and then details the result of the settlers’ intervention:

The gentle Housatonick wound through the depths of the valley, in some parts contracted to a narrow channel, and in others, murmuring over the rocks that rippled its surface; and in others spreading wide its clear mirror, and lingering like a lover amidst the vines, trees, and flowers, that fringed its banks. Thus it flows now—but not as then in the sylvan freedom of nature, when no clattering mills and bustling factories, threw their prosaic shadows over the silver waters—when not even a bridge spanned their bosom—when not a trace of man’s art was seen save the little bark canoe

that glided over them, or lay idly moored along the shore. The savage was rather the vassal, then the master of nature; obeying her laws, but never usurping her dominion. He only used the land she prepared... He did not presume to hew down her trees, the proud crest of her uplands, and convert them into “russet lawns and fallows grey.” The axman’s stroke, that music to the *settler’s* ear, never then violated the peace of nature, or made discord in her music. (HL 86, Sedgwick’s emphasis)

The passage laments the destruction of nature by the settlers. The river is no longer permitted to flow as nature intended; the “clattering mills and bustling factories” have thwarted its freedom. The narrator’s description of the Indian as “the vassal” of nature, not its commander, is a positive one. Sedgwick believes no one is entitled to “own” nature.

Sedgwick critiques the destruction of nature and the Indian removal along with it. Her narrator speaks with bitter irony about white destructiveness in nature. When the “Indian fugitives” march Everell to his death, the narrator describes the landscape and notes that the Indians left no mark on the land: “it is not permitted to reasonable instructed man, to admire or regret tribes of human beings, who lived and died, leaving scarcely a more enduring memorial, than the forsaken nest that vanishes before one winter’s storms” (HL 86). In another scene, Hope laments that the “beautiful vallies of our Connecticut” have, to that point, only been enjoyed “by those savages” (HL 104). In these instances, Sedgwick presents

common negative views of Native Americans for not building up the land and failing to create a lasting legacy. Sedgwick undermines these views by expressing her discontent with such prejudiced opinions. Sedgwick notes that an Indian village “remained the residence of savages long after they had vanished from the surrounding country...the remnant of the tribe migrated to the west; and even now some of their families make a summer pilgrimage to this, their Jerusalem, and are regarded with a melancholy interest by the present occupants of the soil” (HL 90). This village was like their holy land that was taken from them; it represented their heritage but its original state was a part of the past and was only preserved in their memory. The settlers took the land from the Indians, robbing them of their homes and their places of worship. She pays homage to the nearly extinct Indians ways and mourns their loss of the land.

Sedgwick’s the settlers admire the land and proclaim to take command of nature with good intentions. However Sedgwick condemns the actions of the settlers. The settlers’ Christian mission turns into the hypocrisy of “righteous” pilgrims who remove and exterminate Indians. Sedgwick acknowledges the hardships of the “wild” the pilgrims endured:

We forget the noble pilgrims lived and endured for us—that when they came to the wilderness...they did virtually renounce all dependence on earthly supports...they sacrificed ease and preferment, and all the delights of sense...An exiled and suffering people, they came forth in the dignity

of the chosen servants of the Lord, to open the forests to the sun-beam, and to the light of the Sun of Righteousness...

[T]heir feet were planted on the mount of the vision, and they saw, with sublime joy, a multitude of people where the solitary savage roamed the forest – the forest vanished, and pleasant villages and busy cities appeared – the tangled foot-path expanded to the thronged high-way – the consecrated church planted on the rock of the heathen sacrifice (HL 75).

Sedgwick's portrait of the settlers is reminiscent of a biblical passage about the Israelites. The settlers were a chosen people and their cause was intended to be noble; however their treatment of the Indians was anything but Christian. In acting in the name of progress and a Christian God, the settlers stripped the land from the Indians and become the true savages. These "exiled and suffering people," without right, took the land from the Indians, exiled the natives and spoiled nature.

Both Cooper and Sedgwick speak of the desecration of nature with regret. Their treatment of the wilderness reveals their feelings about the Indian removal from the land. Cooper reserves his melancholy for the ruin of the landscape itself; he expresses no regret that an entire people, who had developed sophisticated societies, were forcefully pushed off their land to become displaced and exiled. Any respect he has for Native Americans is far less than his possessive admiration of nature, which itself is second to his belief in progress and building up the land.

Cooper himself espoused the view that “property is the base of all civilization” (*The American Democrat*, 135). An unsettled land is a wasted land in Cooper’s eyes. Cooper’s Romantic treatment of nature reflects the spirit of the time and his own experience with its beauty. However, he quickly moves past this nostalgic treatment and adopts a proprietary attitude: the land must be taken away from the Indians and developed by the white settlers. Cooper awards rightful claim to the land to the settlers who would “improve” nature in order to build a nation.

Sedgwick too presents a Romantic treatment of nature. However she challenges the righteousness of stripping the Indians of their world. Sedgwick questions the settlers’ claim to the land. She warns the settlers of the dangers of the wild and implies the land is best left to its original inhabitants. Sedgwick believes in the right of the Native Americans to the land. She battles the popular attitude that Native Americans did not appreciate the value of the land and were doing nothing with it. Sedgwick’s romantic viewpoint is infused with her religious beliefs: she shows that the Indians consider nature to be God’s domain, that the Indians revere the land, and that they find their “Great Spirit” in nature. They are merely on earth to care for the land; it is not theirs to possess. The pilgrims, “God’s children” with their “pure Christian hearts,” stole the land from the “heathen” people. The pilgrims’ actions were unjust and unchristian. Sedgwick questions Cooper’s proprietary notion of nature and the nation’s conquering spirit. She believed that God has the only true claim to the land.

Chapter IV: European Heritage

Cooper used nature to justify Indian removal and to promote the development of the land by white men of his own status and class. Sedgwick used nature to challenge the settlers' right to the land and the removal of natives from their home and exclusion from American society. For Sedgwick nature is not something to be owned; it is God's domain.

Cooper and Sedgwick also use European heritage to define what America should and should not be. Europe is a backdrop in both *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Hope Leslie*. Cooper and Sedgwick acknowledge Britain as the former Mother country and examine the colonists' struggle to establish their own identity in the New World. Cooper's Europe included both the good English and the bad French. The French, with their Indian allies, are the evil-doers in the French and Indian War, while Britain is the honorable nation. Cooper emphasizes the good British qualities and looks to restore the British system of hierarchy in America. Cooper wants to retain an aristocratic class so men like himself could own land and rule over women, Indians, slaves and property-less people.

Sedgwick's Old World focuses on old England and serves to promote a new American democratic spirit. Sedgwick's treatment of Europe reminds Americans that they left Britain because of its tyrannical rule and warns against reproducing such oppressive ways in America. Sedgwick also places England in the past, and creates a democratic America with freedom for all in the future.

Cooper uses Europe as a backdrop and a foil, just as he does with Native American heritage. He deals not only with England but also with France and Holland. The French and the Dutch are dishonorable, corrupting European influences. The Dutch gave Indians “fire-water,” compromising their condition and causing them to give up the land to the Dutch. Magua’s evil character embodies the corrupting French influence. Magua himself blames the French for introducing alcohol to the Indians, which made them act out in dishonorable ways and caused his ruin and unhappiness: “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” (LM 102).

Cooper repeatedly reminds the reader that the French and the Dutch are the enemies of the British. Hawkeye proudly relates the battles between the British and the “Dutch Frenchmen.” He details how “hundreds of Frenchmen saw the sun that day for the last time; and even their leader, Dieskau himself, fell into our hands, so cut and torn with the lead, that he has gone back to his own country, unfit for further acts in war” (LM 135). The French are ignoble and also weak, despite their winning the battle depicted in the novel. Duncan Heyward, the young colonial major, suspects that Montcalm, the hardened French colonel, will attempt to force Duncan to betray his loyalty to England. Heyward comments that

Montcalm's unscrupulous politics would overpower Montcalm's character: "For though the French commander bore a high character for courage and enterprise, he was also thought to be expert in those political practices, which do not always respect the nicer obligations of morality, and which so generally disgraced the European diplomacy of that period" (LM 94). The French are also most dishonorable for allowing the massacre at Fort William Henry. Montcalm exerts no control over the Indians when they attack the retreating English and takes no action to stop the killing. As a result he is described as being "deficient in moral courage" (LM 181). Cooper implies that Montcalm, and thereby the French, were morally corrupt and cowardly. Cooper emphasizes the false and unmerited luster of the French military by declaring that history surrounds "her heroes with an atmosphere of imaginary brightness" (LM 181).

Cooper further discredits the French by making them allies of the fiendish Iroquois. In doing so, Cooper critiques the French ideals associated with political and social upheaval because the French were associated with radicalism and political turmoil during and after the French Revolution (1789-1799).

Historically, both sides, revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries, used violent means. The most violent phase of the French Revolution occurred during the Reign of Terror from 1793-1794, during which there was a massive extermination of over 40,000 counter-revolutionaries (Hooker). The Revolution was crushed, but France would forever be associated with this violent political disorder. After

the American Revolution, Cooper and many others, advocated for order and authority and opposed the ideals of the French Revolution. By associating the villainous French with the evil Iroquois, Cooper disparages everything he feared: power for the masses, loss of power for the aristocracy, and the idea of communal property (Hooker).

By contrast, Cooper presents the English ways and people as a respected heritage and an honorable foundation on which the new nation was established. The massacre depicts the British as victims and martyrs who suffer for their cause and country. They are an honored people, even in times of defeat. Even their French enemies respect their honorable plight:

As the confused and timid throng, left the protecting mounds of the fort, and issued on the open plain, the whole scene was, at once, presented to their eyes. At a little distance on the right, and somewhat in the rear, the French army stood to their arms....They were attentive, but silent observers of the proceeding of the vanquished, failing in none of the stipulated military honours, and offering no taunt or insult, in their success, to their less fortunate foes. Living masses of the English, to the amount, in the whole, of near three thousand, were moving slowly across the plain, towards the common center, and gradually approached each other, as they converged to the point of their march, a vista cut through the lofty trees, where the road to the Hudson entered the forest. (LM 174)

The scene reads as a mass exodus of people and is reminiscent of the Jews being forced out of Egypt. By forging this Biblical connection, Cooper portrays the British colonists as a chosen people. Although they did not triumph at present, their time to reign would come after the British Empire had lost control of the land and a newly established America was growing. “Old” England was already losing power. The time of British reign would soon be over and the glorious future of America would begin.

Cooper pays homage to an admirable English heritage while at the same time asserting it is doomed and that America must move forward independent of England. The portrait of Colonel Munro, the British commander, is representative of this commendable, yet outdated heritage. While a praiseworthy and respected leader the old colonel is practically useless as he is paralyzed by his grief over the separation from his daughters. Both Munro and Montcalm are relics of the past that stand in the way of progress. On the other hand, Major Heyward, an American of pure British heritage, is presented as the identity and destiny of the nation. He takes the place of Munro at a meeting with Montcalm, and he inherits the power and the spirit of the English forces.

Cooper surrounds the British and their supporters with the very same “imaginary brightness” he saw around the French. The English and their colonial forces (i.e. future independent Americans) represent the just cause; they should and will be the rightful “inheritors” of the land. Cooper creates the flip side of that

image by depicting the French and their Indian allies as violent, dishonorable and unscrupulous. Cooper manipulates and revises history to glorify and adopt the British heritage. He believes the Old World patriarchal rule should be established in the New World to place power in the hands of the white, “civilized,” American male.

Like Cooper, Sedgwick uses European heritage as a backdrop. She pays respect to some admirable British traits but far more than Cooper severs the new nation’s ties with England. Sedgwick criticizes the oppressive English ways and reminds Americans that they left England to escape its tyranny. Sedgwick’s America is a nation of freedom, and its democratic spirit is the way of the future. Restricting the rights of women and entirely excluding Indians and slaves from society is hypocritical and a betrayal of the past.

England in *Hope Leslie* is represented by an older, “first generation” of British characters. The first generation embodies an honorable and refined English heritage within the restrictive society the colonists escaped. One of them is William Fletcher (“Fletcher”), “the son of a respectable country gentleman of Suffolk, in England” with an “elegant appearance and graceful deportment” (HL 5, 7). Fletcher’s past acts out the relationship between England and the American colonies. Sir William, Fletcher’s controlling uncle, disapproves of his nephew’s independence and refusal to “bow the knee to the idols Sir William served” (HL 7). Sir William represents the generation who remained in the “Old World,”

stayed true to the established customs, and looked down on the colonists' quest for liberation. Sir William is threatened by Fletcher's spirited beliefs because they challenge the old ways. As the British monarchy sought to control the colonies, Sir William seeks to control the young Fletcher and to exploit his nephew's growing affection for his cousin (and Sir William's daughter) Alice. Sir William encourages a marriage between the two but dictates terms intolerable to Fletcher by which such a union would take place. Sir William will allow the marriage only if Fletcher abandons his "fanatical notions of liberty and religion" and pledges allegiance to the English monarchy and church (HL 8). Sir William's ultimatum reads like a formal edict issued by the monarchy of England to the rebellious colonists. Fletcher cannot abandon his Puritan principles and must sacrifice his true love to escape his tyrannical uncle.

Young Fletcher epitomizes the spirit that spurred the Pilgrims to leave England and establish the Puritan colonies to accomplish a great work. In Fletcher, Sedgwick combines the best colonial spirit with a refined English manner. Sedgwick's approval of dissent is explicit: a break was needed from the oppression of the Old World monarchy. The new nation should be true to its democratic spirit by creating an inclusive democracy that granted true civil and religious freedom to all.

While Sir William's plot is successful and Fletcher is denied his true love, Fletcher perseveres, just like the American colonists, and goes on to marry

another woman, Martha. The couple leaves for America to establish a new life yet they cannot completely escape England. The ways of the past remain with the Fletchers in the form of their servant, the shrill and judgmental Jennet, and Hope's aunt and chaperone, the refined widow Dame Grafton. However the English ways no longer have control as the colonists work to establish their settlement and then the new nation.

Jennet is another representation of the controlling English monarchy. For Jennet all that was good was left in England and the new country offers nothing positive. However a shift of power between the old and the new is presented by having Jennet as a servant in the Fletcher household. Jennet refuses to change or adapt to new ways. She personifies the rigidity and intolerance of England. As Magawisca notes, when she sees Jennet many years later, "Time had indeed wrought little change on Jennet, save imparting a shriller squeak to her doleful voice, and a keener edge to her sharp features" (HL 192).

Dame Grafton is Hope Leslie's aunt who accompanies Hope to the colonies. Dame Grafton is a counterpoint to Jennet. She serves as a reminder of the honorable English traditions which the next generation can acknowledge but from which they will still distance themselves. She stands for a more liberal and cosmopolitan English heritage. Dame Grafton was "kind-hearted and affectionate" (HL 27, 20). Unlike the narrow-minded Jennet, Dame Grafton tolerates the new lifestyle of the colonies while continuing to reference some of

the English ways with respect and longing. Dame Grafton's practices are antiquated and inapplicable to life in the colonies. As Martha Fletcher notes, "Dame Grafton is strangely out of place here" (HL 31). Sedgwick's message is that these traditions are to be remembered and respected but not rigidly followed.

Sedgwick includes a personification of the corrupting European influence with the character of Sir Philip Gardiner. Sir Philip is the antithesis of the ideas of justice and freedom for which the colonies stood. His underhanded schemes undercut the mission of the pilgrims to establish a just and fair society. Sir Philip is an egocentric charlatan, who is untrustworthy and has no scruples in "persevering falsehood" (HL 304). He attempts to dishonestly win Hope as wife and to have Magawisca convicted in order to cover his own wrongdoings. His campaign against Magawisca was "not from any malignant feelings towards her, but merely to advance his own private interests" (HL 300). Similarly, he has no true love for Hope and his passion for her "had been stimulated by the obstacles which opposed it" (HL 333). He only has self-love and is ruled by vanity. Sir Philip's hedonistic and selfish ways stand in diametric opposition to the sense of community and goodwill the colonists, particularly the Puritans, were trying to forge.

The older European generation represents a heritage that is to be respected but not blindly obeyed. William and Martha Fletcher serve as a link between the past generations of England and the future generation of Americans. They are the

foundation upon which the next generation, specifically the heroine Hope Leslie and their son Everell, can build the new nation. William Fletcher's ways are unconventional as he critiques both the old (the established ways of the other European characters) and the new (his Puritan contemporaries). Fletcher establishes his home a mile away from the village of Springfield near the Indian settlement; he trusts the "savages" more than the prying eyes of the community. Fletcher's actions are a criticism of the new form of Puritan rigidity and remind Sedgwick's readers that the settlers were trying to escape such tyranny, not mimic it. Having Fletcher remove his family from the control of the leaders of the settlement emphasizes the idea that a break from repressive Puritans ways was needed.

Fletcher, his family and his house are built on the frontier of change, in between the "habitation of civilized man" and the "savage howling wilderness" (HL 17). He names his home "Bethel" after Abraham's dwelling in the Bible. The biblical Bethel was established after God told Abraham to go forth to a new land, and He would make Abraham a great nation. The Fletcher's Bethel would be like a New Jerusalem: it would found a new and better nation that broke from the negative ways of the European past and of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Sedgwick's second generation of characters are the founders of this new Jerusalem.

The second generation of characters provide a stark contrast to their European predecessors and emphasize the difference of values between Europe and the colonies. This generation includes Hope, Magawsica, Esther and Everell and represents the future and hope of America for a just, tolerant and diverse nation. These characters look to the first generation for guidance; however they are spirited, rebellious, and independent, and have the freedom to explore options that would not have been tolerated in the Old World. Hope rebels against Puritan authority by secretly and successfully freeing Magawisca. Everell forms a deep bond with the Indian maiden, seeing her first as a potential wife and then coming to regard her as a sister. Hope and Everell form a relationship that achieves a balance of power, love and respect between woman and man. Esther embraces her faith, her religion, and herself, by choosing not to marry and to live as an independent, single woman. These younger characters pave a new path for America that would give equal rights to women and Indians.

Cooper and Sedgwick use Europe as a backdrop in very different ways. Cooper extols the benevolent English traits and incorporates them in the new American heritage. He returns to the past and restores the traditional British ways. His America establishes a patriarchy similar to the English monarchy and bestows power on “aristocratic” white men. He attributes various negative traits to the French and at times the Dutch. His description of the British military efforts paints a glowing picture of the courageous and well-intentioned British soldiers in

their plight to win the Northeastern territories from the treacherous French.

Cooper glorifies the fight of the British in order to legitimize the cause of the settlers and retroactively justify the actions of the settlers, by granting their entitlement to the land and by predicting that the development of the land will succeed because it was destined to be.

Sedgwick highlights all that is wrong with Cooper's American "democracy." She recalls the intolerable civil and religious oppression in England, describes a necessary break from this past, and looks forward to a very different America. The colonists escaped English tyranny only to encounter a new oppression in America – the repressive Puritan ways. She points out the hypocrisy in these ways and challenges the new repression. Her younger characters represent hope for an America that establishes a true democracy. They embody the independent and righteous spirit of the principles that founded the country. Sedgwick shatters the connection with the European past to create a country that offered people citizenship and protection to all people.

Chapter V: Native American Heritage

Both novels convey Cooper's and Sedgwick's views about the place of Native Americans in American society by recounting or reinventing episodes of their history. Cooper constructs a dramatic, historically inaccurate Native American history to create a rightful claim to the land for the colonists that would validate the dispossession of the Indian's land. Sedgwick's depiction of colonial history gives voice and grants a place to Native Americans in the new nation. Cooper depicts the Iroquois as evil human beings, and as inhuman beings, because they had been American enemies and also to validate the possession of Cooper's family's land, which had been originally Iroquois, then British, and had been confiscated from the British after the Revolution (Clark 63).

Cooper rewrites the history of both the Iroquois and Delaware Nations¹³ to legitimize the cause of the colonists. Cooper creates an idealized Delaware tribe and a malevolent Iroquois nation. The Delaware Indians are benevolent, wise, and blessed, and are allied with the British. The Iroquois nation, more specifically the Huron Indians, are untrustworthy, malicious savages aligned with the maligned French.

In actuality, history was not as clear cut. The Delaware were the most important and respected member of the Algonquian family.¹⁴ They were respected

¹³ Cooper uses the tribe names "Delaware" and "Mohican" interchangeably.

¹⁴ "Algonquian Family (adapted from the name of the Algonkin tribe). A linguistic stock which formerly occupied a more extended area than any other in North America. Their territory

elders, the founding “grandfathers” of the Algonquin people. Even the Huron Indians, enemies of the Delaware Indians in *The Last of the Mohicans*, recognized this esteemed title (“Delaware Tribe History”). They were peacemakers who settled disputes between rival tribes (Sultzman, “Delaware History”). While the Delaware were a friendly, hospitable and peaceful people, there is no historical record they were “the greatest and most civilized of the Indian nations, that existed within the limits of the present United States,” as Cooper states in his preface (LM 3).

In an effort to idealize the Delaware, Cooper creates a supernatural aura around them. His Delaware have heightened senses, instincts, and abilities. Upon first seeing the talents of Uncas, Heyward comments: “This, certainly, is a rare and brilliant instance of those natural qualities, in which these peculiar people are said to excel” (LM 53). Chingachook and Uncas commune with nature and expertly navigate the landscape. They are also “vigilant protectors” who “neither tired nor slumbered” (LM 65). He makes them into mystical, divine beings.

Cooper’s use of the name Uncas for a Delaware Indian is a meaningful misrepresentation. The historical Uncas (c. 1588 – c. 1683) died over 80 years

reached from the east shore of Newfoundland to the Rocky Mountains and front Churchill River to Pamlico Sound. The east parts of this territory were separated by an area occupied by Iroquoian tribes. On the east Algonquian tribes skirted the Atlantic coast from Newfoundland to Neuse River; on the south they touched on the territories of the eastern Siouan, southern Iroquoian, and the Muskogean families; on the west they bordered on the Siouan area; on the northwest on the Kitunahan and Athapascan; in Labrador they came into contact with the Eskimo; in Newfoundland they surrounded on three sides the Beothuk.. The Delaware tribe occup[ied] the entire basin of Delaware river in east Pennsylvania and south New York, together with most of New Jersey and Delaware” (“Algonquian Genealogy”).

before the action of Cooper's novel takes place. His elevation of Uncas to a noble, kind-hearted and respected individual is also a distortion. Uncas played a devastating role in both The Pequot War (1634-1638) and King Philip's War (1675-1676) by siding with the English, first against the Pequot and then the Narragansets. Among the Pequot people, chosen by Sedgwick for her historical novel, Uncas was reviled and feared and his own people tried to assassinate him. From the Indian perspective, Uncas was a cruel, infamous, untrustworthy figure. In his *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* Frederick Webb Hodge (quoting De Forest) writes: "His nature was selfish, jealous, and tyrannical; his ambition was grasping and unrelieved by a single trait of magnanimity" (868; vol. 2). He had been an ally of the colonists who had helped put an end to Indian resistance in Connecticut in the middle of the 17th century. Uncas had been "the white man's friend," more loyal to the English than to the members of his own race. In return, he received land that had been taken from other Indians by the English (Hodge 868; vol. 2). In the eyes of the English, he had been a great chief and therefore a fitting figure for Cooper to exalt.

Cooper makes his Uncas noble, honorable, and the last descendant of the Delaware. In the novel, the honored and revered ways of the tribe died with Uncas: "Pride of the Wapanachki, why hast thou left us?" (LM 344). Cooper adopts Uncas as an honored Delaware because the historical Uncas sided with the English against his own people. Uncas was indeed valued by the English, and in

1847, a statue in his honor was erected by the citizens of Norwich, Connecticut. In his historical discourse celebrating the erection of the statue, William L. Stone more truthfully discloses the true character of Uncas:

The Indian name of Uncas is far more familiar to the readers of fiction, than to those of veritable history, or even to the student of the early chronicles of New England. Its original possessor, so far as history informs us, was the bold and warlike chief of a powerful community of Indians, occupying a large portion of the territory now forming the State of Connecticut, when the Pilgrims began to plant themselves in that region. He was the white man's friend, at a period when the friendship even of savage royalty was most welcome. To his fidelity the early planters of Connecticut were brought under obligations that have been but ill-requited to his house and his race. (i)

Cooper and his imaginary Uncas were so linked in the mind of the American public, that another statue in Uncas' honor was erected on the site of Cooper's home in Cooperstown, New York (Hodge 868; vol. 2).

Cooper's choice of the Delaware as the glorious Indians stems from multiple reasons. The Delaware reputation for peace and affability made them easy to idealize. They were respected and honored in their own Algonquian family as well as by other tribes and nations. The Delaware also considered themselves to be the "pure" Indian race. "Delaware" is the name given to the tribe by the

English but they called themselves “Lenape.” This name translated into “original people” or “true men” and designated them as the “unmixed” and pure Indians (Sultzman, “Delaware History”). Cooper, like many of his contemporaries valued racial purity. This value made the Delaware, as well as pure whites, a better people.

Cooper relied on the skewed account of missionary John Heckewelder (Wallace, “Cooper’s Indians”). He chose Heckewelder as his main source of information on the Delaware in order to create his myth about the Delaware people (Wallace, “Heckewelder’s Indians” 497). Heckewelder had lived and worked among the Delaware. He learned to respect the Delaware and considered them to be his friends (Wallace, “Heckewelder’s Indians” 496). Heckewelder’s *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States* (1819) is the highly biased published account of his time among the Indians.

Cooper’s rendering of the Iroquois is equally inaccurate. Cooper portrays the Iroquois as animalistic and barbarians, untamed and wild. The historical record is quite different. Cooper falsely asserts that the Iroquois were a lazy people who did not want to work or develop the land, and he paints them as an undisciplined group. He portrays them as evil spirits, “dark spectres” and unearthly beings. His demonic picture of the Iroquois is most chilling in the massacre scene, in Chapter 17, where he makes them thirsty for blood: “The flow

of blood might be likened to the outbreaking of a torrent; and as the natives became heated and maddened by the sight, many among them kneeled to the earth and drank freely, exultingly, hellishly, of the crimson tide” (LM 176).

The Iroquois were actually far from the awful savages Cooper portrays them to be and closer to the description Cooper gives of the Delaware in his preface as “the greatest and most civilized of the Indian nations, that existed within the limits of the present United States” (LM 3). The Iroquois were the most powerful indigenous people of North America. They possessed superior military skill and established a sophisticated and complex political system. Their society was known for maintaining power through political alliances among the tribes (Sultzman, “Iroquois History”). An Iroquoian tribe had a legislative, judicial, and executive branch, and a balance of power was maintained by an intricate system of laws (“Iroquois Tribe History”). European settlers borrowed elements of Iroquoian political organization, and the Iroquois League even influenced the American Articles of Confederation and the Constitution (Sultzman, “Iroquois History”). Cooper’s evil Iroquois exhibit none of the intelligence and skill that are reflected in the historical records.

Cooper vilifies the Iroquois nation because during the American Revolution, the Iroquois were the enemies of the colonists and fought in support of the British (Washburn). The Iroquois involvement in the American Revolution was disastrous for the great Indian nation. After the colonists’ victory, Americans

considered the Iroquois a conquered people, and the Iroquoian tribes were stripped of their land (Sultzman, "Iroquois History").

Cooper's interchangeable use of "Huron" with "Iroquois" is yet another inaccuracy. While the Huron were originally a highly organized confederation of four Iroquois tribe, tension later rose between the Huron and other Iroquois nations (Hodge 584; vol. 1). According to Hodge, there was "well-known hostility and intermittent warfare between the Iroquois and the Huron" that "date from prehistoric times" (Hodge 587; vol. 1). At the time of the novel, the Huron had been mostly exterminated by the Iroquois: "After the destruction of the Huron or Wendat confederation [in 1650] and the more or less thorough dispersal of the several tribes composing it, the people who, as political units, were originally called Huron and Wendat, ceased to exist" (Hodge 585; vol 1).

Cooper makes monsters of the Huron Indians but history does not portray them as such. The Huron confederacy was the first of the great Iroquois confederation. They were well-organized politically and socially (Sultzman, "Huron History"). Yet the Huron fit Cooper's characterization in surface ways. According to Hodge, "Huron" was a derogatory term given to these Indians by the French traders that first came into contact with the Huron in 1600 (585; vol 1). In France, the term, often used with an added description of "base," was an insult that expressed contempt and signified "an unkempt person, knave, ruffian, lout [or] wretch." The French gave the Hurons this name because of their cropped and

bristled hairstyle that made them look like “wild boars” to the French (Hodge 585, vol. 1). Thereafter, the Huron Indians were friendly to the French and traded with them regularly, proving they were not “louts” or “ruffians” (Sultzman, “Huron History”). The extermination of the Huron by the middle of the 17th century also served Cooper’s purpose of showing a “natural” Indian removal not caused by white society.

Cooper also applies his slanted perspective to Indian-European relations. The British-Delaware and French-Iroquois alliances that Cooper creates in *The Last of the Mohicans* distort history. “As a rule,” the Delaware tribe as a member of the Algonquian family considered the French to be their allies and protectors, while they constantly battled with the British over possession of their territory (“Algonquian Genealogy”). In contrast, the Iroquois never considered the French to be friends. Hodge notes the Iroquois were “bitter enemies of the French, . . . while they were firm allies of the English” (618; vol. 1). Shortly before the French and Indian War, the Iroquois League (a confederation of six different tribal nations) held a conference with the British to prepare for war against the French. Once war officially broke out, the Delaware Indians fought with the French. The Delaware had been under the control of the Iroquois since 1718, and they proclaimed their independence from the Iroquois by siding with the French in the French and Indian War. The Delaware also sided with the French in order to stop the encroaching British from claiming their land. In fact, some attacks by

the Delaware on the frontiers were meant not to support the French but rather to punish the British (“Delaware Tribe History”). Ignoring the historical record, Cooper’s Delaware are allied with the British, while the Iroquois are paired with the French.

Cooper achieves some historical accuracy in creating animosity between the Iroquois and the Delaware because the two tribes were long-time enemies (Sultzman, “Delaware History”). However Cooper takes his historical distortions so far as to blame the Iroquois, and to a lesser extent the Dutch, for the disappearance of the Delaware Indians. In his preface Cooper states:

There is a well authenticated and disgraceful history of the means by which the Dutch on one side, and the Mengwe on the other, succeeded in persuading the Lenape to lay aside their arms, trusting their defence entirely to the latter, and becoming, in short, in the figurative language of the natives, “women.” (LM 3)

In reality, the Delaware were pushed off their land and onto Iroquois land by the British settlers when the settlers began to colonize New Jersey and Delaware around 1666. It was white settlement that caused fighting and forced the Delaware tribe to relocate to over twenty different locations from 1600-1900 (Sultzman, “Delaware History”). In 1751, some of the Delaware in western Pennsylvania settled in eastern Ohio by invitation on the land of the Huron, their supposed enemy in *The Last of the Mohicans* (Hodge 385; vol. 1). Colonization more than

tribal “grudges” resulted in major Native American wars and removal (Sultzman, “Delaware History”). Forced from their indigenous lands, tribes battled over the remaining, and continually diminishing, areas in which they were “allowed” to live. Contrary to Cooper’s portrayal, the settlers did have a hand in the hostility among Native Americans and in the removal of the tribes from their lands. By depicting the Indian feuds as being their own fault, Cooper relieves the settlers of any blame for the Indian removal.

Cooper uses his version of Native American heritage to justify Indian displacement. The Iroquois were evil and should not have a place in the future nation. Their removal is therefore just. Although the Delaware are good, they also will be excluded from society but they are allowed to accept their own removal. Cooper bestows upon the British the blessing of the “good” Indians. He thereby suggests they have accepted domination by the white man. Cooper uses Tamenund (historically, Tammany or Tamanend), a great Delaware chief, to do so. Hodge, quoting Heckewelder, describes him thus:

The name of Tamanend is held in the highest veneration among the Indians of all the chiefs and great men which the Lenape nation ever had, he stands foremost on the list. But although many fabulous stories are circulated about him among the whites, but little of his real history is known. All we know, therefore, of Tamanend is that he was an ancient Delaware chief, who never had his equal. He was in the highest degree

endowed with wisdom, virtue, prudence, charity, affability, meekness, hospitality, in short with every good and noble qualification that a human being may possess. (683; vol. 2)¹⁵

Cooper's use of Tamanend serves a dual purpose: he can cite him as a beloved, respected Native American authority and also invent details to create and supplement the specifics of the chief's relatively unknown history to give his own view a false luster. Another likely motive behind Cooper's use of the chief is that Tamenend played a crucial role in establishing friendly relations between Native Americans and English settlers.

As with Uncas, Tamanend died prior to the novel's action, in this instance nearly a century before the novel takes place. Cooper anachronistically uses the figure to make peace between the Delaware and the British settlers. He first stages a conversation between Cora and Tamenund to discuss the goodwill of the British. Cora proclaims the British to be merciful and speaks to Tamenund "of favour shown to thy kindred" (LM 304). Cooper uses two non-white characters to acknowledge the benevolence of the Indians' white oppressor. Tamenund represents the noble Indian heritage. By giving Tamenund's blessing to the

¹⁵ The Tammany Society, formed in 1786, was named after the Delaware Chief. The Society was anti-Federalist, supported a democratic government, and opposed the aristocracy. The Society had branches across the nation, but the most powerful was in New York, later to be known as Tammany Hall. The New York branch quickly became a political machine and by the middle of the 19th century, was a completely corrupt organization. Tammany Hall survived for over 175 years and ceased to exist in the mid-1960s (Ohio Historical Society; U.S. Department of the Interior).

British, Cooper creates a blessed new country founded on the “good” European heritage with the support of the “good” Indians but without miscegenation.

Tamenund makes a final proclamation at the end of the novel that the Indians’ time is over and the time of the settlers has arrived:

“It is enough!” he said. “Go, children of the Lenape; ...Why should Tamenund stay? The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red-men has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning, 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!” (LM 350)

Tamenund’s prophecy that the time of the Indian would one day come again seems like the lofty wish of an old man, a relic of the past. Uncas, the youth and the spirit of the Delaware, has died and along with him so has the future of the race.

Tamenund’s speech places the removal of the Indians within a natural and cyclical history, again absolving the British settlers of any wrongdoing. The fate of the Delaware is sealed; they are a condemned race, doomed to vanish.

Cooper’s violations would not be so egregious had he not stated in his preface that his novel is an accurate narrative and not “an imaginary and romantic picture of things which never had an existence” (LM 1). In fact *The Last of the Mohicans* is

an untruthful tale about Native Americans and a glorified story of the American conquest of North America.

Like Cooper, Sedgwick also alters history; unlike Cooper, she does so in a more subtle way and with a different purpose. Sedgwick uses actual historical documents to detail the proud and noble heritage of the Pequot tribe, to challenge Indian removal and to protest the prevailing attitude that Indians were vengeful beasts. Sedgwick's version of the Pequot War casts the British as the aggressors and the Pequot tribe as victims.

Sedgwick begins by asserting that her novel should not be taken as historical fact. She states that the story is "not offered to the public as being in any degree an historical narrative, or a relation of real events" and that her mission was to present "the character of the times" (HL 3). Ironically, Sedgwick's text is more historically accurate than Cooper's, even though she does make some historical changes. As she discloses, "a slight variation has been allowed in the chronology of the Pequod War" (HL 3). In most accounts of the Pequot War the Indians provoked the British, and the massacre of 300 Pequot Indians, mostly unarmed women and children, was the "warranted" British retaliation to prior Indian attacks on the English settlers. Sedgwick's inverts the accepted view and casts the British as the aggressors. Magawisca tellingly warns Everell, "when the hour of vengeance comes, if it should come, remember it was *provoked*" (HL 48, emphasis added).

Sedgwick's depiction was unprecedented. She places Magawisca in the role of historian to recount the massacre from her people's point of view. Magawisca tells Everell that the English, with the aid of the Naragansetts, attacked near dawn while the Pequot warriors were still away at a tribal council. The victims were mainly sleeping women and children, and Magawisca denounces the cowardice and dishonor of the English for attacking such innocents. She emotionally relates horrific events that she cannot forget: "Oh! the dreadful fray, even now rings in my ears! Those fearful guns that we had never heard before—the piteous cries of the little children—the groans of our mothers, and, oh! worse—worse than all—the silence of those that could not speak—" (HL 50).

Sedgwick's account of history is more complex than any given by Cooper, who depicts Indian aggression simply as savage behavior. By showing how underhanded and cruel the English had been, Sedgwick gives a motive for Indian violent retaliation. While Cooper allows quiet grunts by the complacent Uncas and Chingachook, Sedgwick allows an emotional and articulate Native American viewpoint and narrative. Magawisca provides a tortured yet eloquent voice to the Indians' suffering and extermination. Her description of the atrocities committed by the British and the brutal killing of her brother – who was taken as a prisoner and then decapitated after he refused to give any information to the English – humanizes and expresses the anguish of the Pequot tribe. She relates that the

English betrayal changed her father's character permanently: "From that moment, my father was a changed man" (HL 55). Sedgwick quotes from sources like William Hubbard's *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New England* (1814) to claim that previous versions of the massacre were warped and biased:

In the relation of their enemies, the courage of the Pequods was distorted into ferocity, and their fortitude, in their last extremity, thus set forth:

"many were killed in the swamp, like sullen dogs, that would rather, in their self-willedness and madness, sit still to be shot or cut in pieces, than receive their lives for asking, at the hands of those whose power they had now fallen." (HL 56)

Magawisca is also allowed to condemn the hypocrisy of the English, who were merciless and anything but Christian in their attack and drove the Pequot Indians to a crazed revenge.

Sedgwick thereby gives the Indians reason for their actions and reveals their emotions. She makes an even stronger statement by declaring Magawisca's story to be the "true" account of the Pequot massacre. The narrative challenges common opinion when Everell concludes that the "defenceless" Pequots were unfairly "exterminated, not by superior natural force, but by the adventitious circumstances of arms, skill, and knowledge" (HL 56). Everell is astonished by the retelling and proclaims a new understanding of the events:

Everell had heard [these events] detailed with the interest and particularity that belongs to recent adventures; but he had heard them in the language of the enemies and conquerors of the Pequods; and from Magawisca's lips they took a new form and hue;... This new version of an old story reminded him of the man and the lion in the fable. But here it was not merely changing sculptors to give the advantage to one or the other of the artist's subjects; but it was putting the chisel into the hand of truth, and giving it to whom it belonged. (HL 55)

Everell references one of Aesop's fables which concludes "one story is good, till another is told." The fable also moralizes that you have to consider who is telling the tale.

Sedgwick points out that history is often written by the conquerors and ignores the tale of the victims. She voices the Indian viewpoint and breaks with the majority opinion of the time by recognizing that the Indians were the "original possessors of the land" and a "heroic and suffering people." These ideas are in contrast to Cooper who, expressing accepted public opinion, proclaimed that the Indians too had taken the land from others and in any case they were dangerous barbarians or a dying race.

Sedgwick's depiction of Native Americans rails against the prevailing notion of Indian savagery. While she does not delve into specific qualities of each tribe, overall she depicts a proud Native American heritage. She also makes

Native Americans complex human beings. Sedgwick's main vehicle for doing so is Magawisca. Sedgwick initially presents the accepted stereotype of the vengeful savage through the perspective of characters such as Jennet, who thought the Indians were doomed heathens, and Digby, who believed them to be traitors and not human: "They are a treacherous race [...] They are a kind of beast we don't comprehend—out of range of God's creatures—neither angel, man, nor yet quite devil" (HL 43). Martha Fletcher is initially hesitant to allow Magawisca and Oneco to stay in her house, believing Indians to be wild and animalistic. Her husband convinces her to welcome the children by noting their mother Monoca's "singular dignity and modesty of her demeanor" (HL 21). Sedgwick openly addresses her readers' disbelief for the idea of Indian nobility: "For those who disbelieve the existence in savage life, of the virtues which we have ascribed to this Indian woman, we quote our authority" (HL 21 n. 7). Sedgwick quotes as evidence the historical text of Benjamin Trumbull, *A Complete History of Connecticut, Civilized and Ecclesiastical* (1797): "'Among the Pequot captives was the wife and children of Mononotto. She was particularly noticed by the English for her great modesty, humanity, and good sense'" (47).

Sedgwick recognizes Monoca's admirable character in Magawisca. She challenges the savage label by depicting the Indian girl as a civilized and refined, in fact nearly royal, person:

The Indian stranger was tall for her years, which did not exceed fifteen. Her form was slender, flexible, and graceful; and there was a freedom and loftiness in her movement which though tempered with modesty, expressed a consciousness of high birth. Her face, although marked by the peculiarities of her race, was beautiful even to an European eye. Her features were regular, and her teeth white as pearls; but there must be something beyond symmetry of feature to fix the attention, and it was an expression of dignity, thoughtfulness, and deep dejection that made the eye linger on Magawisca's face, as if it were perusing there the legible record of her birth and wrongs. (HL 23)

Sedgwick first addresses her physical beauty and assures the reader it met the standards of European beauty. More importantly, she emphasizes Magawisca's inner character and "noble demeanor." Magawisca consistently comports herself with honor and dignity. She is intelligent, humane and dignified, the opposite of a vengeful savage. Magawisca's sense of dignity exudes from her and conveys the wrongs done to her entire race.

Sedgwick makes Magawisca wise beyond her years as a representative of the Pequot tribe and certainly more mature than Hope, her white counterpart. Magawisca imparts the wisdom of an ancient and established people, such as when she eloquently describes to Everell both her family's history and her people's plight. Even amid all her pain, Magawisca acknowledges the kindness of

some English for their honorable treatment of her imprisoned mother. Whether dutifully acting as a servant girl in the Fletcher household, bravely attempting to save Everell's life or boldly standing up for herself in court, Magawisca defies every aspect of the barbarian stereotype applied to Native Americans at the time.

While both turned to colonial history to tell their stories, Cooper and Sedgwick's retelling of Native American history has opposite effects and intents. Cooper practically invents a new history. His goal is to legitimize the British takeover and to bless the future use of the land by Americans. He disfigures historical alliances of the French and Indian War and the events of the time in order to convey his message: the transfer of the land was a destined outcome. The turnover was for the best and the "legitimate" Indians on that land even gave their blessing for it to happen. Cooper relies on stereotypes, both by depicting an evil group of Indians who are opposed to British actions and by creating an ancient, wise group of Indians who consecrate the measures taken by the British. He gives Americans a clean slate, absolving them of any wrongdoing in the creation of their country. His portrait of the Iroquois as barbarians and his amazement at the supernatural qualities of the Mohicans emphasizes how alien the Native Americans were to the white man and how different from each other the two cultures were. Cooper's reinvention of history shows that Indians had no place in Cooper's nation because the "pale faces" and the "red man" could not coexist.

While Cooper looked to validate the American imperial cause, Sedgwick advanced the cause of Indian society and challenged Indian removal. Her Indians are brave and honorable human beings who were wronged by white society. Sedgwick uses historical records to present a more truthful account of history. She is meticulous in presenting a fair and accurate version of the Native America past and includes copious and accurate references to historical people and events (Foster 73). Against the majority opinion of the time, Sedgwick recognized, from the Indian point of view no less, a proud and noble Indian heritage. She showed that the Indians were a people to be admired, to be treated with respect, and to be included in the plans, identity, and history of the developing nation.

Chapter VI: Women & Power

Both *Hope Leslie* and *The Last of the Mohicans* revolve around central female characters. However, Sedgwick chooses as protagonists female characters who have agency and control over their own fates. Cooper's female characters are not protagonists; they are shallow, weak, and lack control over their lives. As Edward Halsey Foster stated, Cooper's females are "vapid and uninteresting" (1). Cooper's women motivate the action and heroism of the male protagonists but are never in the role of protagonist. His one-dimensional female characters project his attitude that American women should not, and would not, hold power in the country; their sole purpose was to produce the next generation.

Sedgwick's women are central to the main action of the novel and even overshadow male characters. Sedgwick's women are complex and display a range of personality traits and emotions that include strength and power, love and compassion, anger and forgiveness. She offers a wide array of determined female characters across racial, religious and class lines. These character portraits serve to empower women and present them as the founders of a righteous and just nation. Sedgwick shows women should be citizens and were important historical figures. Overall, Sedgwick's multifaceted female protagonists command respect and reflect Sedgwick's belief: women can be powerful, even in the oppressive, patriarchal society of her time.

In general, Cooper offers shallow character profiles but this lack of depth most markedly applies to his female characters. Cooper marginalizes the role of women and makes them subservient in his novel. In the future of America, the white, “civilized” male would rule, and marriage would be the only way for women to attain prosperity. Men must work to expand the country. Women would be provided for and protected by their husbands. Cooper, representing the typical attitude of the time, painted them as powerless, weak creatures who could not fend for themselves. Cooper creates a gender division on the first page of his novel. He states that the novel “relates...to matters which may not be universally understood, especially by the more imaginative sex.” Cooper implies that women have a different mental capacity than men can and are limited in their abilities. He continues this classification throughout the novel by constantly placing women in secondary, submissive roles.

Cooper includes only two female characters in *The Last of the Mohicans*: Alice Munro and her sister, Cora. Alice is the damsel in distress who needs to be saved by a man. Cora is the stoic martyr who willfully expresses her convictions yet still defers to and depends on the male characters to rescue her. While the plot of the novel revolves around these women, they are not in the role of the protagonist. They are absent from much of the action in the novel and are often silent in the scenes in which they do appear. When the sisters first set out to be reunited with their father at his military camp, they blindly follow their male

guides. The fragile damsels are subsequently captured by “evil” Huron Indians and end up needing to be rescued. Cooper strips his female characters of any power. They are fully dependent on the male characters, are helpless, and have no authority, even over their own actions.

This helplessness is especially true for Alice, the more fragile and the younger of the two sisters whom Cooper depicts as sunshine incarnate:

One...permitted glimpses of her dazzling complexion, fair golden hair, and bright blue eyes, to be caught as she artlessly suffered the morning air to blow aside the green veil...The flush which still lingered above the pines in the western sky, was not more bright nor delicate than the bloom on her cheek; nor was the opening day more cheering than the animated smile which she bestowed on the youth, as he assisted her into the saddle.

(LM 18)

This passage provides the most comprehensive description of Alice’s character, and it focuses on her physical beauty. Alice is virginal, and like the uninhabited land, waits to be conquered. Nowhere in the novel do we get a glimpse of strength of character or intellectual prowess from Alice. In her essay “Paradoxes: Winners and Losers Among Cooper’s Characters,” Gayle E. Clark aptly describes Alice:

She was small, delicate, blond, blue-eyed, weak, dependent, of the requisite high social class to marry a hero and displaying not an original thought or even an instinct for survival. She was unconscious through

most of the book, and had to be either supported or frankly carried by someone from beginning to end, requiring endless drains on the physical and emotional resources of all of the other characters, whining, complaining and sobbing her way across the frontier while overlooking any inconvenience, discomfort or downright danger her helplessness imposed on the other characters. (MohicanPress.com)

Alice is always the weak female who cannot save herself. After the Hurons have captured and bound her, she can only wait to be rescued by Heyward: “the withes which bound her to a pine, performed that office for Alice which her trembling limbs refused, and alone kept her fragile form from sinking. Her hands were clasped before her in prayer, but instead of looking upward to that power which alone could rescue them, her unconscious looks wandered to the countenance of Duncan with infantile dependency” (LM 108). In this scene, Alice invests more faith in Heyward as her savior than she does in God.

Alice is a child who cannot fend for herself, and at times, her childish ways put the others in danger. For example, when David the psalmist sings at her request and for her amusement, Alice gives no thought to the fact that such noise would attract their enemies. She has to be reminded by Heyward that “common prudence would teach us to journey through this wilderness in as quiet a manner as possible” (LM 27). Alice acts like a spoiled, impetuous child and is treated as such. In another scene when the group is attempting to escape the Huron village,

Alice, the “gentle one,” is literally paralyzed with fear: ““fear has overcome her and she is helpless. Alice! my sweet, my own Alice, arouse yourself; now is the moment to fly. ‘Tis in vain! she hears, but is unable to follow. Go, noble and worthy friend; save yourself, and leave me to my fate!”” (LM 262-263). Her weak, feminine nature lacks strength, and she must be led by a man. Accordingly, Alice has now become Heyward’s possession: “*my own Alice*” (emphasis added). In actuality, she has become his burden, as her paralysis keeps him in the Indian village and has the potential to fatally seal his fate. Whether she is considered to be a child, an object, or a hindrance, Alice is never really a complete person.

Cora is the older sister and is given more resolve, strength, and character. As in his introduction of Alice, Cooper initially focuses on Cora’s physical attributes:

The tresses of this lady were shining and black, like the plumage of the raven. Her complexion was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with the colour of the rich blood, that seemed ready to burst its bounds. And yet there was neither coarseness, nor want of shadowing, in a countenance that was exquisitely regular and dignified, and surpassingly beautiful. (LM 19)

The description of Cora is opposite to the portrayal of her fair and pure sister. Cooper emphasizes Cora’s dark complexion and later reveals her to be of mixed lineage: half-white on her father’s side (who was a part of the “ancient and

honourable” Munro clan) and half-black on her mother’s side (who was descended from West Indian slaves). Cora’s mixed racial background sets her apart from her delicate sister and seems to give her a different temperament. She acts differently than the typical woman of her time, such as when she reprimands Heyward for his prejudice towards Uncas. Cooper makes her more masculine than feminine. He strips Cora of femininity and unsexes her, thereby making her ineligible to be the mother of the nation.

Cora also displays a fortitude and strength of character that Alice, and at times, even the men lack. At many points, Cora challenges the “malignant” Magua: “Magua cast a look of triumph around the whole assembly, before he proceeded to the execution of his purpose. Perceiving that the men were unable to offer any resistance, he turned his looks on her he valued most. Cora met his gaze with an eye so calm and firm, that his resolution wavered” (LM 303). While the men do not make Magua doubt himself, the determined Cora does. She also shows a steely calm as she faces a life removed from her family and with someone she despises: “she arose, and with features of the hue of death, but without even a tear in her feverish eye, she turned away, and added, to the savage, with all her former elevation of manner—“Now, sir, if it be your pleasure, I will follow” (LM 316). Although Cora’s expression reveals her inner dread, she remains composed and dignified, unlike her frail sister who has fainted. However Cora suppresses her strength and ultimately always defers to the male characters.

She still acknowledges her place as a woman and even sets an example for Alice on how to act as a “proper” woman: “Cora set the example of compliance, with a steadiness that taught the more timid Alice the necessity of obedience” (LM 60). In the end, Cora dies. As Gayle E. Clark states, “[d]espite her noble qualities, Cora was destined from the beginning to be a Loser in Cooper’s lottery of life” (MohicanPress.com). Cooper does not permit strong women, let alone racially mixed women, to survive. Cooper would not allow such a woman to be the mother of the nation.

Overall, Cooper’s female are left few choices and must follow and obey their male “protectors.” They are not allowed to think for themselves; they are told when to go, when to rest and when to eat. At one point, Hawkeye insists the group stop because the “gentle ones” needed rest, even though it is implied that Alice and Cora did not feel they needed a respite: “Cora and Alice partook of that refreshment, which duty required, much more than inclination prompted, them to accept” (LM 128). Cooper further suppresses any notion of female independence through Cora’s death: the self-sufficient woman receives a death sentence, while her passive, dependent sister is allowed to live happily ever after (Foster 91). In Cooper’s worlds, both his novels and his view of life in the developing country, women did not, should not, hold a place of power.

In contrast to Cooper’s shallow stereotypes, *Hope Leslie* includes complex female characters. Sedgwick’s women come in all forms with positive and

negative personality traits: obedient wives, rebellious daughters, and devoted companions. Sedgwick divides these characters into two generations of women: mothers and daughters. The former consists of women who generally occupy the accepted role of women in society. They are wives and mothers, and their main goal is to care for their families. This older generation mainly consists of Alice Leslie, Martha Fletcher, Mrs. Winthrop and Monoca. Alice Leslie, Hope's mother, best represents the oppression of women by the old, masculine order. She was kept from her true love by her oppressive father, and Sedgwick buries her character in the Old World. Martha Fletcher and Mrs. Winthrop (Esther's aunt) represent the typical Puritan woman during early colonial times. They tend to their families and maintain their households while assuming a subordinate role to their husbands. Monoca, Magawisca's mother, is depicted as a noble savage. Sedgwick's brief glimpse of her shows an honorable Indian and a loving and fiercely protective mother. While these women are generally in subjugated positions, this first generation provides a respectable foundation upon which the next generation of women can build.

Martha Fletcher is the most comprehensive account Sedgwick provides of the first generation women. Martha Fletcher is a protective mother and a loving wife who represents the first generation of Puritan women. Martha initially seems to occupy the typical role of an obedient wife who blindly follows her husband when he chooses to move away from the settlement of Springfield and closer to

the Indian settlement. Despite the danger, Martha would not think to question him: “The inconveniences and dangers of that outpost were not unknown to her, nor did she underrate them; but Abraham would as soon have remonstrated against the command that bade him go forth from his father’s house into the land of the Chaldees, as she would have failed in passive obedience to the resolve of her husband” (HL 16). Sedgwick presents her as a submissive wife at first, but then subverts that stereotype by revealing the balance of power in the relationship between Martha and her husband. When Martha is left to rule the house on her own, she displays an inner reserve of strength while her husband is away for months: “[the] little community at Bethel proceeded more harmoniously than could have been hoped for from the discordant materials of which it was composed. This was owing, in great part, to the wise and gentle Mrs. Fletcher, the sun of her little system—all were obedient to the silent influence that controlled without being perceived” (HL 30). Martha runs the household in her husband’s absence by taking control of the daily responsibilities of running of Bethel, making important decisions for the family, and even sacrificing her life to protect her children in the face of danger. Overall, Martha courageously faces the hazards of the wilderness and the threat of hostile Indians while managing the household on her own.

Although Martha professes to have a “cowardly womanish spirit,” she clearly possesses far more fortitude than she claims. Martha refuses to uproot her

family despite a warning from those in the village about unfriendly Indians “lurking in the woods” around Bethel: ““We have been advised to remove, for the present, to the Fort; but as I felt no apprehension, I shall not disarrange my family by taking a step that would savour more of fear than prudence” (HL 35). Martha has to stand her ground and make difficult decisions in her husband’s absence, and as a result is the shining example that the “weaker sex” is not weak at all. Through Martha, Sedgwick shows that in actuality women often disregard their own well-being in favor of protecting their families: “[Martha] never magnified her love by words, but expressed it by that self-devoting, self-sacrificing conduct to her husband and children, which characterizes, in all ages and circumstances, faithful and devoted woman” (HL 36). This devotion ultimately gets Martha killed, thereby showing the extremes to which a mother and wife would selflessly go to look after her family. Martha is a testament to the fortitude and power even a “passive,” traditional Puritan woman could hold. Sedgwick uses Martha to exhibit the “habitual deference” expected of women of the time but also to undercut the notion of a weak, disempowered woman.

Sedgwick’s “daughters,” the set of younger female characters, are more autonomous and less obedient than the submissive Martha Fletcher. Magawisca is the “noble savage.” Esther Downing is the dedicated friend and devout Puritan. Faith Leslie is a spoiled, meek young woman. Last but not least, Sedgwick’s heroine Hope Leslie is a charismatic, independent and stubborn young woman

with the best of intentions. This younger generation of varied female characters represent the future of women in America. Sedgwick explores the different paths of each young woman to examine the possible roles future generations of American women might hold.

Magawisca, the proud daughter of the Pequot Indian chief, is a rebellious individual like her white counterpart, Hope. Magawisca is presented as a mature, developed character, a matriarch in her own right as she supports her broken father and younger brother after Magawisca's mother died. Magawisca is an articulate and intelligent Native American; her poise and intelligence show that white women and Indian women can have agency and control. Sedgwick's portrait of Magawisca is glowing and elevates her to the level of nobility. She exhibits "a freedom and loftiness in her movement which, though tempered by modesty, expressed a consciousness of high birth" and her "ornamented" attire "harmonized well with the noble demeanor and peculiar beauty of the young savage" (HL 23). Martha Fletcher notes that Magawisca possesses "rare gifts of mind and other and outward beauties" (HL 32). To Everell she was "true and noble minded" (HL 44) and "seemed, to him, to embody nature's best gifts" (HL 55).

Magawisca is assured and mature; she is not searching for or struggling with her identity and embodies the power of her people. In fact, Magawisca's grown-up persona becomes a mother figure for both Hope and Everell. She tries

to protect the Fletcher family when the Indians plan an attack on Bethel. Although Magawisca cannot stop the massacre, she later unselfishly saves Everell's life. She is maimed in the process as she shields a white man from death, a person whom she could have blamed and hated for the wrongs done to her people. Instead, Magawisca selflessly loves both Hope and Everell. Through Magawisca, Sedgwick shows that Indian women, and all women for that matter, could be both loving friends as well as strong leaders.

Magawisca shows her vigor and fortitude at her trial. She does not beg for mercy nor does she silently await her fate; rather she is forthright in her belief that the settlers have no authority over her: "I am your prisoner, and ye may slay me, but I deny your right to judge me. My people have never passed under your yoke—not one of my race has ever acknowledged your authority" (HL 302). Magawisca challenges the legitimacy of the power the existing patriarchal system had over her and over women in general. Sedgwick makes a daring statement by having a female character voice such an opinion, and the impact is even greater because the character is Native American.

Sedgwick challenges the popular prejudices of both the story's time and her own. Magawisca defies every aspect of the weak stereotype applied to helpless women and the savage stereotype applied to Indians. In Sedgwick's view, women of all races should play an important part in the new country. Sedgwick also confronts the forced removal of the Indians by displaying

Magawisca's determination and independence and by having her choose to remove herself from Puritan society to live with her own people. Magawisca does not allow herself to be treated like a second class citizen, either as a woman or Native American, and asserts her own agency to decide her fate.

Esther Downing, the "godly" niece of Governor Winthrop, is also a young yet mature character. She is dedicated to her family, her friends, and especially her faith:

Esther Downing was of a reserved, tender, and timid cast of character, and being bred in the strictest school of the puritans, their doctrines and principles easily commingled with the natural qualities of her mind. She could not have disputed the nice points of faith, sanctification and justification, with certain celebrated contemporary female theologians, but no one excelled her in the practical part of her religion. In the language of the times, justification was witnessed, both by word, and work. (HL 140)

Esther's lifestyle is a paradigm of Puritan faith and virtue, and her character and dedication are representative of the courage and spirit of the Puritans who fled England for religious freedom. Sedgwick creates Esther to serve as the model of Puritan piety and the symbol of the spirituality of the colonies. She is the embodiment of the letter of religion: "no earthly consideration could have tempted her to waver from the strictest letter of her religious duty as that duty was

interpreted by her conscience” (HL 292). Esther is the religious conscience of the novel, and more importantly, she follows all the sentiments which she voices. Esther is a loving niece to the Winthrops and a devote friend to Hope. She continually puts the needs of others before her own. She denies herself a chance at happiness with Everell when she discovers that Hope and Everell are in love with each other. Her self-sacrifice shows her strong bond with Hope and demonstrates the value of unwavering female friendship. In part, Sedgwick creates the relationship between Hope and Esther to show that having female companions is just as important, if not more so, as having a husband. When Esther chooses to remain single at the end of the novel, she serves as Sedgwick’s progressive statement that a woman can be happy and fulfilled by relying on just herself, her friends, her family and her faith. Marriage is not needed for, nor does it guarantee, a happy life.

The fact that Sedgwick centers the action of the story on female characters is telling in itself, but her free-spirited heroine, Hope Leslie, speaks volumes about Sedgwick’s admiration for women who are intelligent, interesting, and powerful people who do not need men to support them. Hope best represents the independent and rebellious, yet caring, spirit upon which the colonies were established. She comes from England to the colonies and embraces her new country and its freedom. Hope is spirited and full of life: she has “[an] open, fearless and gay character” (HL 127). Sedgwick gives Hope a charisma and

power that no other male character in the novel, and as argued by Foster, perhaps even no other female character in any novel at that time, possessed (Foster 87). Magawisca captures Hope's power: "no one can look on you [Hope] and deny you aught; that you can make old men's hearts soft, and mould them at your will" (HL 199). Hope is an attractive and pleasant young woman who seems to enchant everyone she encounters; however, she is also strong-willed and stands by her principles even against majority opinion.

Hope defies both civil and religious authority when she believes they are not righteous. She disobeys Governor Winthrop by sneaking out of his house to meet Magawisca. She is not committed to the conventional and dogmatic practices of Puritan worship. Most glaringly, she breaks the laws of the settlement by freeing Magawisca. However, as Dame Grafton states "It is what everybody knows, who knows Hope, that she never did a wrong thing" (HL 185). Dame Grafton means that all Hope does is morally right. Sedgwick is not measuring right and wrong by written law. Sedgwick bases the righteousness of Hope's actions not on common opinion but on democratic and Christian ideals. Hope, like Magawisca, questions the patriarchal authority and its laws when they are unjust. She chooses to do what is ethically right even if it is not legally right (Foster 88).

If Esther exemplifies the letter of religion, then Hope is the spirit of American democracy. Hope promotes the quintessential American virtues of self-reliance, self-determination and independence (Fetterley 85). She relies on her

instincts, and not written law, to decide what is right and what is wrong. This allows her to be a true Christian and act as such, usually putting the happiness of others before own. Thereby she also conveys the Unitarian faith which Sedgwick herself deeply believed; Unitarians did not adhere to strict religious dogma or creeds, such as Calvinist religion, which Sedgwick abandoned (Foster 22). Instead, Unitarians believed in moral intellectualism where an individual uses reason, logic and intellect to discern what is ethically good and just. Hope abides by these principles to determine what is morally right, creating her own path and letting nothing stand in the way of accomplishing her goal.

Hope personifies the young nation struggling to order itself and to create an accepting, benevolent place in which all can peacefully live. Her very name is a metaphor for the country's potential and also for Sedgwick's belief that women will play an important part in developing the nation and realizing this potential. Hope Leslie is Sedgwick's shining example of a woman as a strong yet loving leader who could help the country thrive. However, Sedgwick did not, really she could not, openly tout these beliefs. Instead, she created multiple layers in her novel to both expose and veil such revolutionary ideas. Sedgwick paints a picture of a defiant, stubborn young heroine, and at the same time, asserts that Hope's behavior was not accepted behavior: Hope is the opposite of the "thoroughly educated...and thoroughly disciplined young ladies of present day" (HL 126). Sedgwick's approval of Hope's disobedient and unlawful actions could have been

seen as scandalous in her own time. Instead, she uses the “evil” character of Sir Philip to extol Hope’s virtues. Sir Philip describes Hope as having a “generous rashness, a thoughtless impetuosity, a fearlessness of the sanctimonious dictators that surround her, and a noble contempt of danger” that compels him to love her (HL 211). Sedgwick would not have been able to praise her heroine for defying the Puritan “sanctimonious dictators” and disobeying the law but can do so through Sir Philip, a deceitful character who also had little regard for authority.

Sedgwick also presents a disempowered and lost female character: Faith Leslie, who is the complete opposite of her sister Hope and of Magawisca. Faith seems nothing more than a feeble shell. She is portrayed as young and weak upon first introduction: “a pretty petted child, wayward and bashful” (HL 29).

Sedgwick goes on to describe her as a “spoiled child” with a “shrinking and timid character” (HL 34). Faith is not assured of her person, and as a result she loses her own identity when she marries Oneco. Faith joins his tribe and thoughtlessly embraces her husband’s culture. She becomes “pale and spiritless” (HL 240), relinquishing herself to the bonds of a traditional marriage. She ends up in a mindless state “of vacancy and listlessness” (HL 318). Faith even loses the ability to speak English and cannot communicate with Hope. When Hope pleads for her to speak, Faith is only able to utter “No speak Yengees” (HL 238). Faith is helplessly dependent on Oneco and seems more like one half of another being than her own person. Marriage is like a jail sentence, and she is more like her

husband's prisoner than his wife. This weak female character makes a bold statement for Sedgwick about the dangers of losing oneself in marriage and having no character of one's own. Faith is a warning against marriage as a woman's ultimate fate. Marriage for a woman requires the loss of selfhood and does not necessarily equal happiness. This idea is more fully developed with Esther who rebels against the tradition of marriage.

Each author's final and most powerful statement on the place of women in America comes in the form of marriage. Cooper predictably matches his surviving "heroine" with Heyward. Alice will be able to devote herself to her husband, and she will fulfill her only duty in life: to have children and produce the next, "unmixed" generation. Her racially impure sister dies. Cooper's comment about a women's role in society is clear. Women will be wives and mothers; they will not hold positions of authority.

Sedgwick's viewpoint is drastically different. Her ending moves the action beyond the conventional marriage of her female protagonist to Hope's best friend, Esther. Prior to the conclusion, each girl was willing to sacrifice the love of Everell for the better of the other woman; this sacrifice speaks volumes about Sedgwick's idea of the importance of female bonds over romantic love between a man and woman. Esther's choice to remain single at the end of the novel practically shouts Sedgwick's view that marriage is not necessary for a woman to be happy. Her closing lines blatantly state this attitude: "marriage is not *essential*

to the contentment, dignity, or the happiness of woman” (HL 371). Sedgwick declares that Esther and those around her were better off for her not marrying: “Indeed, those who saw on how wide a sphere her kindness shone, how many were made better and happier by her disinterested devotion, might have rejoiced that she did not” (HL 371). Esther’s decision would have been a radical one during both the setting of the novel and the time in which Sedgwick was writing. Sedgwick uses Esther to make a revolutionary statement about female independence.

Sedgwick rails against the weak female stereotype by creating a diverse and spirited group of women. She also has to acknowledge the prevalent masculine authority. On the surface, Sedgwick presents the oppressed female and subservient wife, particularly with her portrayal of Martha Fletcher and Governor Winthrop’s wife. She depicts both as the dutiful wife; however, in her descriptions, Sedgwick inserts comments that critique this way of life. Sedgwick tells how “Mrs. Fletcher received [her husband’s] decision as all wives of that age of undisputed masculine supremacy (or most of those of our less passive age) would do, with meek submission” (HL 15). Sedgwick’s comment reveals the lack of choice women had; they were expected to abide by their husband’s decisions and actions without question. Sedgwick expresses disapproval of this position and women of her own era who “meekly” submit to their husbands, refusing to empower themselves.

Cooper, on the other hand, figuratively and literally buries his female characters in the action of his novel. Cooper leaves American women to serve a secondary, subservient position in society, and his notion of women represents the majority view of the time. Cooper marginalizes women and gives them no power in his vision of America. In opposition to Cooper and popular opinion, Sedgwick believed women could, and should, play an important role in all aspects of life, be it domestic, religious or political. Sedgwick even cleverly structures her heroine's name to foreshadow the country's fate should the potential of such independent women be wasted: Will the country end up as strong as Hope Leslie herself? Or will it be a *hopeless lie*? Or perhaps just end up hopelessly floundering? Sedgwick seems to be saying that without the inclusion of women such as Hope, the future of the country could be very bleak.

Chapter VII: Servants & Slaves

Neither Cooper nor Sedgwick presents an explicit debate on slavery; however both focus on the status of Native Americans in ways that mirrored the controversy over slavery. In the 1820s, slavery and Indian removal became contentious, debated, and intertwined issues that confounded Americans and divided the nation. In 1827, the same year *The Last of the Mohicans* was published, James Madison wrote in a letter to Thomas L. McKenney, Superintendent of Indian Affairs: “Next to the case of the black race within our bosom, that of the red on our borders is the problem most baffling to the policy of our country” (Madison 516). Native Americans and African Americans, like women, were excluded from the privileges of citizenship. As servants or slaves of white people, they were looked down upon by many and considered to be property, not people. The country increasingly disagreed on how to move forward in handling these “non-citizens.” Madison’s categorization of human beings as “baffling problems” points to the ambiguity of a government that embraced ideals of democracy and freedom while forcibly removing and enslaving people.

Both authors were concerned with power, freedom and oppression, and with the status of slaves and servants. Cooper and Sedgwick treat these “problems” in different manners. Cooper is more conservative and justifies Indian removal and servitude as being inevitable and necessary for the developing country. Sedgwick questions both Indian removal and slavery and counters with

the democratic, not to mention humanitarian, view that all people should have an equal chance to prosper in America.

In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper includes comments that express sympathy for slaves, but he also shows that prejudice is innate and a natural part of society. Cooper's characterizations show his belief that Native Americans and slaves were different from white people and should be regarded with caution, even suspicion. He undercuts any sympathetic statements by showing the opinion of the white majority is right and will prevail. Cora questions prejudice and racism. She is both black and white by descent. She is allowed to sympathize with the difficulties facing minorities and also to speak her mind as a member of the white majority. Early in the novel, before Magua's reprehensible characteristics are known, Cora reprimands Alice for questioning whether or not to trust their Indian guide:

“Cora, what think you?” asked the reluctant fair one. “If we journey with the troops, though we may find their presence irksome, shall we not feel better assurance of our safety?”

...

“Should we distrust the man, because his manners are not our manners, and that his skin is dark!” coldly asked Cora. (LM 21)

Alice's instinctive distrust of someone with a darker skin color is representative of the prevailing prejudice of Cooper's day. Cora's reaction reflects a progressive

view in Cooper's time. However Cora is proved wrong when Magua turns out to be a vengeful "savage," which indirectly reinforces the prevailing prejudice, Indians and slaves are uncivilized; their "manners are not our manners;" they cannot be trusted.

Cooper confronts miscegenation and its problems when Colonel Munro reveals Cora's mixed heritage. Munro is angered that Heyward would not want to marry Cora, assuming it is because she is racially mixed. Heyward is ignorant of Cora's racial hybridity, and Munro must reveal the story to Heyward: "[D]uty called me to the West Indies. There it was my lot to form a connexion with one who in time became my wife and the mother of Cora. She was the daughter of a gentleman of those isles, by a lady, whose misfortune it was, if you will,' said the old man, proudly, 'to be descended that unfortunate class, who are so basely enslaved to administer to the wants of a luxurious people!'" (LM 159). With this story, Cooper shows sympathy for slaves and African Americans that he lacks in regard to Native Americans. Munro declares his love for his daughter, and in a very liberal manner, discusses the prejudice facing a person of mixed race. Colonel Munro, with a hint of his own shame, assumes Heyward does not love Cora because she is racially mixed, and forces Heyward to confront his innate prejudice:

"Major Heyward, you are yourself born at the south, where these unfortunate beings are considered of a race inferior to your own!"

“‘Tis most unfortunately true, sir,” said Duncan, unable any longer to prevent his eyes from sinking to the floor in embarrassment.

“And you cast it on my child as a reproach! You scorn to mingle the blood of the Heywards, with one so degraded—lovely and virtuous though she be?” fiercely demanded the jealous parent.

“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 engrafted in his nature. (LM 159)

Munro proclaims the prejudice against black people to be unjust and their enslavement to be “unfortunate.” Yet he shares the prejudice since he assumes Heyward would not want to marry a descendant of slaves.

Munro is also hypocritical because he is a member of the “luxurious people” who own slaves. There is a hint of disgrace when Munro deems his marriage to the slave woman as an “unnatural union,” which further undercuts any sympathetic feelings. Cooper also removes the blame from Major Heyward’s prejudiced feelings by judging them to be “engrafted in...nature.” Cooper thereby naturalizes differences among races and excuses fear and dislike for those who are different. Showing but also undermining his compassion, Cooper implies that Indians and slaves have their fixed place in society, and that place is not one of equality or purity.

Like many of his contemporaries, Cooper believed Indians, slaves, and free black people were not equal to white people. Mixed marriages were thought to be unnatural and doomed because of this inequality. Cooper uses Cora to express the point that Americans should not be racially mixed. Cora is the object of affection of the “malignant” Magua, and she is repulsed by the idea of a union with him. On the other hand, Alice is loved by Major Heyward. The “alabaster” and “golden” sister is worshipped by the commendable and brave soldier, while the dark-complexioned, raven-haired sister is desired by the evil and deceitful Indian. Cooper makes the statement that a racially mixed woman cannot be the mother of the next generation. She is not pure and therefore cannot be loved by someone like Heyward. Instead, Magua is presented as a potential mate. However a union between Cora and Magua would obviously not create an ideal race and future for the country. Neither would a marriage between Cora and the more loyal but still *savage* “red skinned” Uncas. Cooper’s view is that a racially mixed American could not and should not be. He destroys the possibility of miscegenation through the deaths of both Cora and Uncas.

As Uncas is denied a marriage with Cora, he is also deprived of having any future in the society of white men. Cooper gives both Uncas and Chingachook extraordinary “Indian” talents but their abilities only serve the needs of white people. They are trusted with the task of first guiding the party and then finding the Munro sisters. Uncas and Chingachook, are like hired help with no

right or desire to oppose Major Heyward's demands. The Delawares have the duty to serve but not power to rule. Like slaves, they are outside the realm of privileged white citizenship. As non-whites, both Indians and Blacks are excluded from Cooper's definition of American citizenship. In *Notions of the Americans* (1828), Cooper goes so far as to say they are inferior and "there is no doubt that the free blacks, like the aborigines, gradually disappear before the superior moral and physical influence of the whites" (286; vol. 1). As a rationalization, Cooper states that these two groups of people would not survive in the country in positions of authority and should be guides, servants, or slaves.

The master/servant relationship between Heyward and his Indian guides plays out Cooper's belief that social and racial hierarchy in society is natural and necessary. He presents this view in the "On American Equality" section of his book *The American Democrat* (1838):

The rights of property being an indispensable condition of civilization, and its quiet possession every where guaranteed, equality of condition is rendered impossible. One man must labor, while another may live luxuriously on his means; one has leisure and opportunity to cultivate his tastes, to increase his information, and to refine his habits, while another is compelled to toil, that he may live. *One is reduced to serve, while another commands, and, of course, there can be no equality in their social conditions.* (45, emphasis added)

Cooper's illustrates his theory of de facto inequality in *The Last of the Mohicans* by creating characters that are "reduced to serve, while another commands."

Cooper emphasizes the inequality of Native Americans by stripping Uncas and Chingachook of their humanity. The novel gives them an "unintelligible language" of primitive English and animal grunts, or mimicry when they physically act out their thoughts in order to communicate. Uncas and Chingachook guide the group like loyal dogs that Heyward keeps on an invisible leash; he is amazed by their physical talents but pays no mind to their intellectual capacities. They are compared to "startled deer" and "beasts of prey" that have no resemblance to "civilized" white people. Hawkeye often acts like a translator between the two groups. His explanation of the heightened Indian senses to Heyward, Alice and Cora reinforces the differences that separate the white settlers and the Indians. Hawkeye describes their "eyes that would be needless to men in the settlements," their ability to listen "with an attention that seemed to turn them into stone," and their fortitude that caused them to never tire and rarely slumber. These abilities are physical and necessary for the Indians to survive in the woods but are not needed in white society.

Cooper's Indians are "children of the wilderness"; they are compared to beasts, stones, posts, ghosts, but almost never to human beings. In one instance, Major Heyward even mistakes a beaver community to be an Indian village:

A hundred earthen dwellings stood on the margin of the lake.... Their rounded roofs, admirably moulded for defence against the weather, denoted more of industry and foresight, than the natives were wont to bestow on their regular habitations, much less on those they occupied for temporary purposes of hunting and war. In short, the whole village...possessed more of method and neatness of execution, than the white men had been accustomed to believe belonged, ordinarily to Indian habits. It appeared, however, to be deserted. At least, so thought Duncan for many minutes; but, at length, he fancied he discovered several human forms, advancing towards him on all fours, and apparently dragging in their train some heavy, and, as he was quick to apprehend, some formidable engine. Just then a few dark looking heads gleamed out of the dwellings, and the place suddenly alive with beings, which, however glided from cover to cover so swiftly, as to allow no opportunity of examining their humours or pursuits. (LM 219)

Heyward relates his observations to Hawkeye, who infiltrates the “village” to show Heyward his foolish misunderstanding: “His lurking Indians were suddenly converted into four-footed beasts; his lake into a beaver pond; his cataract into a dam, constructed by those industrious and ingenious quadrupeds” (LM 222).

Heyward’s mistake captures common stereotypes about Indians. He gives the

beavers credit for being more industrious than Indians: these beasts had “more industry and foresight” than their human “counterparts.”

Cooper’s Indians are interchangeable with wild animals or with trained guide dogs. Their place in society is in the service of the white settlers. Magua himself rationalizes the inequality of men based on their skin color:

“The Spirit that made men, coloured them differently,”

commenced the subtle Huron. “Some are blacker than the sluggish bear.

These he said should be slaves; and he ordered them to work for ever, like the beaver. You may hear them groan, when the south wind blows, louder than the lowing buffaloes, along the shores of the great salt lake, where the big canoes come and go with them in droves. Some he made with faces paler than ermine in the forests: and these he ordered to be traders;” (LM 301)

Magua here is the mouthpiece for the common opinion of Cooper’s time: skin color dictates your place in society and has divine sanction. Some people must occupy a “lower” status while others assume a dominant position. Regardless of any sympathy Cora or Munro express, Cooper grants power and authority to affluent white men and he excludes Native Americans, African Americans, and women from those privileges.

Sedgwick holds a different opinion about inequality in society. She suggests that enslavement and oppression of people go against nature itself and

against God's will. Her Indians are not mere servants or inferior animals. Sedgwick introduces Magawisca and Oneco as servants in the Fletcher household. They are at first treated like possessions as William Fletcher proclaims that "Governor Winthrop has procured for us two Indian servants" (HL 20). Mrs. Fletcher is unsure about accepting Indian servants because "there were no facilities to lighten them" (HL 20). She voices the prejudice that an Indian would not be as intelligent, hardworking and useful as a white person. This reflects the prevailing belief of the time: Indians were of lower status and intelligence than white people and should be treated as such. Sedgwick challenges these notions by describing Magawisca and Oneco's family and heritage as noble, intelligent and empowered.

The first description of Magawisca presents a person who is practically royalty and was not born to serve. This "savage" was of "high birth." She possessed a "noble demeanor and peculiar beauty" (HL 23). Mrs. Fletcher notes that it "appeareth impossible to her to clip the wings of [Magawisca's] soaring thoughts, and keep them down to household matters" (HL 33). Magawisca is representative of the Indian spirit described in the novel's preface: "The Indians of North America are, perhaps, the only race of men of whom it may be said, that though conquered were never enslaved. They could not submit, and live" (HL 3). Sedgwick believed that enslaving Indians or delegating them to positions of servitude was unjust.

While she does not explicitly discuss slavery in *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick indirectly condemns the institution by claiming the Native Americans were a people too proud to be enslaved. In “Slavery in New England,” published in *Bentley’s Miscellany* in 1853, Sedgwick directly confronts the evil of slavery. In reference to slaves in New England, Sedgwick declares: “They were not numerous enough to make the condition a great evil or embarrassment, but quite enough to show its incompatibility with the demonstration of the truth, on which our Declaration of Independence is based, that ‘all men are born equal,’ and have ‘an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (“Slavery in New England” 417). In opposition to Cooper’s *The American Democrat*, Sedgwick advocates that the sentiments of equality on which the country was founded should be taken literally. Everyone should be free and have equal rights. In “Slavery in New England,” Sedgwick pays homage to the first black woman to be freed in America, Elizabeth “Mumbet” Freeman, who became a beloved house servant and nanny in the Sedgwick household. Sedgwick’s description of Mumbet’s superior character echoes her portrayal of Magawisca. Mumbet, who had been the “property, ‘the chattel,’” of an army general and his “shrew” wife, would not allow herself to be debased and fought for her freedom (“Slavery in New England 418). She was intelligent, kind, and resourceful. According to Sedgwick, a “competent judge” described Freeman as having “‘no superiors and few equals’” (“Slavery in New England 418). In her retelling of Mumbet’s

fascinating story, Sedgwick expresses nothing but admiration and love: “We have marked a few striking points along the course of her life, but its whole course was like a noble river, that makes rich and glad the dwellers on its borders” (“Slavery in New England” 423). In both Mumbet’s and Magawisca’s stories, Sedgwick sets forth her view that no one should be enslaved, and that the most intolerable aspect of slavery is the “galling of the harness, the irresistible longing for liberty” (“Slavery in New England” 421).

For Sedgwick, no economic benefit could forgive slavery, an institution that went against the very spirit of the nation. However Sedgwick could not deny that servitude existed. Servants, like slaves, were a necessary part of home and farm life in the time of *Hope Leslie* and in Sedgwick’s own time. Sedgwick depicts both the beloved, loyal and appreciative servant, as well as the resented and resentful one. The character of Jennet represents the latter type. Sedgwick explains Jennet’s inclusion in the tale and her role in a typical household:

We ought, perhaps, to apologise for obtruding so humble and disagreeable a personage upon our readers. But the truth is, she figured too much on the family record of the Fletcher’s, to be suppressed by their faithful historian. Those personages, yclep’d bores in the copious vocabulary of modern times, seem to be a necessary ingredient in life, and like pinching shoes, and smoky rooms, constitute a portion of its trials...To do Jennet justice, she had many temporal virtues; and though her religion was of the ritual

order, and, therefore particularly disagreeable to her spiritual Mistress, yet her household faculties were invaluable, for then, as now, in the interior of New-England, a faithful servant was like the genius of a fairy tale—no family could hope for more than one. (HL 147)

Jennet's character is judgmental, bigoted, harsh and discontented. She refers to Magawisca in derogatory terms, claims that the Indian should be thankful to be in a Christian household, and that Magawisca had been "snatched as a brand from the burning" (HL 24). Magawisca was brought to the Fletcher household to be a servant, and Jennet's outbursts suggest she was threatened by the possibility of Magawisca doing a better job than she.

Women had few options in society, and poor women had none. Jennet was not married and if she lost her position in the Fletcher household, she would become a pauper. Jennet did not hold the same place as Sedgwick's beloved Mumbet. She has served the Fletchers for years but emotionally she was not truly a part of the family. Jennet is tolerated because she is useful but not loved or accepted as family. Her unpleasant disposition seems, in part, to be a result of her subservient state. This conflicted loyalty is best depicted in the scene when Jennet reveals to Sir Philip Everell and Hope's plan to free Magawisca from prison:

Jennet hesitated for a few moments; she had a sort of attachment to the family she had long served, much like that of an old cat for its accustomed haunts, but towards Everell she had a feeling of unqualified hostility.

From his boyhood, he had been rebellious against her petty domiciliary tyranny, and had never manifested the slightest deference for her canting pretensions. Still she was loath in any way to be accessory to an act that would involve the family, with which she was herself identified, in any disgrace or distress. (HL 315)

Jennet is angry that she must to serve and obey a young boy who does not value her, which results in conflicting desires for revenge and respect for the Fletcher family. The description of Jennet as an “old cat” also mirrors the view that servants, like slaves and Indians, were not seen as full human beings. In fact, when Jennet loses her life, no one even notices her absence at first, and they do not seem to care much when they do. Sedgwick’s focus on this deplorable and underappreciated minor character highlights the unfortunate position of the household servant.

Sedgwick captures the complicated relationship between master and servant and their respective conflicted feelings. She also shows that a servant could be loved and valued. The Fletchers treat Mr. Fletcher’s “confidential domestic” Digby, and Hope’s tutor Master Cradock, like equals; Digby is more a part of the Fletcher family than Jennet and more invested in their welfare. When Mr. Fletcher is away, Digby assumes protection of the family. He is a trusted confidante quite unlike the intrusive Jennet. The Fletchers all respect and like Digby. Similarly, there is a true affection between Hope and Cradock. The reader

is, however, reminded that he is only a servant. For example, when Cradock is bitten by a rattlesnake and taken to Nelema to be healed, Nelema makes a biting comment about a servant's position in life: "I, the last of my race, bidden to heal a servant in the hose of our enemies" (HL 108). Even Nelema, who is generally looked down upon by white society, devalues the status of servants.

Unlike Jennet, both Digby and Cradock are content in their employment. Cradock admires Hope and is dedicated to her. He even betrays his own principles when he helps Hope free Magawisca, whom he considers to be an "idolater". This action displays Cradock's loyalty to Hope, and also underscores the dynamic of power between master or mistress and servant. Cradock feels obligated to help Hope and do what she asks, even though her request goes against his beliefs. In such a predicament, his position is more complicated than Jennet's because Cradock does truly like his mistress, just as Hope holds him dear and in high regard. As Sedgwick reports at the novel's end, both Cradock and Digby are part of the novel's happy ending:

We hope that class of our readers...will not be shocked at our heroine's installing Master Cradock as a life-member of her domestic establishment. We are sure their kind hearts would reconcile them to this measure if they could know with what fidelity, and sweetness, and joy to the good man, she performed the promise she gave in Magawisca's prison, "that she would be a child to his old age." (HL 370)

Hope welcomes Cradock into her family as a way of protecting and providing for him. This ending recognizes the true affection that Hope feels for her tutor. It also professes Sedgwick's belief that masters should be responsible for the welfare of servants. Sedgwick's plea for forgiveness from her readers is ironic. The "class" of the readers – masters who had servants and possibly owned slaves – would be shocked that a servant should become a member of his master's family, especially as a reward for freeing a "savage." Sedgwick's comment – that masters should use their power to treat their servants fairly – also highlights the inequality embedded in this paternalistic master-servant relationship.

Digby attains freedom and finds happiness by establishing a life with a family of his own yet maintaining contact with his old master: "Digby never ceased, after the event had verified them, to pride himself on his own presentiments, and his wife's dreams. A friendship between him, and Everell and Hope subsisted through their lives, and descended, a precious legacy, through many generations of their descendants, fortified by favours, and gratitude, and reciprocal affection" (HL 370). Digby's situation, like Cradock's, shows loyalty, kinship, and respect between servant and master; it shows this relationship extending over time through future generations.

Sedgwick's treatment of servants can be extrapolated to a message about slaves and those generally oppressed: she is their advocate, a champion for the powerless and the marginalized. Sedgwick depicts both positive and negative

aspects of servant life. She criticizes the undermined status of servants and their lack of privileges; she also shows there can be genuine love and appreciation between master and servant. Sedgwick's novel challenges the nation by questioning the subjugation of Indians, and the oppression of the disempowered. Native Americans, African Americans, and women should not be considered "problems" or be forced to silently obey and serve. In Sedgwick's vision of America's future, they will be a part of American identity as entitled citizens.

Cooper's notion of democracy justifies hierarchy based on class, gender and race. According to Cooper, disparity among human beings is simply a part of civilization. The privileged few live in splendor, while many others are disadvantaged. This is the way it has always been, and this is the way it will always be. In the section "On Slavery" in *The American Democrat*, Cooper views slavery as a natural part of society:

Domestic slavery is an institution as old as human annals, and will probably continue, in its spirit, through different modifications, as long as man shall remain under the different of civilization that mark his existence. Slavery is no more sinful, by the Christian code, than it is sinful to wear a whole coat, while another is in tatters, to eat a better meal than a neighbor, or otherwise to enjoy ease and plenty, while our fellow creatures are suffering and in want. (173)

Cooper normalizes oppression while Sedgwick speaks against it. Cooper's natural hierarchy gives political control to land-owning white man and rationalizes the subjugated position of Indians, of slaves, and of women. Cooper's American identity excluded the disenfranchised groups that Sedgwick empowered.

Chapter VIII: Prevailing Power

The endings of *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Hope Leslie* illustrate Cooper's and Sedgwick's disparate views. They also foreshadow conflicts that would shape American politics for generations to come. In his writing, Cooper was a spokesperson for the landed gentry – propertied and powerful white American men – and a defender of their rights and privileges (Clark 64). The end of Cooper's novel gives power to men of this class. In contrast to Cooper's conservative and restrictive view of the nation, Sedgwick's resolutions present an America that will be a just, as well as a Christian, society and in which equality is enjoyed by all.

The French and Indian War was an ideal topic for Cooper's novel. France and Britain fought this war over the expansion and development of French and British colonies in North America. In Cooper's retelling of the war, the colonists are honorable people. The English are fighting the fair fight with the aid and the blessing of the idealized Indians – The Delaware. In *Empire and Slavery in American Literature*, Eric Sundquist notes that by using this war as a backdrop, Cooper “carefully detail[s] the social and economic necessity of the land's transfiguration into property and capital” (126). The French & Indian War historically paved the way for the creation of the American empire and conquest of Indian tribes and their land (Sundquist 126). It marked the end of the historical alliance between the British and the colonists. It also made the colonists aware for

the first time that they could fight for their freedom. To adapt this history to his own purposes, Cooper realigned the French with “enemy” Indian tribes, against the allied British, colonists, and “good” Indian tribes. The action of the story paves a natural and righteous path for the nation: the Indians lost their lands to the Europeans, the French lost it to the British, and the British lost it to the American colonists and new citizens.

From Cooper’s viewpoint, the “American” claim to the land rightfully belongs to land-owning white males, who have a British and aristocratic pedigree, like Heyward. Cooper predicts the future of the nation and guarantees its racial “purity” through the union between Major Heyward and Alice, a meek, pure woman with a “dazzling complexion, fair golden hair, and bright blue eyes” (LM 18). With the deaths of Cora and Uncas, Cooper obliterates any notion of miscegenation in the future of the country.

The union of Heyward and Alice invents an origin for the myth of a manifest destiny that would expand the nation, demolish nature, and forcibly remove Indians all the way to the Pacific. Anything standing in the way of the zealous spirit of American expansion was doomed to vanish. Although an admirer of the beauty and grandeur of nature, Cooper was in support of the movement that leveled forests and exterminated the Indians. The beauty of unmarred nature – which he had experienced during his boyhood in upstate New York – was a part of the past. This romantic and nostalgic view of the land was outdated and must

give way to the inevitable hand of progress. Similarly, Native Americans had no place in such a country. This fate appeared inevitable and was generally accepted by white society. Cooper expressed this belief in one of his letters in “Notions of the Americans”:

As a rule the red man disappears before the superior moral and physical influence of the White, just as I believe the black man will eventually do the same thing, unless he shall seek shelter in some other region. In nine cases out of ten, the tribes have gradually removed west, and there is now a confused assemblage of Nations and languages collected on the immense hunting grounds of the Prairies. ...

The ordinary manner of the disappearance of the Indian is by a removal deeper into the forest. Still, many linger near the graves of their fathers, to which their superstitions no less than a fine natural feeling lend a deep interest. The fate of the latter is inevitable; they become victims of the abuses of civilization without ever attaining to any of its moral elevation.

(277-278; vol. 2)

Cooper justifies the disappearance of Indians and declares African Americans face the same unavoidable fate. Cooper accepted the “disappearance” of these two races because they are “naturally” inferior to the white man. The process of Indian removal was also a natural one. Cooper ignores the fact they were forced to move and instead claims they have “gradually removed” themselves. He relegates the

Indians to the forest and away white society. For Cooper, Indians will never be a part of civilization. Even their attachment to the graves of their ancestors and the lands on which they reside makes them like primitive superstitious savages who belong in the wilderness.

To absolve the nation of any guilt, Cooper presents the disappearance of his Indians as a natural progression. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper repeatedly describes the “ordinary manner of the disappearance of the Indian” and characterizes the Mohican tribe as a vanishing people, a “fading light,” like ghosts or “spectres.” Even Uncas, before his untimely demise, explains that ““Once we slept where we could hear the salt lake speak in its anger. Then we were rulers and Sagamores over the land. But when a pale face was seen on every brook, we followed the deer back to the river of our nation. The Delawares were gone”” (LM 311). Uncas’ words make Indian removal their own choice. Cooper even animalizes them by having them follow the path of deer. They are going back to their home in the wilderness with the other beasts.

Cooper’s Indians accept and even sanction their own removal. Tamenund, the ancient, trusted and wise Delaware “prophet,” speaks for Cooper when he declares at the end of the novel “the pale faces are the masters of the earth, and the time of the red man has not yet come again” (LM 350). With this proclamation, Cooper creates a destined end to the original inhabitants’ possession of the land. He invents a peaceful conveyance of power from the

Indian to the white Europeans as the natural cycle of history. Then ending of Cooper's novel sets the stage for the beginning of the new nation as a country in which the natives become domestic aliens who can never hope to assimilate. The Indians have lost their right to the land, and the turn of the wheel of "progress" has given that ownership to the white man. The "civilized" European ways, outside of the wilderness, are the ways of the future.

Cooper's ending of *The Last of the Mohicans* is a significant part in the creation of his version of the national myth. It rationalizes what happened before and predicts as destined what will happen after. The settlers gain control over Indian land. Authority is the privilege and right of propertied white men. Women are subservient to men in the future of the country. Cooper held conservative political beliefs. He was in favor of strong individual rights for men of his own status – those with privilege and social distinction. For Cooper, class distinctions were natural. They should exist in America to give some elite individuals special power in society. His conservatism can be seen in his political manifesto, *The American Democrat*, in which he states, "[t]he celebrated proposition contained in the declaration of independence is not to be understood literally. All men are not 'created equal,' in a physical, or even in a moral sense" (47). For Cooper, the masses should not be in control. Cooper proclaims that "constant appeals to public opinion" are one of the "disadvantages" of democracy because they "induce private hypocrisy, causing men to conceal their own convictions when

opposed to those of the mass” (*The American Democrat* 70). He also states that “want of national manliness is a vice to be guarded against, for the man who would dare to resist a monarch, shrinks from opposing an entire community” (70).

Cooper insists that American society was not founded on equality, either in theory or written law. He determines that “[e]quality is nowhere laid down as a governing principle of the institutions of the United States, neither the word, nor any inference that can be fairly deduced from its meaning, occurring in the constitution” (*The American Democrat* 48-49). His conservative view denies fair treatment of most people in America; rather it granted freedom and civil rights for an elite group of society: white males with wealth and property. Cooper was a champion of democracy but his idea of democracy did not include a broad sense of freedom and justice.

Sedgwick defends all that Cooper opposes. She is the voice of romantic radicalism. Sedgwick promotes equality for all members of society in practice and not just in theory. She advances the notion of a greater public good for all people, and her nation gives citizenship to the disenfranchised. Her America grants freedom, rights, and power to women, Native Americans, and slaves.

Sedgwick chose to retell the Pequot War, a war in which the English settlers brutally exterminated the Pequot nation. The Pequot War was a devastating blow to the Pequot Indians. It also acted as a warning to other tribes that the English would stop at nothing to subdue the Indians. The Pequot War

epitomized the tension and hostility between the settlers and the Indians in the early 17th century. Sedgwick gives the Indians a valid reason for seeking vengeance and challenges stereotypical depiction of their quest for revenge as evidence of their “savage” nature.

Sedgwick does not idealize the Pequots or free them from guilt by deeming their violent acts of retaliation as just. Instead, she uses the character of Magawisca, the “noble savage,” to show that in the face of such atrocities, forgiveness is still possible. Mononotto, a Pequot chief and Magawisca’s father, is driven nearly to madness after surviving the massacre of his people, including the murder of his son, at the hands of the colonists. Magawisca reluctantly joins the Fletcher household and respectfully learns to live among her “enemies,” even forming a strong kinship with Everell Fletcher and Hope Leslie. She in turn impresses all the inhabitants of Bethel as a noble, smart and caring person. Through Magawisca, Sedgwick presents the natives as intelligent, gentle and proud. She rejects the notion that Indians were evil and vengeful, like Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans*.

As a woman in the early 1800s, Sedgwick was denied the rights and privileges of the new nation. With Hope, and other strong female characters, Sedgwick shows that women can manage on their own and assert their own agency. Magawisca’s white double, the heroine Hope Leslie, is also a smart and independent woman. Hope is respectful of her elders, the laws of the settlement,

and her religion. She is also willing to sidestep any established rules to assert her own will to bring about justice. Hope, as well as Magawisca and Esther, epitomizes the spirit of true democracy and Christianity. This spirit disregards color, class, sex or religion, and operates on principles of morality, love and righteousness. By centering the action of the story on a righteous, strong young woman and creating other complex female characters with interesting storylines, Sedgwick calls for women to play an important role in the country and challenges absolute deference to male authority.

Sedgwick also criticizes the traditional Puritan rituals through Hope, who rebels against the unforgiving “rules” of the religion. The Puritans believe Magawisca and all Indians to be heathens. Hope disregards this belief and frees the wrongfully imprisoned Magawisca in a merciful and truly Christian act. The numerous references to the Puritan lifestyle reflect Sedgwick’s New England heritage and her upbringing as a Calvinist. Hope’s rebellion against these practices also reflects Sedgwick’s own rejection of the strict Congregationalist Calvinism in which she grew up and conversion to the more accepting Unitarian church when she was an adult (Foster 31). Hope questions the severe Puritan laws because they dictated religious dogma but violated the spirit of Christianity. Magawisca committed no wrong and should not be imprisoned. In defiance of both religious as well as civil law, Hope helps Magawisca because she believes it

is the just thing to do. Hope's actions demonstrate willful action by an intelligent, caring and righteous female.

Sedgwick's presents her view of America's future through marriage arrangements. In Volume I of *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick alludes to the chance of marriage between Everell and Magawisca. She dashes that chance when Magawisca loses her arm, and their love turns to a familial rather than a romantic one. Sedgwick thereby destroys a future of a mixed race between the Natives and the Colonists, just like Cooper rules out the possibility of marriage between Cora and Uncas. However Sedgwick maintains a positive relationship between Indians and white society by making Magawisca a "sister" to both Hope and Everell.

The marriage of Everell and Hope embodies Sedgwick's vision for the future identity of the nation. These two free-spirited individuals have respect for their European heritage yet they also love their new country and revel in its freedoms. They are caring, generous and intent on doing what is morally right, even if it means circumventing some established rules and regulations to do so. Everell and Hope represent a nation that will provide an accepting and beneficial place where all can peacefully live. Sedgwick gives this marriage the ultimate approval with blessings from Magawisca and Esther.

Hope and Everell's intense efforts to free Magawisca and their love for her, as well as her reciprocation of that love, express Sedgwick's own hope for a peaceful existence between the nation and the Natives. That hope, however, was a

troubled one because of the forced Indian removal in the 19th century. Sedgwick uses her noble savage to denounce the harsh reality that the Indians were being stripped of their land and were being driven across the country. Everell and Hope ask Magawisca to stay with them but she refuses:

“It cannot be—it cannot be,” replied Magawisca, the persuasions of those she loved, not for a moment overcoming her deep invincible sense of the wrongs her injured race has sustained. “My people have been spoiled—we cannot take as a gift that which is our own—the law of vengeance is written on our hearts—you say you have a written rule of forgiveness—it may be better—if ye would be guided by it—it is not for us—the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night.” (HL 349)

Magawisca blames white people for taking the Indians’ land. She claims Indians have a right to the land and also a right to seek revenge by taking the land back. Magawisca also points out the hypocrisy of Christians who preach forgiveness to the Indians but do not forgive others in their daily lives.

Sedgwick implies that Indian removal should stop, and Indians should be a part of society. She cannot deny what historically took place, nor can she be optimistic in regard to the future of Indians. However, by having Magawisca assert her will, Sedgwick presents a chance for a return and for the inclusion of Indians in American society. Magawisca left on her own terms and thereby can

return to white society if she chooses. Her choice gives the Indians free will. Magawisca embraces her decision, and she rebukes Hope for referring to the wilderness as a “hideous solitude.” Magawisca willingly leaves to live with her own people, but Sedgwick leaves open the possibility that she might one day return to Hope and Everell.

Sedgwick makes another daring statement in the final paragraphs of the novel. After selflessly leaving to allow Hope and Everell’s love to grow, Esther returns and remains a single, independent woman despite the fact that “her hand was often and eagerly sought” (HL 370). Esther’s choice to remain unwed is not pitiable or hopeless; instead Sedgwick portrays Esther as assured, confident and happy. Esther “illustrated a truth, which, if more generally received by her sex, might save a vast deal of misery: marriage is not *essential* to the contentment, dignity, or the happiness of women. Indeed, those who saw on how wide a sphere her kindness shone, how many were made better and happier by her disinterested devotion, might have rejoiced that she did not” (HL 371). Sedgwick makes a grand proclamation for women’s independence and a radical statement that a woman does not need a husband to survive. Sedgwick suggest that many women perhaps would be better off had they remained unmarried. With this ending, Esther becomes Sedgwick’s true heroine, a champion for female self-sufficiency, strength and courage.

Overall, Sedgwick presents the possibility of a morally rich future for America, with the promise of a fair and virtuous society. Sedgwick leaves open the possibility of peaceful coexistence between Americans and Indians, and also proclaims that women should hold powerful and important roles in the developing country. Through the loving treatment of Magawisca, the balanced union between Hope and Everell, and Esther's declaration that a husband is not needed for happiness, Sedgwick presents a radical view of the future and envisions a nation that embraces all people.

Sedgwick's plot resolutions refute the popular opinions expressed by Cooper. Sedgwick disputes that the settlers have a rightful claim to the land while Cooper legitimizes that claim. Sedgwick depicts Indian removal as unjust while Cooper frames their disappearance as a dictate of nature and history, giving the white settlers free reign to the land. Sedgwick criticizes white society for their treatment of the Indians while Cooper absolves them of any blame. Sedgwick empowers women and Indians while Cooper subjugates them. Sedgwick places agency in the hands of the disenfranchised and was concerned with, and hopeful for, forming a righteous democratic and Christian community.

Cooper's interests were focused on developing the land and giving power to those who had possession of the land – men like himself. He empowers white, male, propertied men to lead America. His conclusion extinguishes the “light” of the Delaware and predicts that Indians – and black men – have no future in the

country. Similarly, Cooper pushes women to the background. He kills one female character and makes the other a trophy wife, leaving a strong ruling class of white men, like Major Heyward, to “justly” develop the country. To Cooper, democracy did not mean equality:

The very existence of government at all, infers inequality. The citizen who is preferred to office becomes the superior of those who are not, so long as he is the repository of power...All that the great American proposition, therefore, can mean, is to set up new and juster notions of natural rights than those which existed previously...

There are numerous instances in which the social inequality of America may do violence to our notions of abstract justice, but the compromise of interests under which all civilized society must exist, renders this unavoidable. (*The American Democrat* 47-48)

Cooper rationalizes social hierarchy and places white men in power. Cooper – a white male landowner – is the “citizen who is preferred to office” and “becomes the superior” of others. His restrictive democracy therefore only protects men of his own class. Cooper speaks for the elite citizens while Sedgwick gives voice to all those Cooper removes.

Chapter IX: Conclusion

Overall, Cooper and Sedgwick answer Crèvecoeur's question in radically dissimilar ways. Their novels present diametrically opposed visions of America and its future. Cooper's version secures the position of the white, "civilized," American man as the leader of the country and a citizen who will enjoy all rights and protection under the law. Women and minorities are marginal and subservient. Cooper's nation requires its subjects to live within the traditional bounds and established hierarchy of society. In essence, Cooper advocates a society where those just like him are protected and allowed to prosper.

On the other hand, Sedgwick promotes equality for all members in society, in practice, not just in theory. She includes disenfranchised groups such as women, Native Americans and, indirectly, slaves in her concept of nationhood. Sedgwick's America operates on principles of morality, righteousness and love, not hierarchy and differences of color, class, sex or religion. She challenges the traditional white patriarchal rule and distributes power to all citizens.

Their different views of America are reflected in their treatment of nature, Europeans, Native Americans, and women. Cooper's nature is Romantic, yet he also envisions its destruction at the hands of the white settlers, the rightful "owners," in order to develop the land. Sedgwick's nature is at times dangerous, at times gentle, but always divine. It God's realm, and the rightful home of Indians, but it cannot be owned. Cooper's women are fragile and must be

protected in order to survive. More importantly, they must be racially “pure” to ensure the racial purity in future generations of America. Sedgwick’s female characters are powerful, independent and intelligent. They make decisions for themselves and project an aura of control and determination. Cooper places his Indians in the roles of villains to be killed or servants to enable the white man to dominate. Sedgwick gives her Indians intelligence and reason. Her “noble savages” counteract any prejudice which proclaimed them to be vengeful beasts. Cooper’s ending gives authority to privileged white men. Sedgwick’s ending challenges and undermines that very authority.

Cooper, Sedgwick, and their contemporaries discussed topics that are still heavily debated today – race, gender, social status. They confronted issues that were precursors to contemporary problems: instead of overcrowding in inner cities, they considered the expansion of the frontier and the taming of the wilderness; instead of illegal immigration, they wrote about Indian removal and slavery; and instead of the controversy over abortion, they examined equality for women. In Cooper’s and Sedgwick’s writings, the definition of “America” varied drastically. They foreshadowed the ongoing battle over the notion of identity that still continues in present-day America. Their differences prefigure current societal problems, and even contemporary political factions of the country, where Cooper would be among the conservative white Republicans, while Sedgwick would be among the liberal Democrats.

In hindsight, neither Cooper nor Sedgwick is completely right or wrong because contemporary American society is a combination of their two different versions of the national myth. In some ways, Cooper's view of the nation was accurate. Privileged white men still retain the majority of power. It took over two centuries after the Revolution to elect an African American President, and there has yet to be a female President. The overwhelming majority of Congress is still comprised of older white men, and six out of nine justices on the Supreme Court of the United States are white men over the age of 55. Cooper's America also persists in the racial and sexual discrimination that continue to be large problems in America. Cooper's belief in privilege for the rights of property still holds true because wealth and property coincide with and grant power.

Sedgwick's American identity has also advanced. In the nearly two centuries since *Hope Leslie* was published, America has become a melting pot of different races and cultures. Women and minorities are officially empowered citizens who enjoy the same rights and privileges as white men. The balance of power is also changing and patriarchal rule over the country has declined. Sedgwick's incorporation of religious virtue can also be seen in America today. Although church and state are technically separate, the righteous spirit of religion stills plays a large part in American identity and politics.

Today, as in the times of Cooper and Sedgwick, American identity is a dynamic thing. As it continues to change, the nation will become what neither

author could have foretold. Recent Census data projects that the white majority will no longer exist by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau “Press Release”). Will white men still retain power? Will African Americans or Hispanic Americans gain control? What will be the 2050 Census results determine America to be? Only time will tell. However as sure as the Census Bureau determines how many Americans are counted, the visions of American writers will continue to reflect who they think *should* count.

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