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From Savage to Sublime (And Partway Back): Indians and Antiquity in Early Nineteenth-Century American Literature

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> "I may challenge the whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, and of any more eminent orator, if Europe has furnished more eminent, to produce a single passage, superior to the speech of Logan, a Mingo chief, to Lord Dunmore, when governor of this state."
> —Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (1785)

Introduction

1 It is generally recognized that positive—and romanticized—images of Native Americans began to make their appearance in literary works of the United States around the middle of the second decade of the nineteenth century. As Benjamin T. Spencer points out, "In almost any version of a national culture before 1815 he [the Indian] assumed an unheroic and antinational guise" (Spencer, 1957, 51). Yet things changed relatively quickly after that time, and, in the period between the War of 1812—which provided a strong nationalistic catalyst for this phenomenon—and the Civil War, as Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. notes, "the Indian figured prominently in the higher forms of American art and literature" (Berkhofer, 1979, 86).[1] And this prominence was often, though certainly not always, in the form of positively portrayed representatives of Native Americans. The new image was primarily the result of two trends: cultural nationalism and Romanticism. As Berkhofer also explains: "If cultural nationalism prompted American authors and artists to turn to the Indian and the forest for subject matter, the

importation of romanticism from Europe made possible the elevation of this subject matter to literary and artistic respectability" (Berkhofer, 1979, 86).[2] It is already somewhat ironic, of course, that an artistic movement imported from Europe should be adopted by American authors motivated by cultural nationalism. Doubly ironic is the fact that one of the ways in which the eminently American subject of Indians, seized on by writers trying to create a distinctive and independent literature, was romanticized and simultaneously legitimized for use as a worthy subject through, in part, parallels made between them and heroes, gods, statuary and, especially importantly, great orators of (European) Antiquity.[3] More generally, almost any link that could be established between Indians, on the one hand, and the Ancient World, on the other, seemed to help justify the appearance of Native Americans in the nascent "home literature." And this strategy was, in fact, often adopted by American writers of the first half of the nineteenth century, including the two most successful authors of that period, Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, whose works I will return to later.

2 To begin with, it should be pointed out that two additional paradoxes are often embedded in the comparisons between Indians and Antiquity. First, if these links were generally motivated by an attempt to "elevate" Indians and bring them alive in literature, they also frequently had the simultaneous consequence of identifying Native Americans with a distant and disappeared, or "vanished," civilization, just at the moment when the Indians' own existence was being increasingly threatened by encroaching whites. Second, if the comparisons between Indians and Antiquity generally served to give an aura of dignity and sophistication to Native Americans (and thus, again, legitimizing them as worthy symbols of the recently independent United States), in some cases the associations seem to serve to bring the Ancient World down to the level of "savagery," suggesting that both civilizations, romantically perceived as "primitive," were somehow "below," or at least fundamentally different from, contemporary American society, a view running counter to the prevailing veneration of Ancient Greece and, especially, Rome as providing some of the best examples of the highest levels attainable by republican government and human civilization, more generally.

I. The Origins of the Association between Indians and Antiquity

3 The association between Indians and the Greeks and Romans (and occasionally other peoples) of Antiquity did not, however, spring up overnight, as it were, with the upwelling of nationalistic sentiment associated, to a large extent, with the War of 1812 and the beginnings of the American Romantic movement in literature, which started at about the same time. Indeed, almost immediately after the period of first contact, Europeans began comparing American aborigines to the peoples of Antiquity. As Berkhoffer explains,

> comparison between Europeans and Native Americans was the very basis for the descriptions and understanding of the Indian in the first place. Casual comparison of the Indians with ancient peoples occurred in most accounts of Indian beliefs and behavior as a device to make the unfamiliar known to readers and listeners in terms of the familiar found in the Bible, the classics, or other travel literature already known to the audience. The systematic analysis of parallel cultural traits

> and language was basic to the method of determining Indian origins at the time. [...] Likewise, the systematic explication of correspondences between Indian customs and myths and those of the Greeks and Romans by French and English writers began shortly after settlement of North America by those nations. (Berkhofer, 1979, 45-6)

4 By the early eighteenth century, the idea that such comparisons were legitimate had more or less been taken for granted, as it was in the influential work of the Jesuit Joseph Lafitau, *Mœurs des sauvages amériquains [sic], comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (*Customs of the American Savages Compared with the Customs of Antiquity*), first published in 1724. As Lafitau explains in his introduction,

> I was not satisfied with knowing the character of the Savages and learning about their customs and practices. I looked for the vestiges of remotest Antiquity in these practices and customs. I carefully read the earliest Authors who have treated in their works the Customs, Laws and Usages of the Peoples about whom they had knowledge. I compared these Customs with each other, and I confess that if the Authors of Antiquity provided illumination that supported certain happy conjectures concerning the Savages, the Customs of the Savages also provided illumination that helped me more easily understand and explain several things described by the Authors of Antiquity. (Lafitau, 1724, 3-4, my translation)[4]

5 Further along in the introduction, Lafitau asserts, "In the description of the Customs of the [Native] Americans, the parallel with the Ancients is sustained throughout because there is not one single aspect of their customs that doesn't have a corresponding example in Antiquity" (Lafitau, 1724, 18, my translation).[5] Many thinkers of the eighteenth century (and earlier) were especially fascinated by the parallels to be made between American Indians and the peoples of Antiquity because they had the impression that, through the Indians, Europeans were able to see themselves as they had been in the past. They felt that they had discovered, in fact, a sort of time machine that allowed them direct access to the secrets of (western) humanity's earlier existence. As Adam Ferguson, a professor at the University of Edinburgh and prominent figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, asserted in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, first published in 1767:

> It is in their [the American Indians'] present condition, that we are to behold, as in a mirrour, the features of our own progenitors; and from thence we are to draw our conclusions with respect to the influence of situations, in which, we have reason to believe, our fathers were placed. [...]
> If, in advanced years, we would form a just notion of our progress from the cradle, we must have recourse to the nursery, and from the example of those who are still in the period of life we mean to describe, take our representation of past manners, that cannot, in any other way, be recalled. (Ferguson, 1767, 122)

6 The many parallels made between Indians and the peoples of Antiquity formed an integral part, in fact, in the development of the myth of the Noble Savage, though, as already noted, the myth took root much earlier in Europe than in America (see footnote 2).

II. Early Comparisons in American Writings between Indians and the Ancient World

7 One of the earliest and most famous examples in the newly formed United States of the more ideological uses of the myth of the Noble Savage, which includes a favorable

comparison between Indians and figures of Antiquity, can be seen in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785)[6] as part of his effort to defend Native Americans against European charges that they (along with pretty much everything else in the New World) existed in a degenerate state.[7] Jefferson praised their bravery and made a bold, not to say jingoistic, comparison between the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero—who, in eighteenth and nineteenth century America, were "legendary orators and widely considered, respectively, Athens's and Rome's greatest speakers" (Shalev, 2009, 125)—and a speech made by an Indian chief to Lord Dunmore, the last colonial governor of Virginia:

> Of their [the Indians'] bravery and address in war we have multiplied proofs, because we have been the subjects on which they were exercised. Of their eminence in oratory we have fewer examples, because it is displayed chiefly in their own councils. Some, however, we have of very superior lustre. I may challenge the whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, and of any more eminent orator, if Europe has furnished more eminent, to produce a single passage, superior to the speech of Logan, a Mingo chief, to Lord Dunmore, when governor of this state. (Jefferson, 1984 [1785], 187-8)

8 Logan's speech itself, at least as it is reported by Jefferson, is a heartfelt defense of the chief's character and act of vengeance, as well as a bold statement of defiance, delivered after his family had been massacred by a group of whites, led, according to Logan, by the British Colonel Cresap, seeking retribution for a previous robbery and murder that neither Logan, who had been on friendly terms with the colonists, nor his family had anything to do with. In fact, a small war had ensued and the several tribes that had allied themselves against the whites were finally defeated and sued for peace, but Logan refused to take part in such supplication.[8] As far as Jefferson's comparison of the Mingo's words with those of two of the greatest orators of Antiquity, as Marjorie N. Murphy notes, it perhaps wasn't as exaggerated as all that:

> Cicero would have approved: his canons of rhetoric are all observed in Logan's short speech. The Indian concisely told of treachery in the face of friendship, moving the idea along with his power of memory so the listener cannot forget. His semantic connectives provide contrasts as he speaks of love, then treachery. The use of repetition in parallelism, the shift in voice, and the blunt frankness are Indian qualities. (Murphy, 1970, 361)

9 From a more thematic point of view, Logan's speech can also be seen as recalling Cicero's Catiline orations, which offered an eloquent denunciation of Lucius Sergius Catilina's conspiracy to overthrow the Roman Republic, a parallel that would no doubt have suggested itself to late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Americans steeped in classical history.[9] Just as Cicero had exposed Catiline's crimes, the Indian chief's eloquence revealed the barbarity and injustice of Cresap. And the fact that Cresap was a British officer allowed Jefferson to suggest a further comparison by casting him into the role of representative of an oppressive non-democratic power and Logan into that of defender of (American) liberty, thus providing an example of the sometimes relatively subtle role of cultural nationalism in the transformation of the image of the Indian. Finally, and I will come back to this point later, since Logan is portrayed as the last surviving member of his family, the text also offers a relatively early example of the trope of the "vanishing Indian." As Arnold Krupat states, Logan's speech is also a "farewell," which functions, in part, "as a justification for dispossessing the 'savages' of the lands they soon will not need" (Krupat, 2012, 66).

10 While far from being the only speech of an Indian held up for public admiration at the time, Logan's oration was, according to Robert A. Ferguson, "the most famous Native-American utterance" (Ferguson, 1994, 510), and it clearly helped to spread a positive image of Indians as comparable to heroic and well-spoken figures of Antiquity throughout the United States and beyond. Indeed, besides the notoriety given to this particular oration by its appearance in a work by such a prominent citizen as Jefferson, who would be elected president of the United States in 1800, by the early nineteenth century Logan's speech had been reprinted numerous times, notably in two of the most popular school textbooks of the early nineteenth century, Noah Webster's *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking* and Caleb Bingham's *The American Preceptor*.[10] While these reprintings did not include Jefferson's comparison of the speech to the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero (though *Notes on the State of Virginia* is clearly their source[11]), they did implicitly recognize the supposed quality of Indian eloquence by its very inclusion in these collections meant to provide models of effective rhetoric while at the same time instilling virtue in the minds of their young readers. Furthermore, there is, in fact, an implied comparison between Logan's speech and classical oratory (besides the overt one given by Jefferson) in both Webster's and Bingham's works since the two books also include a selection of great speeches from Antiquity. In *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking*, for example, the Mingo chief's words are immediately followed by the "Speech of a Scythian Ambassador to Alexander" (Webster, 1802, 68), and other examples of classical oratory such as an excerpt from "Cicero's Oration Against Verres" (158-61) and the "Speech of Publius Scipio to the Roman Army, before the Battle of the Ticin" (164-6) are also included. *The American Preceptor*, too, includes several examples of eloquence from the Ancient World, including some of the same ones found in Webster's work such as the "Speech of a Scythian Ambassador to Alexander" (Bingham, 1811, 109-10). In another of Bingham's school texts, *The Columbian Orator*,[12] designed as a sequel to *The American Preceptor*, there is a piece entitled "Speech of an Indian Chief, of the Stockbridge Tribe, to the Massachusetts Congress, in the Year 1775" (Bingham, 1800, 54-55),[13] and, once again, this example of eloquence appears amidst a host of others, including several by classical figures, such as the "Speech of Paulus Emilius to the Roman People, as He Was about Taking the Command of Their Army" (36-38), an "Extract from Cato's Speech before the Roman Senate, after the Conspiracy of Catiline" (48-49) and "Socrates' Defence before His Accusers and Judges" (122-5). As these examples suggest, by the early nineteenth century, readers were being made accustomed to the idea that Native Americans were comparable, at least in the field of oratory, to the great figures of Antiquity, whose popularity, for their part, was related to the widespread phenomenon of Americans—in the years before, during and after the Revolution—seeing their country as characterized by classical virtues and representing, more specifically, the birth of a new Rome.[14]

III. William Tudor and the Encouragement of the Literary Use of Indians

11 Positive portrayals of Indians, in fact, often went beyond the parallels made with classical orators and other major figures of the Ancient World found in works like *Notes on the State of Virginia* and early school textbooks, and it wouldn't be long before literary

writers in the United States began making frequent use of various—very often idealized—images of Native Americans that also linked them with Antiquity. They were directly encouraged to do so, in fact, by cultural nationalists like William Tudor[15] who, in 1815, published an address in *The North American Review* in which he rejected the notion that "one reason why we have not produced more good poems, was owing to the want of subjects" (Tudor, 1815, 14). Instead, he offered a long list of topics he considered appropriate for treatment by the nation's authors. These suggestions include early colonial history, the beauties of the American landscape, distinctive native fauna, such as the beaver, deer and eagle, and the "human actors on this theatre" with "their history replete with interest and romantick adventure" (18). If Tudor begins by briefly mentioning the English and French and their vast empires and centuries of conflict on the North American continent, he quickly moves on to "the Aborigines, who became the allies of these nations and the most efficient part of their force" (19), and Native Americans become, in fact, one of his central themes. But at this still relatively early period, Tudor was aware that Indians did, in fact, need to be defended as a fit topic for American literature. "Before speaking more particularly of them," he notes, "it will be necessary to deprecate the prejudices naturally entertained on the subject" (19). His strategy, to a large extent, is to claim that while many of the surviving Indians were but a mere shadow their former selves, those of earlier times were of a truly noble nature, comparable to the most admirable characters of the Ancient World: "They possessed so many traits in common with some of the nations of antiquity, that they perhaps exhibit the counterpart of what the Greeks were in the heroick ages, and particularly the Spartans during the vigour of their institutions" (19). Tudor's contrasting of Indians of the present day and former times makes use of a relatively common strategy that doubly qualifies the Native Americans as a suitable subject for a (Romantic) national literature, but which did not bode well for contemporary Indians as real human beings. Not only are the Indians of earlier periods of North American history presented as being like the great figures of Antiquity, but, conveniently enough, they, too, have disappeared (or are disappearing):

> sudden civilization at least, has been shewn to be impossible; they diminish and waste before its progress, like snow before the vernal influence. The sublime allegorical painting of Guido, in which Apollo encircled by the hours, is chasing night and her shadows over the surface of the globe, might almost represent the extinction of our savage precursors before the dawn of science and cultivation. (19-20)

12 This clear evocation of the trope of the "vanishing Indian," combined with another reference to Antiquity, here the image of Apollo, provides a complex link between Native Americans and the Ancient World. Here, in fact, Tudor makes Apollo representative of advancing white civilization, while the Indians figure as the disincarnated "night and her shadows" chased away by the Greek god of light (among other things). This reference thus casts the Indians into a mythically distant past since it suggests that they were already in the process, at least, of vanishing in the days of Apollo. Furthermore, the fact that Tudor's reference to Antiquity passes through Guido Reni's early seventeenth-century painting (*Aurora*) adds another layer of distancing and aestheticizing, which intensifies the unreal and "vanished" dimension of the Indian. Indeed, this passage provides an encapsulated vision of just why the Indians could so easily, in the end, be transformed into perfect subjects for the fledgling American literature: they are distinctively American (and thus appropriate for the uses of cultural nationalism in the creation of a uniquely native literature); they are linked

with Antiquity, here mythology, as well as, in this case, with a recognized masterpiece of European art (and thus legitimate for high literary purposes); and they are largely part of the past, or at least presented as being part of the past (and thus cloaked in the mists of time, making them a fitting theme for Romantic literature, which often favors subjects from history or mythology that can only be recalled through an appeal to the imagination).[16]

13 Tudor comes back to the comparison between Native Americans and various aspects of Antiquity again and again in his address. He asserts, for example, that "The solemn councils of the Sachems, the war-dance which preceded their expeditions, like the Pyrrhick Dance of antiquity, was full of terrifick expression" (21). And, perhaps most significantly, Tudor suggests that the exploits of the Indians are fully equal to those recounted in—nothing less than—the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*:

> Many of their achievements were performed by a few or sometimes only one or two individuals. These were savage in their character, and not admitted now in the practice of war among civilized nations; and yet such actions may be rendered highly interesting in poetry. What was the nocturnal excursion of Diomed and Ulysses in the 10th book of the *Iliad*, in which they slew Rhesus, king of the Thracians, with many of his officers in their sleep, and brought away his beautiful horses? what was the enterprise of Nisus and Euryalus in the 9th book of the *Æneid*, in which they murdered so many in their sleep, and in which Euryalus, by taking from one of them his splendid helmet and belt was afterwards discovered by the moon gleaming on its polished surface, and the death of both occasioned by this spoil? These episodes are two of the finest in those immortal Epicks, yet it is only to the genius of Homer and Virgil, that they are indebted for more than may be found in several Indian adventures. (21-2)

14 Tudor's "elevation" of the Indians to the level of heroes of classical literature could also, of course, be seen, in this particular case at least, as a "lowering" of those same figures of Antiquity to the level of "savages." Since if thinkers like Adam Ferguson saw American Indians as a reflection in a mirror of their own ancestors of the Ancient World, the image they are ostensibly gazing at is still, nonetheless, that of the aborigines of North America. And though it is clear that Tudor's overt agenda in his address is to confer dignity on the native inhabitants of his country, there remains an implicit question, which comes very close to the surface in the preceding quotation, as to what extent the achievements of the heroes of the Ancient World could be seen, as Tudor puts it, as "savage in their character, and not admitted now in the practice of war among civilized nations."

15 Like Jefferson, Tudor also highlights Indian eloquence as an important attribute "raising" them again, so to speak, to the level of the ancients. He cites, for example, the remarks of Cadwallader Colden, the first colonial representative to the Iroquois Confederacy, concerning an Indian orator named Decanesora: "His person was tall and well made, and his features to my thinking, resembled much the busto's of Cicero" (25).[17] Tudor follows this quotation with the remark: "The speeches given by Homer to the characters in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, form some of the finest passages in those poems. The speeches of these Indians only want similar embellishment, to excite admiration" (26). Unlike the confident assertion of Jefferson concerning the quality of Logan's oration, Tudor does state here that a literary touch would be necessary to "elevate" Indian speeches to the level of Homer, since they are in "want" of "embellishment." But Homer, of course, "embellished" the speeches in his works, and thus the somewhat equivocal mirroring of heroes of Antiquity and Native Americans previously noted

appears here once again. It is the new country's rising authors, and not Native Americans, after all, whom Tudor's address is meant to recruit, inspire and guide, and who will have the essential role of the new national Homers. A similar example of this sort of ambiguity appears just after the passage quoted above, where Tudor gives a long sample of an oration by the Indian Garangula to the governor of Canada. He compares it to "the celebrated message of the Scythians to Alexander in Quintius Curtius," a speech, it will be recalled, which appeared in both Webster's *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking* and Bingham's *The American Preceptor* along with Logan's celebrated words. Garangula's oration, Tudor concludes, "affords materials, which, if they were drest in the style of the great Roman Historians, would vie with any that they have transmitted to us; indeed, its figurative language, pungent sarcasm, and lofty tone can hardly be surpassed" (28). Once again, the Indians provide a worthy subject, but it is American authors who will transform this useable past into a distinctive national literature.

16 Finally, it should be noted that if Tudor, like many literary nationalists of his day, was primarily thinking of America's coming national literature in terms of epic poetry or grand presentations of national history, that did not stop authors of literary prose works from making use of the relatively widespread suggestion, present either explicitly, in writings like Tudor's, or implicitly, in works like Jefferson's, Webster's or Bingham's, that a comparison between Native Americans and heroic figures of Antiquity could be a useful and, indeed, fertile element in the literature of the United States. Among many others, the two most successful American authors of the early decades of the nineteenth century, Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, did just that.

IV. Washington Irving: Early Linking of Indians and Antiquity in American Literature

17 Washington Irving was one of the first American literary writers to offer positive, and often romanticized, portrayals—sometimes indeed strong defenses—of Native Americans. Indeed, while there is some debate about how the author's attitude towards Indians did or did not evolve over the course of his career, Jason Almus Russell's assessment that "Irving acted as the literary defender, interpreter, and recording historian of the American Indian, as far as he had a knowledge of his history, or came into personal contact with the aborigine" (Russell, 1931, 194), though somewhat dated, still seems relatively fair, as least as concerns his earlier writings. Indeed, as far back as 1809, in *A History of New York*, Irving included an entire chapter criticizing the harsh treatment of the Indians by whites, through an ironic and sharply sarcastic defense of the whites' depredations. As Per Seyersted writes, "the author exposes, with an uncommon harshness, the particularly unpalatable truth about the white settlers' genocide of the original Americans and the concomitant seizure of their lands" (Seyersted, 1974, 17). Irving, Seyersted also points out, "often assumes the mask of a thoroughly bigoted white person, a speaker who sees so few positive qualities in the natives that he feels he has the right to exterminate them" (Seyersted, 1974, 20). At one point, Irving notes the Indians' apparent indifference to European notions of wealth, money and ambition. He then ironically comments:

> Now all these peculiarities, though in the unenlightened states of Greece, they would have entitled their possessors to immortal honour, as having reduced to practice those rigid and abstemious maxims, the mere talking about which, acquired certain old Greeks the reputation of sages and philosophers;—yet were they clearly proved in the present instance, to betoken a most abject and brutified nature, totally beneath the human character. (Irving, 1981 [1809], 414)

18 The tone, of course, is not too surprising, given that the work is a burlesque history of the Dutch colonial period in New York, but the passage does provide at least one early example in Irving's writings, and in American literature more generally, of Indians being defended, in part, through a comparison with the ancients, in this case, Greek philosophers, most likely the Cynics, who, in an effort to promote virtue, advocated the renouncement of worldly goods. However, as in some of the passages by Tudor examined above, Irving's comments cut in more than one direction. He "elevates" the Indians by comparing them favorably to Greek thinkers, even suggesting the Indians are superior since they actually practice what some of the ancients, according to Irving, only talked about. This comparison, however, seems to have the simultaneous effect of "lowering" the sages of Antiquity, whom Irving describes as living in "the unenlightened states of Greece" and appearing as hypocrites, who don't practice what they preach. But the passage's ambiguous message could also be read as presenting the values of both the Ancient World and Native Americans as relatively superior, in any case, to those of the Europeans of the early colonial period and, no doubt, of the Americans of Irving's own time.

19 It was in Irving's sketch, "Traits of Indian Character," first published in the *Analectic Magazine* in February 1814 and later incorporated into *The Sketch Book* (1820), that he produced one of American literature's first clear and strong presentations of Indians in a positive and idealized light, linked, in part, with Antiquity. The sketch's epigraph, and this should by now come as no surprise, is a short excerpt from Logan's speech as reported by Jefferson, though Irving does not identify his source. Indeed, by 1820,[18] he had no need to do so since the oration was familiar to just about every American. And apart from the epigraph, Irving praises Indian eloquence several times in this piece, noting, for example, that in councils organized to decide what sort of response should be made to injuries inflicted on a member of the tribe, "Eloquence and superstition combine to inflame the minds of the warriors. The orator awakens their martial ardour, and they are wrought up to a kind of religious desperation, by the visions of the prophet and the dreamer" (Irving, 1981 [1814, 1820], 1005). Here it should be noted, however, that in highlighting the combination of eloquence and superstition, Irving seems to establish a distinction between the logic-based Ciceronian rhetoric of Antiquity, so often seen as a model in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century America, and Indian oration, a distinction which Jefferson, for his part, did not make. Irving then follows his general comment with a "specimen of Indian eloquence" (1006), delivered by a sachem whose mother's tomb had been violated by whites. The author then makes a more direct link with Antiquity, just afterwards, when he notes that "The Indians had also the superstitious belief, frequent among barbarous nations, and prevalent also among the ancients, that the manes of their friends who had fallen in battle were soothed by the blood of the captives" (1007). The use of the word "manes" (whose primary definition is "the deified spirits of the ancient Roman dead honored with graveside sacrifices" [*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2008, 755]) links the Indians with Antiquity, as does the word "ancients," though the evocation of

"superstitious belief" adds an ambiguity to Irving's remarks, suggesting, once again, something "uncivilized" about both the Indians and the Ancients. One explanation, however, for this ambiguity in the parallels made between Indians and Antiquity, by both Irving and Tudor, can be found in their link with a Romantic outlook, which tended to cast a positive light on "primitive" peoples, whose "uncivilized" characteristics were part of what made them attractive as subjects for literature. Continuing the comparison with Antiquity, later in the sketch, Irving notes that "No hero of ancient or modern days can surpass the Indian in his lofty contempt of death, and the fortitude with which he sustains its cruelest infliction"(1009). The most significant example in "Traits of Indian Character," however, comes near the end, when Irving recounts the tragic story of the Pequot War of the 1630s, which resulted in the almost total annihilation of the tribe. As some of the last remaining Indians are surrounded by their Puritan adversaries and find themselves in a hopeless situation, they nonetheless refuse to surrender, choosing, instead, to die. Irving, quoting a seventeenth-century Puritan source (William Hubbard's *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New-England*), writes, "'the rest were left to the conquerors, of which many were killed in the swamp, like sullen dogs who would rather, in their self willedness and madness, sit still and be shot through, or cut to pieces,' than implore for mercy" (1010). Having recounted the gruesome details of this massacre, Irving comments,

> Can any one read this plain unvarnished tale, without admiring the stern resolution, the unbending pride, the loftiness of spirit, that seemed to nerve the hearts of these self-taught heroes, and to raise them above the instinctive feelings of human nature? When the Gauls laid waste the city of Rome, they found the senators clothed in their robes and seated with stern tranquility in their curule chairs; in this manner they suffered death without resistance or even supplication. Such conduct was, in them, applauded as noble and magnanimous; in the hapless Indian it was reviled as obstinate and sullen. How truly are we the dupes of show and circumstance! How different is virtue, clothed in purple and enthroned in state, from virtue naked and destitute, and perishing obscurely in a wilderness. (1011)

20 Here, the association between Indians and Antiquity is clearly positive, revealing what seems to be genuine admiration for members of both societies. This defense of Native Americans, however, contains the same ambiguity present in Tudor's presentation of them in relation to the trope of the "vanishing Indian," which Irving repeatedly evokes and which is linked throughout the sketch, at least implicitly, with Antiquity, which itself, of course, had already vanished. Indeed, in the last paragraph of the sketch, Irving laments the fact that the eastern tribes are already gone and that the others will inevitably follow. They are only likely to be saved for posterity, he remarks, as with Antiquity, in literature: "Or if, perchance, some dubious memorial of them should survive, it may be in the romantic dreams of the poet, to people in imagination his glades and groves, like the fauns and satyrs and sylvan deities of antiquity" (1012). The "vanishing Indian" trope can be seen as being intensified here, notably in its seemingly self-evident and tautological inevitability, by the reference not to historical figures of the Ancient World, but to mythological creatures and gods, who, of course, never existed in the first place.[19]

V. Washington Irving: Declining Comparisons between Indians and Antiquity in the Western Narratives of the 1830s

21 After the appearance of "Traits of Indian Character" and "Philip of Pokanoket" (see footnote 19), Irving did not return to Indians as a main theme for two decades. When he came back to the United States in 1832, after a seventeen-year absence, however, his apparent desire to reconnect with the land of his birth led him to publish three books on the American West, in all of which Indians figure prominently: *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), *Astoria* (1836) and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837). These three works could perhaps best be described as literary travel narratives, since if Irving's imaginative skills are clearly on display, all three are based, at least, on fact. The author's presentation of Indians is not unambiguously positive in these works, as it primarily was in his earlier writings, and it is because of this shift that Jason Almus Russell's assessment, quoted above, needs at least some qualification. It would probably be more accurate, in fact, to suggest, as does Robert L. Hough, that in the three western narratives Irving was on some occasions leaning towards a romanticized, and on others towards a less flattering, portrait of Native Americans. As Hough notes: "If the trapper lived a 'wild Robin Hood kind of life' certainly the Indian was equally romanticized—at least sometimes" (Hough, 1968-1969, 31). But, he adds, "Irving's romantic Indian should not be exaggerated. As in his ambivalence over the natural and civilized states he presented two positions" (Hough, 1968-1969, 32).[20]

22 The first of the three works, *A Tour on the Prairies*, was based on a trip Irving made out West just a few months after his arrival back in the United States, and it is the only one directly inspired by the author's own experience. None of the three books has a large number of references to Antiquity, but *A Tour on the Prairies* has the most. That Irving still had a strong tendency to romanticize at least some of the Indians he saw is clear early on in the text. Though in the very first chapter he describes certain tribes such as the Pawnees and Comanches as "warring and vindictive" (Irving, 2004 [1835], 13), in the second chapter a Creek Indian on horseback forms "a picturesque object, in unison with the wild scenery around him" (19). The Osages, however, seem to have most favorably impressed Irving, and they are the only Indians in the work explicitly linked to Antiquity. In one passage, he seems to transform them into Roman centurions:

> Their heads were bare, their hair was cropped close excepting a bristling ridge on the top like the crest of a helmet, with a long scalp lock hanging behind. They had fine Roman countenances, and broad deep chests, and, as they generally wore their blankets wrapped round their loins, so as to leave the bust and arms bare, they looked like so many noble bronze figures. (20)

23 And just two chapters later, Irving describes a young Osage "with the fine Roman countenance common to his tribe" (27). According to the author, "as he rode with his blanket wrapped round his loins his naked bust would have furnished a model for a statuary" (27). Irving later remarks that the same Indian, along with his horse, "would have formed studies for a painter or a statuary" (32). In the same chapter, a group of Osages are described as looking like "figures of monumental bronze" (35). And much later, one of a group of Osages is seen as having "a free and noble mien" (117), and Irving admires "the finely shaped heads and busts of these savages" (117), as if he were considering them as models for statues, or even imagining them as having already been

transformed into statues. All of Irving's aestheticizing comparisons between Indians and works of art, especially statues, paralleling and often closely linked with comparisons to Antiquity, it should be noted, are further examples of an indirect reinforcement of the trope of the "vanishing Indian," since "noble bronze figures," to recall just one of Irving's phrases, are no more alive—less so, in fact, one could argue—than heroes or gods of ancient times.

24 It could also be pointed out that one of the ironies of Irving's use of both explicit and implicit comparisons with Antiquity in this work is that he also claims, in the same text, to have realized just how false most literary presentations of Indians are. In chapter VII, he asserts: "the Indians that I have had an opportunity of seeing in real life are quite different from those described in poetry" (35). And a few lines later he states: "As far as I can judge, the Indian of poetical fiction is like the shepherd of pastoral romance, a mere personification of imaginary attributes" (36). Romanticism, of course, is relative. And, without going outside of Irving's own writings, one could maintain, as I have already suggested, that he is somewhat less Romantic in his depictions of Indians in *A Tour on the Prairies*—notably in the way he differentiates among the various tribes—than in the earlier sketches, though Romanticism there is, as is clear in his use of evocations of Antiquity.

25 *Astoria* and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* are somewhat different cases than *A Tour on the Prairies* since these two works were based largely on the journals, notes and letters of others and thus were not directly inspired by Irving's own experiences. *Astoria* recounts the history of John Jacob Astor's ultimately unsuccessful attempt, in the years just before the War of 1812, to develop the fur trade in Oregon and the Northwest, in competition with the British, while *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* is a rewriting of the papers of Benjamin Bonneville, which Irving purchased from the western explorer. The circumstances of the genesis of these two works, I would argue, result in narrative voices that are somewhat less free, tied, to a certain extent, to the points of view of Irving's various sources, which the author, in fact, frequently quotes. In any case, the tendency to romanticize Native Americans, while still present, is diminished in these works, and there are, in fact, few evocations of Antiquity. One example, though not concerning American Indians, confirms at least Irving's tendency to see "primitive" peoples like figures of Antiquity. This is how he describes the native Hawaiian islanders met by the men on one of Astor's ships on its long voyage from New York to the Pacific Northwest to bring supplies to another party that had taken the overland route (in the days, of course, before the Panama Canal):

> The Islanders are a comely race, of a copper complexion. [...] The men wore the Maro, a band one foot in width and several feet in length, swathed round the loins and formed of tappa, or cloth of bark; the Kihei or mantle, about six feet square, tied in a knot over one shoulder, passed under the opposite arm, so as to leave it bare, and falling in graceful folds before and behind, to the knee, so as to bear some resemblance to a Roman toga. (Irving, 2004 [1836], 229-30)

26 The narrative, however, also contains many accounts of the cruelty and lawlessness of members of various tribes, notably the Sioux, Blackfeet and Crow. Others, in contrast, including the Wallah Wallah[21] and Snake are described as friendly. The only direct reference linking Indians and Antiquity is when Irving describes an Arickara chief calling across a wide river to invite a party of whites to a council:

> The river was half a mile in width, yet every word uttered by the chieftain was heard. This may be partly attributed to the distinct manner in which every syllable

> of the compound words in the Indian languages is articulated and accented; but in truth a savage warrior might often rival Achilles himself for force of lungs. (344)

27 A multi-layered reinforcing of the trope of the "vanishing Indian" is once again present in this comparison. Achilles, of course, is not only a hero of Greek mythology (and thus not a historic figure who ever existed). He is also a character who is probably best known for having a vulnerable spot, his heel, which led directly to his death when he was shot by Paris, who hit him in that very place (with an arrow, no less). Besides this comparison, there are a few references to speeches made by various Native Americans, though Indian eloquence is not emphasized, with the only partial exception being the characterization of a Chinook chief's "spirited war speech to his son in law" (587).

28 The only explicit, though slight, reference to Antiquity, in the last of the three narratives, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, is in a brief description of Crow horsemen: "Nothing can be more spirited than a band of Crow cavaliers. They are a fine race of men, averaging six feet in height, lithe and active, with hawks' eyes and Roman noses" (Irving, 2004 [1837], 894). While there is no necessary link with Antiquity in this description since "Roman" can simply indicate a particular shape of nose, the polysemy of the adjective, along with the rest of the image, clearly suggests heroic Roman figures. And Irving's focus on physical beauty shows him, once again, seeing Indians aesthetically, as fit subjects for statuary. It should also be noted that this comparison is made despite the fact that the Crow, here as in *Astoria*, are depicted as warlike and predatory. Indeed, this work also includes both positive and negative characterizations of Indians (the Blackfeet and Crow, for example, are described as hostile, while the Nez Percé are said to be friendly). And there is occasional highlighting of Indian powers of oratory in *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, such as a reference to one Indian's "nervous eloquence" (719) and later to his "impassioned eloquence" (747), but these are not frequent. Irving even undermines, to a certain extent, the myth of Indian eloquence and use of lofty speech:

> though Indians generally are very lofty, rhetorical, and figurative in their language at all great talks, and high ceremonials, yet, if trappers and traders are to believed, they are the most unsavory vagabonds in their ordinary colloquies; they make no hesitation to call a spade a spade; and when they once undertake to call hard names, the famous pot and kettle, of vituperating memory, are not to be compared with them for scurrility of epithet. (894)

29 Indeed, by the time Irving wrote *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, it seems clear that he no longer saw the majority of Indians as measuring up to the heroes of Antiquity. Thus, as a preliminary conclusion, one would have to say that there is indeed a certain evolution in Irving's presentations of Indians from his *History of New York* and early sketches to his later narratives. If the author continues, throughout his works, to offer positive portrayals of Indians, they become less systematically romanticized and are accompanied by negative characterizations of other Indians. This change is reflected, in part, in the author's diminishing use of comparisons between Native Americans and Antiquity, including a reduced insistence on their supposed lofty oratory.

VI. James Fenimore Cooper: Indians and Antiquity in the Leatherstocking Tales of the 1820s

30 Another major American author of the early decades of the nineteenth century who frequently described Native Americans in his works is, of course, James Fenimore Cooper. The author returned again and again to the subject, and he relatively frequently evokes Antiquity in his descriptions of Indians, notably in his famous series of romances collectively known as the Leatherstocking Tales, which includes *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (1826), *The Prairie; A Tale* (1827), *The Pathfinder: or, The Inland Sea* (1840) and *The Deerslayer: or, The First War-Path* (1841).[22] In a similar fashion to the works of Irving considered above, there is a fairly large gap within this grouping. And, to a certain extent, once again, there is a reduction in the romanticizing of Indians over time, also reflected in a diminishing use of comparisons between Native Americans and Antiquity, though this development is not fully linear. While a detailed analysis of these five relatively long romances is beyond the scope of this study, I will try to characterize Cooper's use of references to the Ancient World in order to clarify how the author employed them in offering, in most cases, positive images of Indians. Before beginning, however, it would be well to recall that Cooper's Indians, somewhat like Irving's in his works of the 1830s, tend to fall into one of two categories: good ones and bad ones. In general, the Delawares (or Mohegans or Mohicans), exemplified by the central Indian hero, Chingachgook,[23] and his son, Uncas, are romanticized and portrayed in an extremely positive light, while, as John T. Frederick somewhat humorously points out, "the Iroquois, or Mingoes, as he called them following Heckewelder, are—as every boy used to know—the bad Indians in Cooper" (Frederick, 1968-1969, 1015).

31 Chingachgook appears for the first time in chapter VII of *The Pioneers*, though he is not a major character in that work. Cooper nonetheless notes, as the Indian is first introduced, that "His forehead, when it could be seen, appeared lofty, broad, and noble. His nose was high, and of the kind called Roman" (Cooper, 1985a [1823], 84). Several speeches by Chingachgook are also described in the romance, including a moving oration made as he dies in chapter XXXVI. Cooper makes an effort, both in this work and throughout the series, to put what are clearly intended as noble-sounding words into the mouths of his Indian characters, however successful or unsuccessful these attempts might be. Indeed, at least since 1895, when Mark Twain skewered him in his essay, "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," the author's reputation for dialogue and speech has not exactly been of the highest order. But if Twain declared that one of the "rules governing literary art" violated by Cooper was that "when the personages of a tale deal in conversation, the talk shall sound like human talk, and be talk such as human beings would be likely to talk in the given circumstances" (Twain, 1895, 2), Cooper's portrayal of speech, and specifically his portrayal of the words of Indians, does have its defenders. John T. Frederick, after making a thorough study of the author's sources, asserts, for example:

> Cooper did not, then, indulge his imagination freely and irresponsibly in putting figurative language into the mouths of his Indian characters. Still less did he float passively in the current of European literary tradition or imitate the language of English Romantic writers. Instead he followed diligently and consistently—faithful always to the spirit and usually to the letter—the most trustworthy firsthand

> accounts of actual Indian speech which the literature of the time afforded. (Frederick, 1968-1969, 1014)

32 He concludes: "The recurring charge that Cooper idealized and falsified his red men in this respect—that their eloquence was the product of his own imagination, or the effect of trans-Atlantic literary influence—is contrary to the facts" (Frederick, 1968-1969, 1017). Frederick, however, only claims to prove that Cooper was true to his sources on Indian speech, not necessarily to Indian speech as it actually existed either in the first decades of the nineteenth century or in the earlier periods portrayed in the Leatherstocking Tales. And the debate continues, as Lawrence Rosenwald, for his part, in more or less agreement with Twain, indicts Cooper for impoverishing Indian language in his representations of it. For Rosenwald, "Cooper makes Native American languages fascinating; but he also makes them something less than European languages and their speakers less than adult members of a complex culture" (Rosenwald, 1998, 22).

33 In any case, when Cooper wrote the second book in the series, *The Last of the Mohicans*, no doubt the most famous of the five, he placed Indians, notably Chingachgook and his son, Uncas, at the heart of the action. In this book, Indians, and the entire work as a whole, in fact, are associated with Antiquity in various ways. And the author was also thinking seriously about Indian language—again regardless of how accurate his notions of it were—as the introduction to the work makes clear.[24] Chingachgook's language is described as "earnest" (Cooper, 1985a [1826], 500); and, early on in the work, the Indian briefly recounts the first meeting between his tribe and white men, "with a solemnity that served to heighten its appearance of truth" (502). Even a "bad" Indian, like Magua, a Huron, is described as "speaking with the dignity of an Indian chief," using "those significant gestures with which an Indian always illustrates his eloquence" (591). In the mouth of a hostile Indian, however, this famed eloquence becomes dangerous. At one point, Magua is seen "gliding among his countrymen" like a snake "and speaking with his fatal and artful eloquence" (671). These various examples already suggest that, unlike Irving, Cooper's portrayal of Indians was ambiguous from the very start. Later still in *The Last of the Mohicans*, Hawk-eye, who was raised amongst the Delawares, "assumed the manner of an Indian, and adopted all of the arts of native eloquence" (700). This last example shows how some authors, like Cooper, no doubt influenced consciously or subconsciously by cultural nationalism, not only appropriated the Indian as a worthy subject for the new country's literature, but also attributed certain supposedly admirable qualities of Native Americans to selected members of the white population, thus helping to create, strengthen and celebrate distinctive national traits that contrasted with those of Europeans.

34 Recurring amidst all of this Indian eloquence are several references to Antiquity, lending legitimacy and sublimity to this very American story. Indeed, when Chingachgook's son, Uncas, first appears, he is seen by Alice, who is being escorted to Fort William Henry, where her father is commander, as "some precious relic of the Grecian chisel" (529), thus offering another comparison to statuary—once again an image that is dignified, but not suggestive of life. Also, like in Irving's "Traits of Indian Character," Cooper makes reference to the great respect that Indians have for the "manes" of their friends and relatives, using that term which recalls Antiquity four times in the book (576, 760, 788, 871). And even the Huron Magua, portrayed as an incarnation of evil, seems, for a while, to be able to escape every attempt on his life, "with that sort of fabled protection, that was made to overlook the fortunes of favoured

heroes in the legends of ancient poetry" (859). Linking the story to ancient statuary, literature and history, however, as should be clear by now, also has the ironic effect of both "elevating" the Indians and, at the same time, emphasizing the imaginary, and indeed "vanishing"/"vanished" aspect of these same subjects. Finally, another method Cooper employs to suggest a tie with Antiquity in *The Last of the Mohicans*, thus giving his entire work the prestigious aura of the great stories of the Ancient World, is through some of the epigraphs he places at the head of each chapter. These quotations include excerpts from Thomas Gray's *Agrippina, A Tragedy* (chapter IX), Alexander Pope's translation of *The Iliad* (chapters XXIV, XXIX & XXXII) and William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (chapter XXVII). From the point of view of cultural nationalism, these examples also include a significant ironic dimension, since in order to legitimize an American story, they make an implicit appeal not only to the classical world and its literature, but, since only British authors, in fact, are directly cited, also to the prestige of the literature of the very country the United States had only recently broken away from and whose culture it was the most urgently trying to distance itself from.

35 Cooper's third romance in the Leatherstocking series, *The Prairie*, is actually the last from the point of view of the chronological progression of the central character and is set in the early nineteenth century. Chingachgook is already dead before the romance begins, but there are a host of Indians who nonetheless make their appearance in the work. Paralleling Cooper's division in the earlier novels between the Delaware Indians, on the one hand, and the Iroquois (and Huron), on the other, in this work the Pawnee are generally portrayed in a positive light, while the Sioux are described as "demons," "miscreants" and "reptiles" (Cooper, 1985a [1827], 918-9). The Pawnee leader Hard-Heart is described as furnishing "some idea of the personal appearance of a whole race," and Cooper asserts that, "Would the truant eyes of Alston or Greenough turn, but for a time, from their gaze at the models of antiquity to contemplate this wronged and humbled people, little would be left for such inferior artists as ourselves to delineate" (1089).[25] Of Hard-Heart himself, Cooper writes: "The outlines of his lineaments were strikingly noble, and nearly approaching to Roman, though the secondary features of his face were slightly marked with the well-known traces of his Asiatic origin" (1089). Here, in fact, Cooper seems to want to have his Indian both ways: "elevated" through an association with Antiquity and "savage" through a reminder of his "Asiatic origin." As previously remarked, this dual nature can be seen as embracing a Romantic view that values the "uncivilized" appeal of "primitive" peoples. In *The Prairie*, too, there are frequent examples of Indian oratory, and though most of them are placed in the mouths of the hostile Sioux, oratory's sacred place in Indian culture is nonetheless recognized. One example of a speech given by Hard-Heart, however, offers a subtle, and indeed complex, link with the Ancient World. The young chief's address is not only delivered "in the usual, metaphorical language of an Indian," but it is noted that he began "by alluding to the antiquity and renown of his own nation" (1296). It thus has the eloquence of a classical oration; its very subject matter touches on the concept of "antiquity," with the polysemous nature of the word continuing the link between Indians and the Ancient World; and the mention of the word "nation," with its own ambiguity, creates a parallel between the Indian and American peoples—both of whom were concerned with the futures of their nations—completing the circle, so to speak, and thus "raising" not only the Indians, but the United States as well, to the level of Ancient Greece and Rome, a fundamental aspiration, in fact, of the cultural nationalists.

VII. James Fenimore Cooper: Declining Comparisons between Indians and Antiquity in the Leatherstocking Tales of the 1840s

36 There is a thirteen-year gap between the publication of *The Prairie* and the next work in the Leatherstocking series, *The Pathfinder*, which takes the reader to a period of time between the events described in *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Prairie*. There are very few references to Antiquity in this work. Arrowhead, however, a Tuscarora who serves as a guide for Charles Cap and Mabel Dunham, is described as "one of those noble-looking warriors that were often met with among the aborigines of this continent a century since" (Cooper, 1985b [1840], 13), though he turns out to be a traitor. And when Davy Muir, a quartermaster who himself betrays the British, tries to convince Mabel to surrender to Arrowhead, he makes the claim that the Indian reminds him of "a Roman, or a Spartan, by his virtues and moderation," but that he could also prove dangerous since he may feel the need "to appease the manes of fallen foes" (378). These references, of course, create a certain tension in their association with a hostile Indian and a traitorous British soldier, but they do continue the link between Indians and Antiquity.[26] In fact, they may be seen as highlighting once again just how ambiguous the strategy of associating Indians with the Ancient World can be. As already noted, if such links can "elevate" the Indian, they can also highlight his "savageness" as a member of a "primitive" people.

37 The last work in the series is *The Deerslayer*, which is also the first one chronologically in the lives of Leather-stocking and Chingachgook. It describes events that take place just before those presented in *The Last of the Mohicans*, as the tensions leading up to King George's War (the third of the French and Indian wars, known in Europe as the War of Austrian Succession) are beginning. The hostile Indians in this story are the Hurons, who have not only sided with the French, but have also kidnapped Chingachgook's betrothed. Indeed, as the Delaware works out his plan to recover his wife-to-be, there is a reference to Antiquity in his description as "an Apollo of the wilderness" (Cooper, 1985b [1841], 716). While on the surface this association is no doubt another effort to "elevate" the Indian, it may also be viewed as a further example of the ambiguity of many of the characterizations of Native Americans as figures of Antiquity since, as Marcel Detienne has shown, Apollo displayed traits of excessive and vengeful violence in addition, for example, to being recognized as a god of music and poetry and an embodiment of order, knowledge and harmony.[27] Furthermore, the deliberate melding of the American and the Indian through the use of comparisons with Antiquity can also be seen in this romance when Deerslayer makes a desperate effort to escape from the Hurons "that would have rendered a Roman illustrious throughout time" (770). Here, as seen in previous examples, a reference to Antiquity serves to link Indians and white Americans, creating a web of associations whose primary goal is to culturally "elevate" them both. Later in the romance, one of the Hurons is said to be "the model of a naked and beautiful statue of agility and strength" (820), and even the fading light of day, over the lake, casts "a glow that bore some faint resemblance to the warm tints of an Italian or Grecian sunset" (862-3)—but it is Chingachgook, once again, who is cast into the role of a hero of Antiquity when, as Leather-stocking leaves to keep his pledge of honor to surrender himself to the Hurons, the Delaware draws "the light blanket he

wore over his head, as a Roman would conceal his grief in his robes" (940). Finally, when Chingachgook makes his dramatic attempt to save Leather-stocking, he is clothed in "his war dress, which scarcely left him more drapery than an antique statue" (17). The final work also includes several references to Native American oratory. And if none of these examples are explicitly linked to Antiquity, it should be clear by now that the connection between the two is implicit throughout Cooper's works—and American writings of the early nineteenth century more generally. As was the case with Irving, Cooper had more of a propensity to romanticize Indians, notably through comparisons with various aspects of the Ancient World, in his earlier works than in his later ones. But he nonetheless made use of that association, in varying degrees, throughout the entire Leatherstocking series.

Conclusion

38 The tendency to compare Indians with heroes, gods, statues and, perhaps especially, orators of Antiquity was relatively widespread in American culture and literature—and certainly in the works of Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper—in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The phenomenon was more pronounced in the period from the War of 1812 (or just before) to around the end of the 1820s and then seems to have tapered off. It is likely that one reason for this change, notably in Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), *Astoria* (1836) and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837) and Cooper's *The Pathfinder* (1840) and *The Deerslayer* (1841), is the policy of Indian Removal, formalized by the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and the related tensions involved in implementing that act, which, among other things, made it painfully clear that all of the Native Americans—including those east of the Mississippi River—had not, in fact, "vanished." Indeed, as John McWilliams suggests, the ambiguity of Cooper's portrayal of Indians in *The Last of the Mohicans*, for example, can be seen as both supporting and criticizing the growing movement for removal, which was already being widely discussed by the time the book was first published in 1826 (McWilliams, 1998, 419-20). Cooper's romance, in fact, seems to embed that fierce debate within its story. And the same thing could be said, to a certain extent, about the other works I have discussed from the period before the end of the 1820s. Once the Indian Removal Act was passed, it may have been more difficult to maintain that same ambiguity, at least in the same way.

39 The comparisons between Native Americans and Antiquity, however, had begun long before they had started to be integrated into the works of more purely literary writers. The association between Indians and Greek and Roman orators, as far as that aspect is concerned, was, from the beginning, so insistent and so sustained that Indian speeches as presented in works of early nineteenth-century American literature became almost a code, or shorthand, for the type of nobility associated with Antiquity. A large part of the motivation for the comparisons between Indians and the Ancient World more generally was undoubtedly to give legitimacy to the use of the subject of Native Americans in the literature of the United States. And yet this strategy, as I have tried to demonstrate, contains various fundamental ambiguities at its very heart. Prestigious European history and high culture were used to legitimize a distinctively American subject for the nascent "home literature," one aim of which, at least for cultural nationalists, was to highlight its independence from European literature. Indians,

portrayed as linked to the Ancient World, became useful literary material in part because, like Antiquity itself, they were seen as belonging to a "vanished," and thus perhaps more useable, past, which, unfortunately for them, risked masking the real-world tensions related to their on-going destruction. The Romantic interest in "primitive" peoples can also be seen as sometimes tending to highlight a certain distance between both the Ancient World and the Indians, on the one hand, and the "civilized" world of contemporary America, on the other. Thus, the frequent comparisons between Indians and Antiquity in early nineteenth-century American literature, though largely inspired by a desire to "elevate" the status of Native Americans as subjects for that literature had at times, in part, the opposite effect, creating a paradoxical image that "lowered" as well as "elevated" their prestige. In the end, both tendencies reinforced the trope of the "vanishing Indian" and, no doubt, helped justify American actions that resulted in bringing that constructed image, and implicit prophecy, closer to fulfillment.

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NOTES

1. James Ruppert, for his part, concurs with these characterizations, noting: "Between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, the Indian held a central place in American literature and art, a position he has yet to regain" (Ruppert, 1996, 386).

2. One could, of course, add the myth of the Noble Savage to these two trends, though that phenomenon can be seen, to a certain extent, as being encompassed by the Romantic Movement, which often highlighted the supposed dignified simplicity, closeness to nature and character uncorrupted by civilization of "primitive" peoples. The myth, however, can be traced back to well before the Romantic Movement, in fact, to the earliest years of European colonization of the American continents. Ter Ellingson, for example, whose in-depth study highlights the problematic nature of the very concept of the myth of the Noble Savage, suggests that it may have originated in Marc Lescabot's ethnological studies of the Indians of eastern Canada first published in 1609 (Ellingson, 2001, 12-13). Still, as Berkhofer points out, "In the English colonies the literary and ideological use of the Noble Savage came on the scene only during the Revolutionary era" (Berkhofer, 1979, 76).

3. This ironic phenomenon is actually quite common in postcolonial cultures attempting to define themselves as distinct and different from that of their former "mother countries." As Seamus Deane points out, simplifying somewhat, "Nationalism, cultural or political, is no more than an inverted image of the colonialism it seeks to replace" (Deane, 1991, xxv).

4. The original French (which I have not modernized or corrected) reads: "Je ne me suis pas contenté de connoître le caractere des Sauvages, & de m'informer de leurs coûtumes & de leurs pratiques, j'ai cherché dans ces pratiques & dans ces coûtumes des vestiges de l'Antiquité la plus reculée; j'ai lû avec soin ceux des Auteurs les plus anciens qui ont traitté des Mœurs, des Loix, & des Usages des Peuples dont ils avoient quelque connoissance; j'ai fait la comparaison de ces Mœurs les unes avec les autres, & j'avouë que si les Auteurs anciens m'ont donné des lumieres pour appuyer quelques conjectures heureuses touchant les Sauvages, les Coûtumes des Sauvages m'ont donné des lumieres pour entendre plus facilement, & pour expliquer plusieurs choses qui sont dans les Auteurs anciens" (Lafitau, 1724, 3-4).

5. "Dans la description des Mœurs des Ameriquains, le parallelle avec les Anciens est toûjours soûtenu, parce qu'il n'y a pas un seul trait des mœurs de ceux-là qui n'ait son exemple dans l'Antiquité" (Lafitau, 1724, 18).

6. Printed privately in France in 1785, the first public edition of *Notes on the State of Virginia* appeared in England in 1787.

7. As Jefferson indicates in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, the main European proponent of the relatively popular theory of degeneration—whose ideas Jefferson sought to counter with specific examples from his home state—was Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon (1707-1788). What was probably even more aggravating for Americans like Jefferson is that some Europeans tended to extend the theory of degeneration to include not only indigenous fauna (including Indians), but also Americans of European descent and their entire culture, including scientific and literary works.

8. The text of Logan's speech, as reported by Jefferson, is as follows: "I appeal to any white man to say, if ever he entered Logan's cabin hungry, and he gave him not meat; if ever he came cold and naked, and he clothed him not. During the course of the last long and bloody war, Logan remained idle in his cabin, an advocate for peace. Such was my love for the whites, that my countrymen pointed as they passed, and said, 'Logan is the friend of white men.' I had even thought to have lived with you, but for the injuries of one man. Col. Cresap, the last spring, in cold blood, and unprovoked, murdered all the relations of Logan, not sparing even my women and children. There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This called on me for revenge. I have sought it: I have killed many: I have fully glutted my vengeance. For my country, I rejoice at the beams of peace. But do not harbour 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" (Jefferson, 1984 [1785], 188-89). The history of Logan's speech is complex and not totally clear. Furthermore, as Arnold Krupat points out, it wasn't actually a speech, but rather a written message sent to Lord Dunmore by Logan, who had refused to meet with the governor in person (Krupat, 2012, 62-63). The additional fact that the text was a translation, possibly from Cayuga, only further complicates the matter. In the context of this study, however, these aspects need not be overly insisted upon since what is important is Jefferson's desire to present Logan's words as an example of dignified Native American oratory, comparable to that of the greatest of the ancients. Indeed, Logan's speech offers an early example of the kind of transformation and "elevating" of the image of Indians that literary authors would engage in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

9. As Eran Shalev notes, "many indicators suggest that the world of classical antiquity was becoming meaningful after 1750 to growing numbers of North Americans. Contemporaries certainly felt so. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, thought that the entirety of the white male yeomanry, which he considered the backbone of American society, consisted of potential classical discoursers. [...] The foundations of what would become, in the words of the historian Caroline Winterer, a 'culture of classicism' during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were as old as settlement in North America" (Shalev, 2009, 10).

10. Both of these works went through multiple editions and numerous printings. Chief Logan's speech, along with Jefferson's account of its historical context, had been incorporated into Webster's work by 1802 and into Bingham's by 1811. My focus in this article is on the early decades of the nineteenth century, but it should be noted that Logan's speech was later included in the even more successful series of McGuffey's readers that dominated the school market in the second half of the century. It appears, for example in the 1857 and 1866 editions of *McGuffey's New Fifth Eclectic Reader* (McGuffey, 1857 & 1866, 324-325 in both editions), though not in earlier editions such as that of 1844, entitled *McGuffey's Rhetorical Guide; or Fifth Reader, of the Eclectic Series*, or that of 1853, entitled *McGuffey's Newly Revised Rhetorical Guide; or Fifth Reader of the Eclectic Series*.

11. Both works credit Jefferson as their source in their tables of contents. The later reprintings of Logan's speech in *McGuffey's New Fifth Eclectic Reader* (see previous footnote) do include Jefferson's comparison of the Indian's speech to the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero (McGuffy, 1857 & 1866, 324 in both editions).

12. *The Columbia Orator* is probably best known today because it is mentioned in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) as a source for Douglass both of general instruction in reading and elocution and, more specifically, of arguments against slavery. *The Columbia Orator* was first published in 1797 and, like *An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking* and *The American Preceptor*, went through many editions and printings.

13. This Indian oration had been incorporated into the work no later than the edition of 1800.

14. As Eran Shalev points out, "American Whigs found the classics so appealing because they perceived the ancient republics as the origin and embodiment of some of the most powerful ideals they cherished—namely, the ideological bundle modern scholarship understands under the common framework of "the republican synthesis" (Shalev, 2009, 5). Furthermore, he explains, it was Rome that "enticed [...] revolutionaries' political imagination and historical inquisitiveness more than any other historical society" (Shalev, 2009, 5). This fascination with the Ancient World continued throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and, to a certain extent, well beyond it. The inclusion of Cato's speech in Bingham's work is especially telling since the story of the Roman tribune's opposition to Julius Caesar's rise to power was very well known in America during the colonial and early national periods, notably through Joseph Addison's play *Cato*, which "was widely produced and quoted by Americans in a revolutionary context" and "had become a symbol of colonial resistance to British tyranny" (Litto, 1966, 440). The figure of Cato was still widely enough familiar by mid-century for Herman Melville to include a reference to him in the opening paragraph of *Moby-Dick*, published in 1851, in which Ishmael declares: "With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship" (Melville 1988 [1851], 3).

15. William Tudor (1779-1830) graduated from Harvard in 1796. His interest in literature led him to help found the *North American Review* in 1815. He was its first editor and contributed many of the articles to its first volumes.

16. This projection of the Indians into the past, as early as 1815, was, at least in part, fanciful, though it did have the advantage, as has already been suggested, of avoiding bothersome political questions and, no doubt, helping to ease American consciences as the spoliation and massacre of the continent's first inhabitants continued.

17. Colden's *History of the Five Indian Nations* was first published in two parts, in 1727 and 1747.

18. The epigraph was added to the piece in 1820 when it was incorporated into the first book-form publication of *The Sketch Book*.

19. "Philip of Pokanoket," a companion piece to "Traits of Indian Character," was also first published in the *Analectic Magazine* in 1814 before being included in *The Sketch Book*, and it, too, presents Indians, and most notably its central figure, Philip of Pokanoket, or King Philip, as the Puritans called him, as heroic figures. Once again, romanticized Noble Savages, referred to early in the sketch as "native untaught heroes" (Irving, 1981 [1814, 1820], 1014), comparable to heroes of Antiquity, come to life on the pages of this sketch, and there is praise for Indian oratory. Irving does not, however, use any specific references to the Ancient World in this sketch. See Niemeyer, "As Monumental Bronze Unchanged his Look": Washington Irving's 'Philip of Pokanoket.'"

20. For Per Seyersted, the break between the early sketches and the later narratives is fairly strong. He writes: "Though he in his three books of the 1830s—written when he had gained personal experience of the Indians—still gives a rather favorable picture of them and still exposes the white men as the instigator of frontier trouble, he is much softer in his criticism of his fellow whites. [...] Whatever the reason, these later treatments of the original Americans mark a sad anticlimax for a writer who started out as one of America's strongest critics of his countrymen's merciless robbing and killing of the Indians" (Seyersted, 1974, 27). However, doubts such as those expressed by Seyersted are attacked, to a certain extent, by Daniel F. Littlefield, who asserts: "throughout his works, Irving is consistent in his attitude toward the Indian. Because he realized that the Indian's existence depended on a fragile relationship with the land the Indian occupied,

Irving predicted the Indian's destruction in the wake of American progress, and he regretted that destruction. His later works graphically portray fulfillment of his early prediction. He was anxious to 'fix on record' the Indian and his habits so that Americans of his generation and of the future would not be too quick to generalize about the Indian's character or his condition. While in some modern readers' views Irving may have fallen short in his literary treatment of the Indians, his attitude toward them, when taken wholly and placed in the context of some of his other non-Indian works, seems intelligent and enlightened for his time" (Littlefield, 1979, 152). There is, no doubt, truth in both of these assessments, which do not, in fact, really contradict each other, and an examination of Irving's explicit and implicit references to Antiquity in his three western narratives can help clarify the situation somewhat.

21. The English spellings of the names of many Indian tribes have changed over the years. Here, I have followed Irving's usage.

22. The Leatherstocking Tales take their name from the central character whose life ties together all five romances, Nathaniel (or Natty) Bumppo, also known as the Leather-stocking. This simple, honest and good-hearted white man, a sharpshooter and expert woodsman, who was raised by the Delaware Indians, is also referred to as Hawk-eye, Pathfinder and Deerslayer. It should be noted that the unfolding of the history of Natty Bumppo's life does not proceed sequentially in the order of the publication of the five works. The chronological development of his career is portrayed in the romances in following order: *The Deerslayer: or, The First War-Path* (1841), *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (1826), *The Pathfinder: or, The Inland Sea* (1840), *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale* (1823) and *The Prairie; A Tale* (1827).

23. In his apparent desire for exoticism, Cooper did not provide the reader with an easily pronounceable name for his Indian hero. A clue, however, to the pronunciation of Chingachgook's name, which, according to Cooper, can be translated as "Great Snake" (Cooper, 1985a [1823], 84) or, more colloquially, as "Big Sarpent" (Cooper, 1985a [1823], 154) is given in *The Deerslayer*. In chapter XIII, upon seeing the Indian, Hist, Chingachgook's bride-to-be, who at that point barely knows him, carefully pronounces his name, which is repeated by Hetty, a young white girl: "'Chin—gach—gook—' pronouncing the name slowly, and dwelling on each syllable —'Great Sarpent, Yengeese tongue.' "'Chin—gach—gook—' repeated Hetty, in the same deliberate manner. 'Yes, so Hist called it, and you must be the chief'" (Cooper, 1985b [1841], 712). Mark Twain famously joked that Chingachgook's name is "pronounced Chicago, I think" (Twain, 1895, 4).

24. Cooper's asserts, for example: "The imagery of the Indian, both in his poetry and in his oratory, is Oriental,—chastened, and perhaps improved, by the limited range of his practical knowledge. He draws his metaphors from the clouds, the seasons, the birds, the beasts, and the vegetable world. In this, perhaps, he does no more than any other energetic and imaginative race would do, being compelled to set bounds to fancy by experience; but the North American Indian clothes his ideas in a dress which is different from that of the African, and is oriental in itself. His language has the richness and sententious fulness of the Chinese. He will express a phrase in a word, and he will qualify the meaning of an entire sentence by a syllable; he will even convey different significations by the simplest inflexions of the voice" (Cooper, 1985a [1826], 473).

25. Cooper refers here to two prominent American artists of the time, the painter Washington Alston (1779-1843) and the sculptor Horatio Greenough (1805-1852). Though the writer admired both men (his modesty in the passage is probably not entirely false), here his reference to Antiquity cuts in two directions, lending prestige to the Indians while, at the same time, implicitly suggesting that these two artists might be well advised to focus a bit more on portraying distinctively American subjects—like Indians.

26. It is also worth mentioning that friendship between Leather-stocking and Chingachgook is insisted on more explicitly in *The Pathfinder* than in any of the other works. At one point, Leather-stocking refers to the Delaware as his "best and most tried friend" (Cooper, 1985b, 77) and soon

after declares: "He knows I love him, and that I speak well of him behind his back" (79). Indeed, the closeness between the two can be seen as a theme that reinforces Cooper's other efforts to legitimize the Indian as a figure in American literature. The friendship, or even love, between Leather-stocking and Chingachgook "elevates" the Indian, so to speak, to the social level of the white American. At the same time, by insisting on the closeness of the relationship, it reinforces, in part, the idea that the Indian really is, also, an American, an integral part (at least symbolically) of the new nation, and that the American really is like the Indian, with distinctively native traits that distinguish him from non-Americans, notably the British.

27. As Detienne recalls, Apollo, often seen in a purely positive light—as the god who encouraged Socrates to follow a "philosophical" life, the god of Pythagoras and the sage speaking in the name of the Pythian—was also a strong, violent figure who could be cruel, as when he shot Niobe's sons full of arrows or flayed Marsyas alive after a musical contest (Detienne, 2009, 10-11).

ABSTRACTS

This article examines the comparisons made between Indians and Antiquity in early nineteenth-century American literature (notably in the works of Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper); to do so, it begins by reaching back to references in European and American writings of the eighteenth century. One of the main motivations behind the associations between Native Americans and the Ancient World made in the early decades of the nineteenth century was to "elevate" Indians in order to transform them into worthy symbols of the recently established United States. Such associations also rendered them suitable subjects for treatment by authors inspired to a large extent by the Romantic Movement and involved in the project of creating a national literature for the new country. Bringing together these two quite different worlds, however, resulted in various ambiguities: it simultaneously reinforced the suggestion that Indians were already part of the past (providing a certain complicity with the continuing destruction of Indian culture) and questioned the then dominant image of Ancient Greece and Rome as examples of some of the highest levels attainable of government and human civilization.

Cet article examine les comparaisons faites entre les Indiens et l'Antiquité dans la littérature américaine des premières décennies du XIX^{e} siècle (notamment dans les œuvres de Washington Irving et de James Fenimore Cooper), entreprise qui suppose au préalable une exploration de ce type d'allusions dans des textes européens et américains du XVIII^{e} siècle. Ces associations entre les Amérindiens et le monde antique visaient entre autres à « élever » les Indiens pour en faire des symboles dignes de la jeune nation américaine, mais aussi des sujets appropriés pour des auteurs fortement influencés par le Romantisme qui cherchaient à faire émerger une littérature nationale. Le rapprochement entre ces mondes n'est cependant pas dépourvu d'ambiguïtés: il suggère que les Indiens appartenaient déjà au passé (entérinant ainsi le processus de destruction de la culture indienne alors en cours) et interroge l'idée alors dominante selon laquelle la Grèce et la Rome antiques incarnaient des formes parmi les plus accomplies de gouvernement et de civilisation.

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