

Reverberations of Native American Oratory in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*

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ABSTRACT

James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1823) is the first of five novels known as *The Leatherstocking Tales*. Cooper began writing in an effort to meet mounting financial obligations created after poor business decisions made by his brothers, unresolved legal claims against the estate of his father Judge William Cooper and the radical devaluation in land values brought on by the War of 1812. All of this left Cooper wholly financially dependent upon his pen to support himself, his wife and their four young children.

Storytelling was an integral link in the spreading of news, the triumphs, and terrors of living on the frontier. Cooper casts his tale against the backdrop of the French and Indian Wars during which Native Peoples experienced repeated land dispossessions as the French and English fought their war. The story of Chingachgook/John Mohegan is one of resistance to intruders, a narrative which involves bloody conflict in the region where the town Templeton was established.

KEYWORDS

Native Americans, Indians, French and Indian War, Land Dispossession, Oratory, Canassatego, Little Turtle, Logan, Pontiac, *Red Jacket*, James Fenimore Cooper, *The Spy*, *The Pioneers*.

James Cooper's¹ *The Pioneers* (1823)² is the first in a series of five novels known collectively as *The Leatherstocking Tales*. During 1821, while Cooper was writing *The Pioneers*; or *the Sources of the Susquehanna*, he and his family lived on the fifty-seven acre farm called Angevine, at Scarsdale in Westchester County, New York.³ His father-in-law held this property in trust for his wife, Susan, in order to keep it safe from Cooper's creditors. Judge William Cooper, James' father, had provided well for his children, leaving each of them a large cash allowance and ample holdings in land. However, poor business decisions made by Cooper's brothers, unresolved legal claims against Judge Cooper's estate, and a radical devaluation in land values due to the War of 1812–13 left young James the reluctant executor of his father's precipitously declining fortune.⁴ Cooper tells his reader in the Preface to the 1823 edition, perhaps somewhat disingenuously that, "[...] it was mine own humour that suggested this tale."⁵ On some level this may be correct, but by the time *The Pioneers* was published Cooper was wholly financially dependent upon his pen to support himself, his wife, and their four young children. The phenomenal success of his Revolutionary War tale *The Spy* had given him an unexpected, though welcome, means of supporting his family while at the same time allowing him to retain his dignity as a gentleman.

1 Fenimore was not added to the author's name until 1826.

2 James Cooper, *The Pioneers; or, the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale*, ed. James Franklin Beard, Lance Schachterle and Kenneth M. Andersen (1823, Albany, New York: University of New York Press, 1980).

3 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, xx.

4 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, xix.

5 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 4.

However, Cooper was much too honest a historian to allow profit to dictate historical fact. He proudly informs his audience in the Introduction to the 1832 edition that, “they who will take the trouble to read it, may be glad to know how much of its contents is literal fact.”⁶ Cooper’s emphasis on the historical context of the tale has emboldened many scholars to focus on his debates about conserving environmental resources and the game laws in the wake of westward expansion. Other scholars have noted the multi-faceted theme of land dispossession. The fictional Judge Marmaduke Temple “discharged his functions with credit and fidelity, [however,] Marmaduke never seemed to lose sight of his own interests.”⁷ Judge Temple soon became the proud owner of vast tracts of land under the acts of confiscation. Although no one ever legally challenged Temple, a cloud of suspicion lingered. The resolution of the love plot allows Cooper to unite the Effingham heir with the Temple heiress to resolve the issues related to the apparent dispossession by Judge Temple. However, the focus on the Anglo-American aspect of land dispossession overshadows another history that Cooper subordinates to the main theme.

A historical account of the French and Indian Wars figures prominently in the background of *The Pioneers*. Inherent in that history are the repeated land dispossessions that the Native Peoples experienced as the French and English fought their war. This paper deconstructs the representation of the Native American character Chingachgook/John Mohegan, a long-time companion of Natty Bumppo, to reveal a complex story of dispossession and resistance to the foreign intruders that often involved bloody conflict with and among the Native American Peoples in the region where Templeton was established.

According to Wallace, when Cooper began publishing in 1820, Americans read European literature almost exclusively.⁸ Cooper followed the book market, read reviews, and was determined to create an American literature that would appeal to an American public. In order to expand his readership to a broad-based national audience, he would have to create new modes of narrative.⁹ The unprecedented success in America and abroad of *The Spy* resoundingly answered the sarcastic question by a well-known critic for the *Edinburgh Review*, “In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?”¹⁰

Alan Taylor has pointed out in his article “‘Wasty Ways’: Stories of American Settlement” how “stories of endurance in the face of daunting hardships” became “the substance of [the settlers] own narratives.”¹¹ Cooper’s success was based in part on his ability to tap into this narrative of endurance by projecting characters and events against a historical backdrop that rife with people. Many of Cooper’s readers would have been familiar with stories about figures they could recognize in the shimmering outlines of characters like Harvey Birch, Natty Bumppo, and Chingachgook. These characters gave Cooper’s novels a sense of authenticity that no one else had managed to attain at that time. Wallace claims that Cooper “created the audience which represented the reading

6 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 6.

7 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 36.

8 James D. Wallace, *Early Cooper and His Audience*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), vii.

9 Wallace, *Early Cooper*, x.

10 Adam Seybert, “Statistical Annals of the United States of America,” *Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal*, (Jan 1820), 79.

11 Alan Taylor, “‘Wasty Ways’: Stories of American Settlement,” *Environment History*, 3, no. 3 (July 1998): 293, accessed 22/08/2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3985181>.

public for every American author through most of the nineteenth century (and) which determined the commercial success or failure of every American novel".¹²

The Spy launched Cooper into national and international prominence which, combined with the nearly one year advance notice for *The Pioneers*, created a great anticipation for his new novel.¹³ Throughout the year preceding publication, much to the annoyance of one critic of the newspaper, *The Minerva*, advertisements had appeared in various newspapers announcing Cooper's forthcoming work:

For some months before the appearance of the PIONEERS, we have had our curiosity kept alive, and our anticipations strongly excited, by the *puffs* [italics in the original], which have, from time to time, appeared in one of our daily papers.¹⁴

Cooper, who was known for his hands-on approach in dealing with both the printing and distribution of his literary works, had judged his audience well.¹⁵ The first edition sold an unprecedented 3,500 copies on the morning of its publication.¹⁶ Cooper's determination to allow his readers to be the judge of his success rather than the literary critics had been a bold political move which had paid off. Wallace notes that:

The Pioneers challenged the critics directly twice over. First, in his preface Cooper had chosen to make popularity his measure of literary success and to ignore the arbiters of public taste; he had dared to call them asses and to doubt the objective principles upon which criticism was founded. Second, the prepublication printing of extracts from the novel in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* (and the reprinting of those extracts by other newspapers) seemed very much like an attempt to bypass altogether the judgment of reviewers by appealing directly to the reading public.¹⁷

Yet, while Cooper did not want to have his financial success determined by the arbiters of taste, he relished confirmation of his authenticity by his readers. A month after the book appeared, a widely reprinted letter to the *Boston Patriot* said that:

The Pioneers...is an admirably finished picture of the manners, habits and peculiarities of the 'early settlers'. [...] I am surprised at the intimate knowledge the author displays, of the peculiarities of their way of living [and] I am heartily glad, that some one (sic) has arisen who does not think it unworthy of his time & genius, to collect & preserve memorials of those who seemed, almost, to belong to a different species from ourselves — another century, and all traces of originality and cleverness of these early settlers, will be lost; the progress of civilization and education has been so rapid, that they are fast disappearing.¹⁸

Reviewing the novel in 1826, William Gardiner states "The numerous characters introduced to play their respective parts in the rise and progress of Templeton [...] are

12 Wallace, *Early Cooper*, vii.

13 Hugh MacDougall, "The Pioneers: Creator of a New York Frontier Image." *James Fenimore Cooper Society*, accessed, August 29, 2009, <http://external.oneonta.edu/cooper/articles/suny/2007suny-macdougall.html>.

14 *The Minerva* (February 8, 1823), I:348–349.

15 Wallace, *Early Cooper*, 172.

16 W. M. Verhoeven, ed. *James Fenimore Cooper: New Historical and Literary Contexts* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 11.

17 Wallace, *Early Cooper*, 174–175.

18 MacDougall, *The Pioneers*, n. page.

drawn with great spirit and originality [...]”¹⁹ Cooper drew upon the new Republic’s sense of nostalgia and guilt for the rapid disappearance of the noble savage, celebrated as a worthy adversary in the Native American character of Chingachgook/John Mohegan. Cooper created a dual nature for this character; Chingachgook the mighty Indian warrior and John Mohegan, or simply Mohegan, the drunken Christianized Indian. This dual-natured character figures prominently in *The Pioneers*, but has been largely dismissed as the simple alter ego of the Natty Bumppo/Leatherstocking character. Terence Martin had once suggested that, “Cooper has doubled Natty’s consciousness to include that of Chingachgook.”²⁰ Wallace, following Martin takes the idea of doubling one step further saying that, “the presentation of Natty’s other self [is] Chingachgook.”²¹ However, by subordinating the Chingachgook/John Mohegan identity to that of the Natty/Leatherstocking character, modern literary critics have taken out the Native American history that Cooper had intended to be present – a history that his contemporary readers would have known well.

Chingachgook enters the novel and the scene just after the Edwards/Young Eagle character has been accidentally shot by Judge Temple. Yet, before the reader gets a description of Chingachgook, Cooper cues his audience as to the significance of this character, “He had suffered severely in his family during the recent war, having had every soul to whom he was allied cut off by an inroad of the enemy.”²² Cooper’s early nineteenth century audience would have immediately made the connection to Chief Logan, a Cayuga Indian who lived through the murder of several members of his family at the hands a group of Virginia frontiersmen led by Daniel Greathouse on April 30, 1774.²³ The incident, known as the Yellow Creek Massacre, prompted Logan to seek revenge for the unprovoked murders and is considered to be the principal reason for Lord Dunmore’s War.²⁴ Cooper echoes Logan’s speech, “I have even thought to live with you but for the injuries of one man, Colonel Cresap,²⁵ who last spring in cold blood and unprovoked murdered the relatives of Logan, not even sparing his wife and children.”²⁶ According to Wallace, the speech made by Chief Logan to Lord Dunmore at the cessation of hostilities is the most famous example of Indian oration and became part of the public discourse of the time.²⁷ Edward Seeber gives an indication of its widespread popularity, stating that the speech was reprinted numerous times in

19 MacDougall, *The Pioneers*, n. page

20 Wallace, *Early Cooper*, 148.

21 Wallace, *Early Cooper*, 147–148. Emphasis added.

22 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 85.

23 Lawrence J. Fleenor, Jr., “The History of Yellow Creek,” *The Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Association*, accessed September 2, 2012, <http://www.danielboonetrail.com/historicalsites.php?id=86>

24 Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, *Documentary History of Dunmore’s War* (Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1905), 371; Modern histories usually consider the Yellow Creek Massacre to be the primary cause of Lord Dunmore’s War; however, earlier historical evidence attributes the cause to settlers, in violation of the Royal Proclamation of King George III of 1763, insisting upon violating treaties made with the Native Peoples and settled lands well beyond the established boundaries.

25 Edward Seeber, “Critical Views on Logan’s Speech,” *The Journal of American Folklore*, 60, no. 236 (Apr – Jun, 1947): 130–146; Logan blamed Colonel Cresap exclusively for the deaths of his family and was apparently unaware of Daniel Greathouse’s involvement.

26 Chief Logan, “Logan’s Lament,” *American Rhetoric Online Speech Bank*, / Delivered in 1774, [Point Pleasant] Ohio Territory, accessed September 2, 2012, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/nativeamericans/chieflogan.htm>.

27 Wallace, *Early Cooper*, 145.

the colonial newspapers of 1775, in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in numerous histories of Virginia, the Ohio Valley, and Dunmore's War, and in countless books relating to the American Indian. In the eighteen fifties and sixties the speech was a notable feature of McGuffey's *Fourth* and *Fifth Reader*.²⁸

Still, Logan is not the only Native American whom the character of Chingachgook/John Mohegan represents, nor is the Yellow Creek Massacre the only piece of Native American history embedded in the background. As such, Chingachgook's entrance into the manor house is both powerful and suggestive:

As he walked slowly down the long hall, the dignified and deliberate tread of the Indian surprised the spectators. His shoulders, and body, to his waist, were entirely bare, with the exception of a silver medallion of Washington, that was suspended from his neck by a thong of buck-skin, and rested on his high chest amidst many scars [...] The medallion was the only ornament he wore, although enormous slits in the rim of either ear, which suffered the cartilages to fall to inches below the members, had evidently been used for the purposes of decoration, in other days.²⁹

Cooper mentions the Washington medallion upon the entrance of Chingachgook and again during his death scene, when Elizabeth Temple comes upon him sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree: "The medallion of Washington reposed on his chest, a badge of distinction that Elizabeth well knew he only produced on great and solemn occasions."³⁰ The Washington medallion is clearly important, yet little attempt has been made to explain its significance. Thomas L. McKenney, head of the Indian Office, wrote to the Secretary of the War Department in 1829 that the Native American Peoples place a high value on medals as "tokens of Friendship" and "badges of power," believing that they were representative of the importance of the Native Americans to Government.³¹

Fredrick Webb Hodge from the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology concurs, "From time immemorial loyalty has been rewarded by [...] the presentation of medals, [...] With the Indian chief it was the same."³² The first Indian Peace medal, struck within the United States in 1780, it did not have a bust of Washington on it. Another medallion, authorized by Congress and issued to Governor Arthur St. Clair to be given to the Native American tribal leaders present at the Treaty of Fort Harmar in Ohio, in 1789, did have a bust of George Washington on its face.³³ Cooper states that Chingachgook's Washington medallion is silver, while Hodge states clearly that the Fort Harmar medal was made of pewter.³⁴

An intriguing possibility for the Chingachgook medallion is the Red Jacket medal presented by Washington to the Seneca Chief, Red Jacket at Philadelphia, in 1792. It has the full figure of George Washington in uniform presenting a [peace] pipe to an Indian

28 Seybert, *Statistical Annals of the USA*, 130.

29 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 86.

30 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 400.

31 Thomas L. McKenney, "Primary Sources: Importance of the medals to the U.S. government." *Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies (SCEMS)*, (1829/2007), accessed September 6, 2012, <http://www.smithsoniansource.org/display/primarysource/viewdetails.aspx?TopicId=&PrimarySourceId=1040>.

32 Frederick Webb Hodge, ed. *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, vol. I. II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1907), I: 829.

33 Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, I: 834.

34 Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, I: 834.

with the words, "George Washington President" engraved on its face.³⁵ This medal was particularly well known to nineteenth century readers because, according to a New York Times article published October 29, 1865, "RED JACKET (*sic*) always wore the medal on all great and state occasions, and it was his pride in his speeches to allude to its emblematic character [...]."³⁶ Cooper's description of the medal as well as Elizabeth's statement that Chingachgook wore the medallion on "great and solemn occasions"³⁷ would be in keeping with the historical description of Red Jacket's medal. Further substantiation for Chingachgook wearing a Red Jacket medal can be found during his death scene. In what appears to be a parody of Red Jacket's *Address to White Missionaries and Iroquois Six Nations*, delivered in 1805 at Buffalo Grove, New York, Natty, Chingachgook/John Mohegan, and the Reverend Grant have a "failure to communicate" about the former's rejection of Christianity. Reverend Grant, in a celebratory tone says, "Oh! How consoling it is to know that he has not rejected the offered mercy in the hour of his strength and of worldly temptations!"³⁸ However, when he inquires directly of John Mohegan if he wants the Christian last rites, "The Indian turned his ghastly face to the speaker, and fastened his dark eyes on him, steadily but vacantly [...] and began to sing, using his own language."³⁹ When Grant implores Natty to translate, and inquires if John Mohegan/Chingachgook is singing "the Redeemer's praise," Natty reponds simply, "No, no—'tis his own praise that he speaks now."⁴⁰ Confused, Grant tries desperately to explain that the soul of Chingachgook is in jeopardy and that he must reject all his pagan ways. Grant suggests that Chingachgook is in a "lost state"⁴¹ because he sings songs of past deeds. In exasperation, Natty exclaims that far from thinking he is lost, Chingachgook "believes it to be a great gain" to travel "where it will always be good hunting; where no wicked or unjust Indians can go; and where he shall meet all his tribe together ag'in."⁴² Reverend Grant, like the White missionaries to whom Red Jacket spoke could simply not understand that the Native Peoples have their own beliefs. In an entry in the 1969 *Encyclopedia Britannica* Red Jacket is indicated to have said to the missionaries

Brother, continue to listen. You say that you are sent to instruct us how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to His mind, and if we do not take hold of the religion which you white people teach, we shall be unhappy hereafter. You say that you are right and we are lost. How do we know this to be true? [...] How shall we know when to believe, being so often deceived by the white people? Brother, you say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agreed, as you all read the book? Brother we do not understand these things. We are told that your religion was given to your forefathers and has been handed down to us, their children. We also have a religion, which was given to our forefathers, and has been handed down to us, their children. We worship that way. It teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive; to love each other, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion. Brother, the Great Spirit has made us all, but He has made a great difference between His white and red children. He has given us a different complexions and different

35 Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, I: 834.

36 "The Red Jacket Medal," *New York Times Archive* (New York), October 29, 1865, accessed September 6, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/1865/10/29/news/the-red-jacket-medal.html>

37 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 400.

38 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 419.

39 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 419

40 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 420.

41 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 420.

42 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 420.

customs. To you He has given the arts. To these He has not opened our eyes. We know these things to be true. Since He has made so great a difference between us in other things, why may we not conclude that He has given us a different religion according to our understanding? The Great Spirit does right. He knows what is best for his children; we are satisfied. Brother, We (*sic*) do not wish to destroy your religion, or to take it from you. We only want to enjoy our own.⁴³

Again, there are overtones of the Logan speech embedded in the exchange as Natty tells Reverend Grant, "Flesh isn't iron, that a man can live forever, and see his kith and kin driven to a far country, and he left to mourn, with none to keep him company."⁴⁴ This is similar in tone and meaning to that of Logan's text:

There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This has called on me for revenge. I have sought it; I have killed many; I have fully glutted my vengeance. For my country, I rejoice in the beams of peace. But do not harbor a thought that mine is the joy of fear. Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one.⁴⁵

If the assumption is made that Chingachgook is wearing the Red Jacket medallion, then another prominent Native American chief and more history can be revealed. The 1917 edition of Calvin M. Young's, *Little Turtle (ME-SHE-KIN-NO-QUAH): The Great Chief of the Miami Indian Nation* contains an image of the Little Turtle made from "a cut out of a very old book which had been reproduced from a painting made for him while in Philadelphia."⁴⁶ The original is said to have been destroyed when the "Capitol buildings burned during the War of 1812."⁴⁷ Little Turtle is depicted with a necklace of bear's teeth and a large medallion under it. The size and shape of the medallion is consistent with the Red Jacket Peace Medal.

Little Turtle, along with Shawnee Chief Blue Jacket, and the Lenape (Delaware) Chief Buckongahelas, led a confederated Native American force of over one thousand to attack Major General Arthur St. Clair on 4 November 1791 on the banks of the Wabash River.⁴⁸ The defeat of St. Clair at The Battle of the Wabash resulted in the highest percentage of casualties ever suffered by the United States Army.⁴⁹ It would not be until "Mad" Anthony Wayne, under whom Natty Bumppo claims to have served, won the Battle of Fallen Timbers in August of 1794 that the United States would gain control of what is now Ohio by the Treaty of Greenville, in 1795.

Cooper alludes to another well-known Native American in Young Eagle/Edward's chastisement of Chingachgook for having drunk too much at the tavern the night before:

Is John old? When was a Mohican a squaw, with seventy winters! (*sic*) No, the white man brings old age with him—rum is his tomahawk!

43 Chief Red Jacket, *The Annals of America*, 4. 19 vols (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1968), 4:168.

44 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 419.

45 Chief Logan, "Logan's Lament."

46 Calvin M. Young, *Little Turtle (ME-SHE-KIN-NO-QUAH): The Great Chief of the Miami Indian Nation*, (Greenville, Ohio: Calvin M. Young, 1917): Inside front cover.

47 Young, *Little Turtle*, inside front cover.

48 Patrick Feng, "The Battle of the Wabash: The Forgotten Disaster of the Indian Wars," *On Point: The Online Journal of Army History*. January 11, 2011. <http://armyhistoricaljournal.com/?p=597>, (accessed September 2, 2012).

49 Feng, "Battle of the Wabash."

"Why then do you use, it old man?" exclaimed the young hunter; "why will one so noble by nature, aid the devices of the devil, by making himself a beast!" [...] My fathers came from the shores of the salt lake. They fled before rum. They came to their grandfather, and they lived in peace; or when they did raise the hatchet, it was to strike it into the brain of a Mingo. They gathered around the council-fire, and what they said was done. Then John was the man. But warriors and traders with light eyes followed them. One brought the long knife, and one brought rum. They were more than the pines on the mountains; and they broke up the councils, and took the lands. The evil spirit was in their jugs, and they let him loose [...]⁵⁰

In this exchange, we can hear echoes of Chief Pontiac's prohibition against the use of alcohol during his speech used to unite the Native Peoples in resistance to the European encroachment into Indian Territory:

Listen well to what I am going to say to thee and all thy red brethren. [...] I do not like that you drink until you lose your reason, as you do; or that you fight with each other; or that you take two wives, or run after the wives of others; you do not well; I hate that. [...] This land, where you live, I have made for you and not for others. How comes it that you suffer the whites on your lands? Can you not do without them? I know that those whom you call the children of your Great Father supply your wants, but if you were not bad, as you are, you would well do without them. You might live wholly as you did before you knew them. Before those whom you call your brothers come on your lands, did you not live by bow and arrow? You had no need of gun nor powder, nor the rest of their things [...]⁵¹

Cooper interjects the topic of Native American education, then drops it just as abruptly. Young Eagle/Edwards sits down to dinner with the Rev Grant, who inquires "I trust, my young friend, [...] that the education you have received has eradicated most of those revengeful principles which you may have inherited by descent; for I understand, from the expressions of John, that you have some of the blood of the Delaware tribe."⁵² This inclusion gives Cooper the opportunity to remind his readers of how Native Americans allegedly feel about education by alluding to comments that Benjamin Franklin attributed to the Onondaga Chief Canassatego, and referring to the Treaty of Lancaster signed in 1744 through which the Covenant Chain was renewed and the boundary of Iroquois Territory was agreed to be the Blue Ridge Mountains. During treaty negotiations, some of the members of the Virginia Legislature offered to send six Indian youths to school at the College of William and Mary, in Williamsburg. Franklin printed this excerpt of the speech of Chief Canassatego:

We know you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in these colleges. And the maintenance of our young men, while with you, would [be] very expensive to you. We're convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us good by your proposal, and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different nations have different conceptions of things. And you will not, therefore, take it amiss if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young people were formerly brought up in the colleges of the northern province. They were instructed

50 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 185.

51 Chief Pontiac, an Ottawa Chief, "Primary Sources: Pontiac, an Ottawa Chief voicing the proclamations of the 'Master of Life,' 1763," *The Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies (SCEMS)*, 1763/2007, <http://www.smithsoniansource.org/display/primarysource/viewdetails.aspx?TopicId=&PrimarySourceId=1186>, (accessed September 2012).

52 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 141–142.

in all your sciences. But when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, and therefore were neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor councilors. They were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less oblig'd by your kind Offer tho' we decline accepting it; and to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great Care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them.⁵³

Cooper does not rely solely upon symbols and representations to bring the nuances of his texts to his readers' attention, but sometimes introduces historical personages directly by having his characters make reference to them. This is the case with Chief Cornstalk and Chief Cornplanter. When Judge Temple asks his daughter Elizabeth not to inquire into Young Eagle/Edward's past because it appeared to be a bad subject for him, she replies haughtily, "I shall believe him to the child of Corn-stalk, or Corn-planter, or some other renowned chieftain [...]."⁵⁴ Chingachgook speaks only briefly in this passage, yet Cornstalk's speech pattern would have been easily recognizable to Cooper's readers.

Father, you are not yet past the summer of life; your limbs are young. Go to the highest hill, and look around you. All that you see from the rising to the setting sun, from the head waters of the great spring, to where the 'crooked river' is hid by the hills, is his. He has Delaware blood, and his right is strong.⁵⁵

The names of Cornstalk and Cornplanter have faded into obscurity; during Cooper's time, however, they were well-known. Cornplanter was intimately involved in the defeat of General Edward Braddock, who led the British forces at Battle of the Monongahela at the beginning of the French and Indian Wars. Braddock's defeat was a major setback for the British. The sting of this defeat would still have been fresh in the memory of Cooper's contemporaries. This speech to Congress on the first day of December, 1790, by the Chiefs and Councilors of the Seneca nation, Cornplanter, Half-Town, and the Great-Tree was widely published:

Father: Your commissioners, when they drew the line which separated the land then given up to you from that which you agreed should remain to be ours, did most solemnly promise, that we should be secured in the peaceable possession of the lands which we inhabited east and north of that line. Does this promise bind you? Hear now, we beseech you, what has since happened concerning that land. On the day in which we finished the treaty at fort Stanwix, commissioners from Pennsylvania told our chiefs that they had come there to purchase from us all the lands belonging to us, within the lines of their State, and they told us that their line would strike the river Susquehannah below Tioga branch [...] Father: Our nation empowered John Livingston to let out part of our lands on rent, to be paid to us. He told us, that he was sent by Congress, to do this for us, and we fear he has deceived us in the writing lie obtained from us. For, since the time of our giving that power, a man of the name of Phelps has come among us, and claimed our whole country northward of the line of Pennsylvania, under purchase from that Livingston, to whom, he said, lie had paid twenty thousand dollars for it. He said, also, that he had bought, likewise, from the council of the Thirteen Fires, and paid them twenty thousand dollars more for the same.

53 Ralph Ketcham, ed, *The Political Thought of Benjamin Franklin*, Reprint (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 2003), 369–370. Capital letters in the original.

54 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 215. Capital letters in the original.

55 Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 142.

And lie said, also, that it did not belong to us, for that the great king had ceded the whole of it, when you made peace with him. Thus he claimed the whole country north of Pennsylvania, and west of the lands belonging to the Cayugas. He demanded it; he insisted on his demand, and declared that he would have it all. It was impossible for us to grant him this, and we immediately refused it. After some days, he proposed to run a line, at a small distance eastward of our western boundary, which we also refused to agree to. He then threatened us with immediate war, if we did not comply [...] All the lands we have been speaking of belonged to the Six Nations; no part of it ever belonged to the King of England, and he could not give it to you. The land we live on, our fathers received from God, and they transmitted it to us, for our children, and we cannot part with it.⁵⁶

The chiefs appealed to Congress to honor their Treaties and to stop encroachment of the White settlers into their hunting grounds. The Chiefs felt they were being unfairly treated because they had sided with the French during the Battle of the Monongahela, one in which the young George Washington had been defeated. However, when their appeals fell on deaf ears, Cornstalk joined Chief Logan in the defense of their hunting grounds in the Ohio Valley. Cornstalk led a confederated force of Mingo and Shawnee warriors during Lord Dunmore's War in an attempt to beat back the invading settlers. During the fierce battle at Point Pleasant, a Captain Stuart, after hearing a powerful and commanding voice throughout the day, inquired of one of his foot soldiers whose voice it was and what was he saying. The soldier responded, "It is Cornstalk's' [...] shouting to his men—*Be Strong!—Be Strong!*"⁵⁷ According to Reverend Foote, when Cornstalk met with Lord Dunmore to conduct the treaty negotiations, he received the "highest praise from the English officers."⁵⁸

Cooper's contemporaries would not only have been familiar with Cornstalk's role in Lord Dunmore's War, they would likely have been keenly aware of the brutal murder of Cornstalk while on a mission to Fort Randolph by the men stationed there. Although he had fought against the British at Lord Dunmore's War, he was a well-respected, honorable enemy who was slain by soldiers while under a flag of peace. This betrayal of the peace code and the refusal of the civil and military authorities to hold anyone culpable caused the Shawnee to let the "blood of multitudes along the frontier"⁵⁹ flow as they sated their revenge until the peace of 1783.

News articles, excerpts of the events of Congress, addresses like that of Cornstalk and other Native Americans, personal stories of being held captive by the Indians, accounts of the depredations of the Indians as well as excerpts from military journals and missionary tracts were routinely published in newspapers of the 18th and 19th century. These stories of triumph and terror were read and shared, debated, told and retold throughout the new nation. Cooper realized – and the success of *The Spy* confirmed for him – the importance of appealing to the same democratic reading public that newspapers had long depended upon for their survival, rather than depending on the opinion of established literary critics as a measure of success. Cooper's achievement comes in part from the co-mingling of real-life people and fictional characters against a familiar historical backdrop, exploring issues that were pertinent to those on the new frontier, while

56 United States Government, "American State Papers, 2nd Congress, 1st Session," *Library of Congress*, 1792/2012, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsp.html> (accessed August 29, 2012).

57 Reverend William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1855), 164.

58 Foote, *Sketches of Virginia*, 166.

59 Foote, *Sketches of Virginia*, 166.

simultaneously reminding people in the urban areas of their own historical roots. Through the nuanced symbolic representation of Chingachgook, Cooper was able to include a Native American story of dispossession and their passionate resistance to the White invasion of their lands. Wallace sees this as part of a "more fundamental question: Who owns America?"⁶⁰

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60 Wallace, *Early Cooper*, 136.

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