

Navigating the Colonial Discourse in Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of The Mohicans*

Saddik M. Gohar

English Literature Department United Arab Emirates University

P.O.BOX 15551 Alain City, United Arab Emirates

Email: s.gohor@uaeu.ac.ae

Abstract Within the framework of postcolonial studies of Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi Edward Said, the paper critically examines the entanglements of colonial and racial trajectories in *The Last of the Mohicans* in order to subvert traditional critical assumptions which categorized the novel as an adventure story or Indian Romance or travel narrative affiliated with a multi-ethnic frontier community. Negotiating the dynamics of colonialism, through the economy of its central trope, the Manichean allegory which creates boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, the paper argues that Cooper's novel, modeled on seventeenth-century captivity narratives, aims to exterminate or marginalize the indigenous American subaltern or associate him/her with a status of cultural decadence and savagery. The paper also illustrates that Cooper's fiction blends the legacies of the colonized and the colonizer to reconstruct a biased narrative integral to the author's vision of the confrontations between the native Indian community and the European settlers during the American colonial era. Reluctant to introduce a balanced view of the situation on the western frontier, Cooper emphasizes crucial colonizer / colonized constructs engaging cultural trajectories which lead to conflict rather than dialogue between both sides.

Key words Colonial; racial; captivity narrative; savagery; civilization; native; settlers.

Author **Saddik Gohar** is Professor and Chair of the English Literature Department, UAE University. Dr. Gohar has published extensively on comparative literature, literary theory and American literature in renowned journals such as *Middle East Critique*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Primerjalna Knjizevnost*, *Acta Neophilologica*, and *Mediterranean Review*.

Introduction

In his scrutiny of the history of colonization, Cornelius Castoriadis points that thirty five percent of the earth's surface was owned by Europeans in 1800 and sixty seven percent was controlled by Europe in 1878. From 1878 to 1914, the period of "the new imperialism," more than eighty five percent of the globe was under western domination. He concludes by affirming that from a historical perspective, "the earth has been unified by means of western violence" (Castoriadis 200). In a related context, Ricky Lee Allen argues that after five hundred years, Europeans are not able to achieve the status of "civilized beings" because "our history was in reality, not a narrative about the evolution of civilization but rather a myth that masks our perpetual state of savagery and dehumanization vis-à-vis direct and indirect forms of genocide and institutional violence."¹ Affiliating European civilization with violence and imperialism, Allen demonstrates that "the tough reality to face is that we whites, as a people, have yet to move from savagery to civilization. Our notion of civilization is part of a dream state that keeps us unconscious of and complacent within our necrophilic desires. Meanwhile, we project our true selves into others" (Allen 479).

Historically, the fever of colonialism became infectious, in the nineteenth-century, particularly after the success of the exploratory invasions led by Christopher Columbus. Consequently, other European nations rushed to emulate Columbus. In colonial literary works, the conquistadors or the conquerors usually enslaved the natives exploiting their bodies and lands. In the very beginning of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese began to depopulate Labrador, transporting the now extinct Boethuk Indians to Europe and Cape Verde as slaves. After the British established beachheads on the Atlantic Coast of North America, they encouraged Coastal Indian tribes to capture and sell members of more distant tribes. Charleston, South Carolina, became a major port for exporting Indian slaves and the Puritan pilgrims sold the survivors of the Pequot war into slavery in Bermuda in 1637. Likewise, the French shipped virtually the entire Natchez nation in chains to the West Indies in 1731 (Loewen 65). James Loewen also points out that after the extermination of the indigenous Indians, the European settlers started the persecution of the black people. According to him "Indian slavery, then led to the massive slave trade to the other way across the Atlantic, from Africa"(65).

The western mythology about the Indians which provided justifications for their genocide dated back to Columbus. Reporting (that he was told) that on an island called "Carib" — a southern Caribbean island- there were vicious people

who “ate human flesh,”² Columbus started “the line of savage images of the Indian as not only hostile but depraved” (Berkhofer 7). The vision of Columbus, according to Stanley Rope, solidified many of the cultural misconceptions affiliated with western mythology³. For example, native Indians in Rope’s view are constructed in American culture as “truly wild men of the lowest order, clearly beyond the pale of civilization” (45).

Upon his second trip to the Caribbean in (1493), King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain provided Columbus with more men, seventeen ships”canons, crossbows, guns, cavalry and attack dogs” (Loewen 61). According to traditional and standard history, Columbus wanted to prove that the earth was not flat and find a western route to the East. However, historians did not capture the pernicious consequence suffered by the non-white people who encountered Columbus during his voyage and new discoveries. Therefore, the omission of the ignoble deeds of Columbus from textbooks bespeaks a form of ideological revisionism.

In a related context, King Ferdinand entrusted Columbus with a letter to be given to the indigenous Taino / Arawak Indians. The letter stipulated that they must acknowledge the authority of the King and the Christian religion or face painful consequences. The following is an extract from King Ferdinand’s letter: “Should you not comply, or delay maliciously in so doing, we assure you that with the help of God, we shall use force against you declaring war upon you from all sides and with all possible means, and we shall bind you to the Yoke of the Church and of the Highnesses. We shall enslave your persons, wives and sons, sell you or dispose of you as the King sees fit. We shall seize your possessions and harm you as much as we can as disobedient and resisting vassals” (Ferdinand 10).

Explicitly, colonialism resulted in a devastating impact on the indigenous people⁴ as reflected in the letter of King Ferdinand. According to L.R. Gordon, the natives had their limbs cut off, women killed their children to avoid having them oppressed, natives killed themselves in mass suicides, many suffered from malnutrition, massive depopulation occurred, native female sex slaves ages nine to ten, were in demand by the Spaniards. Their young bodies were raped and invaded. As indigenous bodies were murdered and degraded “European modernity’s self-reflection prefers to look at that moment as an age of exploration, as an age of courage, fortitude, and faith” (Gordon 2). It is known that after the arrival of Columbus in Haiti, the native Arawak Indians were brutally persecuted. When a native commits a minor offense, the Spanish invaders “cut off his ears or nose⁵. Disfigured, the person was sent back to his village as living evidence of the brutality the Spaniards were capable of” (Loewen 61).

The Arawaks were not able to fight Columbus who had horses, cannons, crossbows and attack dogs “who were turned loose and immediately tore the Indians apart”(Loewen 61). Historically, the Spaniards also hunted the natives for sport and “murdered them for dog food” (Loewen 62). In a similar context, Frantz Fanon argues that “European civilization and its best representatives are responsible for colonial racism” (Fanon 90) sanctioned by the dynamic process of interpellation where the colonizer/colonized connection becomes fixed through processes of affirmation / negation respectively. Through the process of ideological structuring, the colonizer and the colonized are deemed opposites in an ontologically hierarchal/structural relationship. The former is deemed naturally superior and the latter is considered to be naturally inferior and fit for domination. Being enslaved by this inferior/superior dialectics, both colonized and colonizer “behave in accordance with aneurotic orientation” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 60). Further, colonialism, from a politico-economic perspective, was sustained by material forces. In addition to the economic and political dimensions of colonialism, both colonized and colonizer undergo existential/phenomenological nullification through processes of western ideological formations.

Discussing the phenomenological and existential aspects of colonization, Robin Kelly demonstrates that “colonial domination required a whole way of thinking, a discourse in which everything that is advanced, good, and civilized, is defined and measured in European terms” (Kelly 27). Ostensibly, European colonialism is a form of deep existential trauma and a physical / psychological murder. As messianic and imperialistic phenomenon, it apparently includes dispossession, oppression and displacement. Colonialist practice ranges from the complete genocide of indigenous nations and / or the deracination of a native people from their land (who are then taken to foreign lands to work as slaves, controlled, disciplined, policed and inculcated to think of themselves as sub-humans) to colonial occupation resulting in the disruption and devastation of the “lived” cultural teleological space of native people in addition to the demolition of their ways of life.

From a Euro-centric perspective, the colonial project is part of European humanism which aims to civilize the uncivilized population⁶ of the world, but the core of Euro-humanism was exclusionary. In other words, Euro-humanism was a culturally and racially politicized humanism, its conception of the human functioned as an ideological category, a category in the name of which violence toward the Other (the sub-human/ the non-human) could be enacted with little or no remorse. Once faced with “the striptease of our European humanism,” says Jean-Paul Sartre, this humanism stands naked “and it is not a pretty sight. It was nothing

but an ideology of lies, a perfect justification for pillage, its honeyed words, its affection of sensibility were only alibis for our aggression” (Sartre 24-25). In a related scenario, Fanon states: when (we) search for Man in the technique and style of Europe (we) see only a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders” (Fanon, *The Wretched* 312). Moreover, Sartre, in his preface to Fanon’s *The Wretched of The Earth*, argues that “the European has only been able to become a man only through creating slaves and monsters” (quoted in Yancy 1).

Since Euro-humanism was grounded within the ideology of whiteness⁷, its conception of the “human” must be rejected as it is a form of anti-humanism. In the face of a pernicious and racist ontology of the “human, with its misanthropic axiological frames of reference,” it is no wonder that “the native laughs in mockery when western values are mentioned in front of him” (Fanon, *The Wretched* 43). The irony is that the concept of universal humanism was shaped through an ideology of exclusion⁸ and misanthropy. The development of ideas regarding the nature of humanity and “the universal qualities of the human mind as the common good of an ethical civilization occurred at the same time as those particularly violent centuries in the history of the world now known as the era of western colonialism” (Young, *White Mythologies* 160).

The colonialist desire for wealth, with its logic of centralization of power, and its selectivity regarding who and what is deemed “human” mocked universal humanism which AimeCesaire terms “Pseudo-humanism.” He maintains that “for too long Pseudo-humanism has diminished the right of man, that its concept of those rights has been-and still-is narrow and fragmentary, incomplete and biased and all things considered, sordidly racist” (Cesaire 15). Fanon is also cognizant of Europe’s hypocrisy with regard to its own professed humanism. In the same vein, Fanon criticizes Europe’s incessant “taking of Man, and where they never stopped proclaiming that they were only anxious for the welfare of Man: today we know with what suffering humanity has paid for every one of their triumphs of the mind” (Fanon, *The Wretched* 312).

In a similar context, George Fredrickson states that “social inequality based on birth was (historically) the general rule among Europeans themselves” (Fredrickson 54). In Europe, the Irish were characterized as savages and the Jews were viewed as having committed Deicide. Moreover, the Greek distinguished themselves from those that they deemed “barbarians.” Fredrickson observes that “the prejudice and discrimination directed at the Irish on one side of Europe and certain Slavic people on the other foreshadowed the dichotomy between civilization and savagery that would characterize imperial expansion beyond the European continent”

(Fredrickson 23). Unequivocally, Europeans have oppressed white and non-white races alike or what they call “sub-humans” according to Fredrickson. Further, the sweeping horrors of anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Slavic people by Europeans provided historical evidence about brutalities committed in Europe against other races.

Toward the Colonization of the American Western Frontier

Colonial invasive powers, bringing with them their own myths, beliefs, and forms of colonial ordering which create a bifurcated form of hierarchy (Yancy 4) that is designed to distinguish between the natives and the colonizers, a form of hierarchy where the colonizer (white, good, intelligent, ethical, beautiful, civilized) is superior in all things while the native (dark, exotic, sexually uncontrollable, bad, stupid, ugly, savage, backward) is inferior. These colonial invasive powers also brought with them various diseases which wiped out great numbers of the population in the colonized world. Apparently, colonialism is a form of violent usurpation that disrupts the psycho-social equilibrium of those indigenous to their lived cultural cosmos. This external power violence interrupts “their continuity, making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves” in addition to “making them betray not only their commitments but their own substances” (Levinas 21).

Unlike the Jews and the Irish, the indigenous American people represent those who were dramatically and historically opposed to Europeans in terms of color, culture, language and religion⁹. Traditionally, the native Indians were presented in frontier American fiction for decades as faceless terror, implacable enemies of the European civilization who do not deserve to live. They are usually delineated as barbarians streaked with paint moving in hordes upon the besieged wagon trains with cruel glints and bloodthirsty cries. Consequently, “the visible epidermal terrain,” to use Wiegman’s words, of the non-white body became the site of Otherness within the framework of a deeper, historically embedded axiological Manichean divide in Europe itself (Wiegman 31). An epidermal terrain that would continue, for centuries, to signify moral and scientific realities regarding the entire cartography, as it were, of the non-white / dark races.

Within the colonial space of intelligibility, this Manichean divide, Indian/ White, is neatly positioned along taxonomic-zoological lines. Fanon observes that “at times, this Manichaeism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly it turns him into an animal. When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to the bestiary (Fanon, *The Wretched* 42). Within the context of colonialism, indigenous peoples were

deemed things vis-à-vis an economy of white sameness. As things, they were considered devoid of feeling, humanity and reason. This form of rationalization functions to erase the dynamic of human relations, a form of inter-subjectivity where two or more people respond to each other as equally human, mutually respecting the other's subjectivity.

The erasure¹⁰ of the identity of the colonized and the elimination of his/her human potential dynamic lead to the construction of a new relationship, which is believed to be “metaphysically fixed” as described by Albert Memmi. In *Racism*, Memmi points out: “we go from biology to ethics, from ethics to politics, from politics to metaphysics” (174). Within the terrain of racist ideologies, it is argued that the relationship between colonized and colonizer is fixed and thereupon is located outside history. There is no doubt that the projection of the inferior / monstrous colonized is contingent upon the construction of the European as superior and non-monstrous. Thus, the colonized is fixed because the colonizer does the fixing and the objectification of the colonized is dialectically linked to the transcendent / master consciousness of the colonizer.

In a similar context, Fatima Rony argues that under colonialism, colonized people were deemed “ethnographic: of an earlier time, without history, without archives” (Rony 194). As the humanity of the colonized native is rendered suspect, individualized subjectivity is denied¹¹. Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonize* identifies this process of depersonalization as the mark of the plural in the sense that, the colonized native vis-à-vis the colonizer is an amorphous collectivity as if moved by the same collective essence: “The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner, he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity (they are this, they are all the same)” (85). There is no doubt that Memmi was aware of the boomerang effect of colonization and dehumanization: “to handle this, the colonizer must assume the opaque rigidity and imperviousness of the stone. In short, he must dehumanize himself, as well” (Memmi, *The Colonizer* xxvii).

Like the colonized, the colonizer becomes “thing,” according to Memmi, denying his freedom to be other than white colonial sameness. In becoming a “thing,” the colonizer need not feel responsible for his action. Further, the colonizer attempts to repress the anxiety that accompanies his freedom either through the process of becoming a “thing”—“I am following the order of nature's teleological dictates” — or making the colonized into a “thing”, he is fixed in his nature to be animal-like, inferior. Further, Memmi provides an insightful observation as he clarifies: “whenever the colonizer adds, in order not to fall prey to anxiety, that the colonized is wicked, backward person with evil, thievish, somewhat sadistic

instincts, he, thus, justifies his legitimate severity” (Memmi, *The Colonizer* 82).

According to HomiBhabha, “colonial power produces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” (cited in Yancy 1). In a related context, the colonizers / oppressors “develop a series of methods precluding any presentation of the world as a problem and showing it rather as a fixed entity, as something given-something to which people, as mere spectators, must adopt” (Friere 20). Stating this relationship in correlative terms, Fanon argues: “the feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 93). In other words, and according to Robert Young, colonialism shapes the colonized through powerful processes of inscription. On this basis, there is a violent Geo-spatial dimension of colonial territorialization and a violent form of psycho-cultural territorialization, both of which are interwoven (Young, *Colonial Desire* 169).

The process of psycho-cultural territorialization aims to place the colonized in a pathological relationship to his race, color, identity, culture, religion and traditions. This is accomplished on one level through Geo-spatial modalities of incursion and usurpation. Further, the colonized are lured into the process of ideological inculcation in order to internalize their stereotypical image in terms of which they are viewed by the colonizers. On this basis, Jan-Mohamed speculates on colonialism and its politics, arguing that “instead of seeing the native as a bridge toward syncretic possibility, it (colonialism) uses him as a mirror that reflects the colonialist’s self-image” (Jan-Mohamed 84). Obviously, the western imaginary, shaped through a powerful Manichean divide, is shown to be parasitic upon the dehumanization of colonized others. Western colonization which aims to civilize the colonized is a trope for domination and exploitation, deemed by Europeans as a form of historical necessity even if it meant the social, psychic or physical death of the colonized. As AimeCesaire points out: “My turn to state an equation: colonization = thingification” (cited in Yancy 1).

The colonial apparatus¹² possesses incredible cultural and historical weight because of the many agencies of colonial power and knowledge including anthropology, phrenology, philosophy and medical discourse that function as vehicles through which western hegemony is further exposed and maintained. The point is that knowledge and power are interwoven. Within the context of colonial power, the science of ethnology helped toward colonial administration. Literary and artistic works depicting the non-western “others” combined with medieval fables and notions drawn from the Bible and the Classics. As Jan NederveenPieterse

states: “in painting, poetry, theatre, opera, popular prints, illustrated magazines, novels, children’s books — a broad range of imaginative work — non-European worlds were represented as part of European scenarios” (Pieterse 224). Ultimately, the colonial imaginary creates a system of codification through which colonial perception is shaped in predictable ways. Fanon observes that within the colonial Manichean world, the colonized native is “declared insensible to ethics, he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this scene, he is the absolute evil” (Fanon, *The Wretched* 41).

In the same vein, Sartre characterizes the colonizer as undergoing a process of reification. To Sartre, “this imperious being (the colonizer) crazed by his absolute power and by the fear of losing it, no longer remembers clearly that he was once a man; he takes himself for a horsewhip or gun” (Fanon, *The Wretched* 16). The objectives of the colonialist were to get the colonized native to become blind to the farcical process of the historical necessity of being colonized. The idea here is to get the colonized native to conceptualize his identity/being as an ignoble savage, bestial, hyper-sexual criminal, violent, uncivilized, brutish, dirty and inferior (Pieterse, *The Colonizer* 79). To Memmi, the colonizer attempts to blur the distinction between his own freedom / praxis and the putative “objective necessity” of colonialism (Memmi, *The Colonizer* xxvii).

The colonial strategy aims to get the colonized native to undergo a process of epistemic violence, a process where the colonized begins to internalize all of the colonizer’s myths and thus begins to see his identity through the paradigm of colonial white western supremacy / Euro-centricity. What the colonizer knows about the colonized constitutes what the colonized is. Thus, perception, epistemology and ontology are collapsed. With regard to the colonized native, what is seen is what is known and what is known is what is seen. Therefore, the colonized is closely scrutinized in order to determine his relationship to other sub-humans and human beings. Moreover, the colonized, according to Memmi, is used as a yardstick by which to judge the stages of western evolution, by which to discern identity, difference, and progress. To Memmi, the colonizer strips the colonized of any recognizable human form through “a series of negation” (Memmi, *The Colonizer* 83). For example, while the colonized body is not beautiful, not colonized, not moral, the colonizer’s body is constituted through a series of affirmations. These negations and affirmations are designed to pass off as normal.

Moreover, Cesaire observes that when the colonizer and the colonized are face-to-face under colonialism there is no human contact but relations of

domination¹³ and submission. Cesaire sees nothing except “force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, conflict” during the confrontation between colonizers and colonized (Cesaire 21). Throughout centuries of expansion, colonialism embedded within it a racist colonial ethnography / anthropology or what Cesaire calls “theory of the Anthropos.” Cesaire maintains that under colonialism “the only history is white” and “the only ethnography is white” because “it is the West that studies the ethnography of the others, not the others who study the ethnography of the West (Cesaire 54). In this colonial context, colonized people were deemed “ethnographic: of an earlier time, without history, without archives” (Rony 194). Further, the colonizer strives to encourage the colonized to embrace his / her existential predicament as natural and immutable. The idea is to get the colonized to accept the colonialist perspective as the only point of reference. Jan-Mohamed observes that by “subjecting the native, the European settler is able to compel the Other’s recognition of him and, in the process, allow his own identity to become deeply dependent on his position as a master”(Jan-Mohamed 87). Jan-Mohamed points out that this “enforced recognition from the Other, in fact, amounts to the European’s narcissistic self-recognition since the native, who is considered too degraded and inhuman to be credited with any specific subjectivity, is cast as no more than a recipient of the negative elements of the self that the European projects onto him” (Jan-Mohamed 88). This transitivity and the preoccupation with the converted self-image mark the “imaginary” relations that characterize the colonial encounter.

The Dialectics of Civilization and Savagery

Like the captivity narratives of the colonial era, *Mohicans* reflects the image of the Indian as a savage. In this context, Cooper’s novel serves a colonial/white purpose by putting the Indian race in a position inferior to the European settlers (Mills 438). Cooper’s leather-stocking novels are not “adventure stories” as James Grossman indicates (Grossman 4) or “Indian Romances” as Leslie Fiedler argues (Fiedler 179) or stories about a multi-racial society” as (Dekker 64) states but they are manifestations of ethnocentrism in nineteenth century American literature. Roy Harvey Pearce maintains that in Cooper’s tales “the idea of savagism is realized in the image of an Indian, in his gifts at once ignoble, an Indian whose fate was to be a means of understanding a civilization in which he, by civilized definition, could not participate” (Pearce 210). Cooper did not only create the savage of the nineteenth-century novel, but he also put the bases for a whole tradition in American fiction, which manipulated the Indian theme as depicted in early captivity narratives.

The racial/stereotypical image of the Indian as a savage standing as an obstacle in the way of civilization has kept its existence in American fiction for a long time. During the frontier wars with the native Indians, the European settlers killed them in great numbers because they categorized them as cannibalistic, baby killers and primitive devils. In this historical context, Cotton Mather, who situated himself as the major chronicler of the Puritan experience in America elaborated “the captivity narrative myth as the historical framework for summarizing Indian-white relationships throughout the seventeenth century” (Slotkin 71). The Puritans picked up the captivity narrative to show “the horror whites suffered under Indian enslavement” (Perkhofer 85). Though Cooper’s frontier fiction is not a picture of actual life but a kind of myth like the literary works of Melville and Hawthorne, his novel provided a pretext for racial stereotypes and distorted images of the Indian natives created to symbolize savagism. In the aftermath of the publication of *Mohicans*, Cooper’s novel became a model par excellence to be followed by other imperialist romance writers in America.¹⁴

In an attempt to Americanize the frontier history in *Mohicans*, Cooper introduces colonial discourses appropriated from seventeenth-century literature. Simultaneously, Cooper developed and extended anti-Indian/racial categories which appeared in embryonic form in seventeenth century captivity narratives¹⁵. Considering the European colonization of America as a historically unavoidable process of progress toward a pre-historic continent, Cooper’s novel distorts reality by dramatizing the native Indian as a savage¹⁶. In Cooper’s narrative, the natives are victims of a racist / imperialist ideology which aims to banish them out of a community modeled on the western style. While the fighting natives are stigmatized as barbarian, the defeated tribes are given inferior roles in Cooper’s novel. By obscuring the native perspective which calls for resistance and marginalizing moderate and reconciliatory native viewpoints, Cooper’s narrative strategy produces a prevailing view of the frontier conflict that ignores the victims and advocates the opinion of the victorious side. Viewing the Indian as a barbarian, Cooper attempts to mystify the actual/brutal process of conquest by making it seem to be the inevitable result of sweeping historical forces. By making the difference between whites and Indians more dramatic and by emphasizing racial divisions, Cooper’s novel creates what Pearce calls “the major image of savagism” (Pearce 200) and inaugurate a whole genre of American fiction dealing with the Indian theme on this basis.

Locating the narrator’s racial/colonial narrative at the center of the text is in itself an act of justification, even support, for such radical perspectives which

consider the native Indian as a barbarian.¹⁷ Thereupon, the novel is considered as an allegorical rationalization of the European annexation of America depicted as an inescapable colonial march across the continent. Portraying the frontier conflict from the perspective of the winner and taking over the typology inherent in Western culture of a degraded native confronting the civilized westerner, the narrative discourse of the novel categorizes the native Indian as inferior and fearsome. The invisibility of a reasonable voice of the native Indian and his frequent appearances in the speeches of evil personas such as Magua is a calculated narrative strategy. This technique aims to locate the native in a certain context in the novel order to play only the role which conforms to his degraded image in western culture. The entire process reflects the colonial discourse which pervades the text and provides an impetus to the racist authorial vision which aims to demonize the native.

Further, by delineating the colonized Indian as a barbarian and savage brute who seeks white blood everywhere, Cooper's narrative prevents the white readers from understanding the human tragedy of the natives in the aftermath of their colonization. In other words, the focus on narratives of superiority and inferiority advocated by the authorial narrator who is given a substantial space in the textual landscape in addition to the elimination and silencing of moderate native voices transform Cooper's narrative into a colonial fiction. Obviously, Cooper's concept of Indian savagery denies the possibility of cultural and racial hybridization as it is evident in the author's treatment of racial mixing. As a whole, Cooper's frontier novels¹⁸ prohibited interracial relations between whites and native Indians aggravating the Indian motif by giving the readers an image of the Indians as savages who must be isolated in reservations. Articulating race to a discourse of gender and revealing the dangerous consequences of miscegenation, Cooper's novels also promote a web of colonial trajectories par excellence. Apparently, Cooper's frontier fiction is characterized by the construction of colonizer/colonized boundaries which stereotype the native Indians as savages and determine race relationship.

For example, in Cooper's fiction, the drunken Indian redeems himself only through affirming his savagery. In *Mohicans*, when Magua orders Duncan Heyward to send Cora, a mixed-blood American, to him, Heyward, assuming that the Huron Indian will demand some ransom, warns her: "you understand the nature of an Indian's wishes and must be prodigal of your offers of power and blankets. Ardent spirits are, however, the most prized, by such as he" (Cooper, *The Last* 101). Affirming his identity as a savage, Magua confessed that drinking makes him more impassioned, more volatile and it was "the fire-water that spoke and acted for him"

(Cooper, *The Last* 103). One of the most famous stereotypes in Cooper's fiction concerning Indians involves the image of the drunken Indian. Russell Thornton argues that alcohol has had a profound effect upon Indians pretending that "many native societies were virtually destroyed by the quest for alcohol" (Thornton 66). Thornton's argument constitutes part of the stereotypical thinking about Indians which prevailed nineteenth-century culture.

Considering the native Indians as an inferior race who could not be civilized, the American government in the first half of the nineteenth century developed a policy which aimed to remove them out of locations near the mainstream society. Opponents of removal argued that, once removed outside the boundaries of civilization, native Indians would revert to the "savage state of the hunter" and thus all hopes of their future assimilation into American society would be lost. Nevertheless, the stereotypical belief that Indians were vanishing due to alcohol and were unable to survive in close contact with American civilization provided a context for the federal government to expand its removal policy. Moreover, assumptions about the deficiencies of Indians as they were alcohol addicts promoted the presumed incompatibility of Indian savagery and white civilization.

Accepting the issue of Indian addiction of alcohol as a sign of savagery,¹⁹ Cooper does not reject the nineteenth-century debate over the removal of Indians from their territories. Instead, his treatment of the question of Indian savagery reflects his acceptance of the nineteenth-century debates over removal and the importance of isolating the natives in reservations. In this context, Cooper's fiction promotes the alcohol addiction²⁰ motif which is associated with Indians. In Cooper's fiction, Indian characters addict alcohol, particularly the fringe figures who live on the periphery of the white community and have contact with American society. For Cooper, the Indians could not be assimilated into the American society because drinking "a taste for firewater" destroys them. Kay Seymour House points out that "whiskey became, for Cooper, a convenient symbol of civilization's silent and corroding destruction of native beauty" (House 251). Anyhow, Cooper's portrayal of Indians and his debate on the alcohol issue underscore his assumption about the ultimate moral inferiority of the Indian race and the fundamental incongruity between savagery and civilization on the frontier.

One of the strategies triggering colonization policies is the claim that the colonial process brings civilization to the land of the colonized or in Memmi's words the colonizers will bring "light to the ignominious darkness of the colonized" (Memmi, *The Colonizer* 76). This strategy, according to Memmi, marks the brutality of colonization and justifies the annihilation of inferior races.

Identifying the colonized and oppressed races as worthless, the colonizer has always demonstrated his racism and superiority: “How can one deny that they are underdeveloped, that their customs are oddly changeable and their culture outdated” (Memmi, *The Colonizer* 22). Within this context, the paternalistic role assumed by the colonizer in Cooper’s fiction inevitably leads to violent confrontations with the colonized, which consequently brings about catastrophic developments prohibiting any possibilities of further reconciliation and censoring mutual dialogues between the two parties.

As a colonial narrative, *Mohicans* views the colonized natives as being naturally subservient to a superior, advanced, developed, and morally mature force. In Cooper’s fiction, racism is blended with colonial conquest and the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized native is one of power and domination. In this context, the colonizer makes use of imaginative speculations to produce erroneous stereotypes of the native. In *Mohicans*, which is one of the cornerstones of western colonial narratives, the displaced native is transformed into cultural objects, essentialized, racialized and marginalized to conform to their image in colonial taxonomy of inferior races. Since the destruction of native images is a recurrent, almost a ritualistic practice in colonial discourses, the subaltern native, in Cooper’s novel, is either denied a voice or appears in the single image of a savage or a barbaric demon. In this context, the displaced native is fictionally exploited to affirm anti-Indian discourses integral to frontier American fiction.

The racist/colonial discourses of Cooper’s novel could be critically investigated by a post-colonial interpreting mechanism. Edward Said advocates a discursive strategy which aims to provide a new reading of western texts by integrating a counter-discourse dynamics able to uncover colonial implications hidden in these texts. In other words, Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, develops a link between imperialist and post-colonial narratives using a hermeneutics of interpretation called “contrapuntality” (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 93) in order to explore western canonical texts: “As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 51). A contrapuntal reading of Cooper’s famous novel²¹ provides evidence that writing can never be a neutral activity. There is no doubt that Cooper’s text²² is a reflection of the vision of “nineteenth-century European powers, for whom the natives of outlying territories were included in the redemptive mission *civilisatrice*” (Said, *The Question* 68).

Explicitly, different generations of critics did not come to grips with what might be considered as invidious forms of racism and colonialism that Cooper expresses in *Mohicans*. It is accurate that Cooper uses romance, adventure, war narratives as a camouflage to cover the racist, colonial and misogynist agenda of the novel. The novel apparently “tells the story of racial warfare set on the line between settlement and wilderness” (Tawell 99) and Cooper’s simplistic depiction of the Indian is reflected in his preface to the novel: “in war he is daring, boastful, winning, ruthless, self-denying and self-devoted, in peace, revengeful, and superstitious” (Cooper, *The Last* 14). Presenting the Indian as a racial stereotype, Cooper’s novel gained popularity because of the tension between savagery and civilization. However, the delineation of Cooper’s frontiersmen is realistic compared to his falsified Indian images, therefore Roy Harvey Pearce illuminates that Cooper was interested in the Indian “not for his own sake, but for the sake of his relationship to the civilized men who were destroying him” (Pearce 200).

Mark Twain criticizes Cooper’s distorted depiction of the Indians: “The Cooper Indians are dead-died with their creator. The kind that is left are of altogether a different breed, and cannot be successfully fought with poetry, and sentiment, and soft soap, and magnanimity” (Twain 566). Likewise, Frank Norris demonstrates that Cooper’s Indians are the work of his imagination. As a novelist, he is “saturated with the romance of the contemporary English storytellers. It is true that his background is American while his Indians stalk through all the melodramatic tableaux of Byron, and declaim in the periods of the border noblemen in the pages of Walter Scott” (Norris 271). Obviously, the testimonies of Twain and Norris reveal that Cooper’s concept of the Indian as a savage is not realistic. Nevertheless, and in spite of Cooper’s claim that his works are historical narratives, it is relevant to mention that Cooper did not pose as a historian in the Leather-stocking tales but as a writer of romance. In this context, Cooper’s view of the Indian was not anthropological but literary. He may have felt that too much realism would destroy the charm of his fiction as some critics claim.

However, Cooper committed a mistake when he told his readers to approach his fiction as a historical narrative. James Fenimore Cooper had no background of Indian life and confessed that he was not in contact with Indians. Susan Cooper cites the following confession of Cooper as he openly stated that: “I was never among the Indians. All that I know about them is from reading and from hearing my father speak of them” (Cooper, *Pages and Pictures* 129). Therefore, Arthur Parker argues that Cooper in his tales committed many mistakes. For example, he confused the Mohicans of the Upper Hudson River and the Mohegans of

Connecticut and Rhode Island. When he based one of the important episodes in *Mohicans* on an incident in history – the massacre at Fort William Henry — Cooper ignored the fact that the Delaware tribes fought as allies of Montcalm, the leader of the French army. According to Parker, Cooper mixed up the names and locations of the tribes in *Mohicans*: “he had Mohawks aiding the French instead of standing at the side of the English and made the Hurons a still effective fighting force as if they had not been thoroughly scattered in 1650 by the disposed Maguas” (Parker 447).

Politics of Racism and Marginalization in *The Last of the Mohicans*

In *Mohicans*, the interaction between the races is predicated on skin color, civilization and the alleged superiority of the white race. In the wilderness of Cooper’s Leather-Stocking tales, the white men of the woods such as Daniel Boone, Davy Crocket and Natty Bumppo may deal with the native Indian as an equal. Nevertheless, if the Indian leaves the woods, he is regarded by the white men of civilization as an inferior. Even if the Indian adopts Christianity, the religion of the settlers, he is looked down upon not as “a noble savage” as critics suggest, but as a decadent, drunk-corrupted remnant of a vanquished race. In “*Imperialist Nostalgia*,” Renato Rosaldo states that “in imperialistic narratives, descriptions of character attitudes are fertile sites for the cultivation of ideology” (Rosaldo 108). This process is integral to the narrative discourse of *Mohicans*. For example the delineation of Chingachgook, the famous Indian character in Cooper’s fiction, is an example to support this premise. In *The Pioneers*, Chingachgook, who is considered as a good Indian by the wilderness society is approached by the civilized society as a bloodthirsty killer, an enemy of civilization and an obstacle to colonial expansion. To a white civilized society, the good natured Chingachgook remains wild, violent and deceitful. Like Magua — Cooper’s Indian villain — the noble Chingachgook is depicted from the same racist perspective.

Therefore, it is Natty Bumppo (Hawkeye), not Chingachgook, who is endowed with the qualities of both races as he fulfills himself in the wilderness as well as in the white community. The endorsement of colonial politics, which lies at the core of a master narrative may also be illuminated by involving the character of Bumppo in this context. Due to his presence in the wilderness, Bumppo is influenced by native culture: “He bore a knife in a girdle of wampum, like that which confined the scanty garments of the Indian, but tomahawk. His moccasins were ornamented after the gay fashions of the natives, while the only part of his under-dress which appeared below the hunting frock was a pair of buckskin leggings that laced at the sides, and which were gartered above the knees with the sinews of a deer”

(Cooper, *The Last* 33). In other words, Bumppo, the white man, stands in between the Indian world (the wilderness) and the white world (civilization). He is a product of both worlds and is a cultural hybrid: “A pouch and horn completed his personal accouterments. The eye of the hunter or scout, whichever he might be, was small, quick, keen, and restless, roving while he spoke as if in quest of game or distrusting the sudden approach of some lurking enemy” (Cooper, *The Last* 33).

In the novel, Cooper allows Bumppo, the protector of civilization, to regress the ideology of savagery for a limited time. Bumppo, the deer-slayer, is allowed to select what he wants from the Indian culture. Bumppo²³ does not, however, embrace the native traditions as a whole construct, but he adopts particular customs as they suit his purposes. In the beginning of the novel Bumppo is described as a pure white frontiersman who engendered trust from his own people: “The frame of the white man was like that of one who had known hardship and exertion from his earliest youth. He wore a hunting shirt of forest green and a summer cap of skins which had been shorn of their fur” (Cooper, *The Last* 33). Throughout the character of Natty Bumppo, the white frontiersman and the protagonist of the *Leather-Stocking* tales who lives with Indians in the wilderness and absorbs their culture, Cooper speaks of acts that are acceptable from Indians but not from whites and he mentions acts worthy of whites but not Indians.

The establishment of such hierarchy of cultural values is crucial to Cooper’s concept of Indian savagery. According to Cooper’s concept, civilized whites, by comparison to the native Indians, should know their position in the New World. The Indian savage for the European whites is “the zero” of human society against which civilized societies can measure their progress. In conquering Indian land, white Americans, according to Cooper’s racial paradigm, were asserting themselves of the correctness of their historical path as well as vanquishing the savage that they suspected still lurks inside every civilized white. To Euro-Americans, “what Indians signified was not what they were but what Americans should not be” (Pearce 232). Ignoring Cooper’s racial discourse, critics such as Lelan Person, sees Natty Bumppo only as an American Adam, a mythic figure who embodies the myth of the hunter. As a composite figure related to the issue of gender in Cooper’s fiction and its male discourse, the mythic qualities of Bumppo, according to Person, reflect the tradition in the nineteenth-century novel grounded in male identity politics (Person 77).

From another critical standpoint, David Leverenz argues that Natty Bumppo is “the first man beast” who serves nineteenth century middle class men as “a compensatory simplification” and “a new myth of American manhood in the

making : to be civilized and savage in one composite, self-divided transformation” (Leverenz 760). But even this image of the white man of the wilderness, this symbolic mixture of civilized and savage which characterizes Bumppo, according to American critics, is rejected by Cooper. Since Cooper’s novels are structured around ethno-centric stereotypes, Bumppo is forced to withdraw into the extreme West and become part of the wilderness society by the end of the tales. His symbolic social mixture confines him to be a stereotype that eventually alienates him from the civilized white world. In other words, Bumppo, like Oliver Edwards in the beginning of *The Pioneers*, is considered partly savage because of his social intercourse with the native Indians, thereupon, he must be banished from the civilized white community like the native Indians.

Unequivocally, Cooper introduces a set of stereotypes, designed to degrade the Indians, the native inhabitants of America. Using Indian characters as a medium, Cooper emasculates them by putting them at the bottom of the societal totem. In his novels, Cooper philosophizes on the primitive nature of Indians who are unfortunately described as a more devil than human. Describing the Indians in an absurd way, it becomes evident from this description that Cooper’s novel is structured around racial stereotypes and caricatures associated with racial discourses. In this context, Cooper’s novel advocates and justifies the nineteenth century religious and historical argument about Indians portraying them as a vanishing race. The native, stereotyped through the description of Magua, in *Mohicans*, represents the way many civilized white readers of that era regarded native Indians: “There was a sudden fierceness mingled with the quiet of the savage. The native bore the tomahawk and knife of his tribe; and yet his appearance was not altogether that of a warrior. The colors of the war paint had blended in dark confusion about his fierce countenance, and rendered his swarthy lineaments still more savage and repulsive than if art had attempted an effect, which had been thus produced by chance” (Cooper, *The Last* 20). There is no doubt that Magua is demonized simply because he lives in the native wilderness and belongs to a non-white race: “His eye alone, which glistened like a fiery star amid lowering clouds, was to be seen in its state of native wilderness. For a single instant, his searching and yet wary glance met the wondering look of the other, and, then, changing its direction, partly in cunning and partly in disdain, it remained fixed, as if penetrating the distant air” (Cooper, *The Last* 20).

This description provides an evidence that Cooper depicts the Indian only as fierce, savage and vicious who poses a menace to the settler’s community. Ignoring Cooper’s racist/colonial vision, some critics see Magua only as a native Indian

concerned with his honor as a warrior, a man who “directs his attention to scalps, the visible tokens of courage and success in battle which determine the reputation of the Indian” (Allen 159). Allen’s description of Magua and the above quote simultaneously indicate that the white man of the civilized world is the one who fears the native Indian. This kind of fear usually leads to the demolition of the native. Moreover, Alice Munro, the white protagonist in *Mohicans*, represents this type of civilization. As she enters the domain of the Indian wilderness, the aura of fear descends upon her. Duncan Heyward notices it and cautions her: “Here lies our way, said the young man, in a low voice. Manifest no distrust or you may invite the danger you appear to apprehend” (Cooper, *The Last* 23). It is at this juncture that Bumppo’s Indian knowledge gains importance. His presence in the wilderness and his knowledge of the woods make the wilderness less formidable to characters such as Alice, Cora, Duncan Heyward and David. To them, Bumppo becomes a symbol of civilization regardless of being part and parcel of the western wilderness. To them Bumppo is a white hunter who responds to the conventional ways of the civilized white world. With his knowledge of the wilderness and the habits of the native Indians, Bumppo, in this context, becomes symbolic of “the Biblical Moses” who leads his people through what Cooper describes as “a sea of red Philistines.” As Bumppo assumes this role and reveals his scorn for Magua, the native Indian takes on the aspect of a barbarian. He becomes the embodiment of Satan “with an air unmoved, though with a look so dark and savage that it might in itself excite fear” (Cooper, *The Last* 45).

The delineation of the character of Bumppo affirms the Cooper’s concept that native and white cultures remain realms apart, requiring a mediating, translating figure (like Bumppo) to explain and justify the actions of the Indians to whites such as Duncan Heyward, the white protagonist of the novel. On this ground, Bumppo practices a colonizer’s ethnology, as his knowledge of the natives serves the ultimate aim of the conquest. Bumppo’s Indian knowledge, nevertheless, contaminates him, therefore, Cooper introduces him as a cultural hybrid who is not eligible to stay in the white frontier society. Bumppo who is unable to give up his uncivilized manners absorbed from a wilderness inhabited by colonized natives, is destined to follow the frontier as it moves steadily westward to die in *The Prairie* (one of Cooper’s Leather-Stocking novels) among the Pawnees and the Sioux Indians. Through the slippery and ambiguous character of Natty Bumppo which raises questions about his attitude and identity as an enemy or ally to the colonizers, Cooper replaces what Hayden White calls “the discourse of the real” with “the discourse of the imaginary” (White 20) in order to make the imaginary

desirable and obscure history.

It is noteworthy to point out that colonial hegemony is fulfilled in the lands of the colonized not only by military domination, but also through the process of writing history from the viewpoint of the colonizer. This process is a basic aspect of colonialism which has a tremendous impact upon the colonized even after national liberation. This process is a basic aspect of colonialism which has a tremendous impact upon the colonized even after national liberation. Moreover, the process of history-making which aims to mute the colonized subaltern is an instrument of colonial hegemony since the colonizer plans not only to dominate a country but also to impose his own history and cultural paradigms. In his novel, Cooper explicitly depicts good and bad Indians, but he approaches both types from an ethnocentric position. To him, Uncas, the noble Indian chief and Magua, the savage villain, are alike. In a related context, Cooper totally rejects to establish interracial relations at any level between Indians, whether good or bad, and whites. This notion undermines George Dekker's perspective that "an experienced reader of Cooper should guess at once that when Cora and Uncas are attracted to each other, Cooper is dealing with the relations between the races, then inhabiting North America, and testing the possibility of their being brought together in a harmonious union" (Dekker 68). In *Mohicans*, the potential marriage between the young Mohican chief, Uncas, and Cora Munroe, the daughter of the Scottish Colonel, who herself is a hybrid descending from mixed black/white ancestry, is rejected by Cooper. The marriage which would unite the three racial and cultural strands of colonial America- Red, White and Black- is prohibited in Cooper's world. The death of Uncas and Cora Munroe metaphorically eliminates this possibility leaving the American continent to be inhabited by the descendants of Duncan Heyward and Cora's racially pure half-sister, Alice, the allegorical progenitor of the white American people.

David Herbert Lawrence argues that "Cooper or the artist in him has decided that there can be no blood-mixing of the two races, white and red. He kills 'em off" (Lawrence 59). In Cooper's novel, Cora and Uncas are killed by the author because of their lack to pure white blood. Pearce, like Lawrence, maintains that the marriage of Cora and Uncas "would be impossible in Cooper's world of civilization and progress, hence, temporizing the issue by making Cora's ancestry somewhat dubious, he must do away with them both" (Pearce 529). Cora is not allowed to marry Uncas because both are not of the same race: her complexion was not brown, but appeared charged with the color of the rich blood that seemed ready to burst its bounds. At the same time, Cora is deterred from marrying a white

man (Duncan Heyward) because she is not racially pure. Cora is taken back and forth in the capture-chase-recapture scene from white society to Indian territories. Cora's movement from white society to the Indian society is due to Cooper's failure to deal easily and effectively with her racial mixture (Mills 447). When Cooper determines her fate, she can no longer belong to the white world and she is prohibited from returning to the civilized/white world anymore. Because she is not pure she must die outside the civilized white world.

The chase-rescue scenes-engaging noble and hostile Indians — in *Mohicans* suggest that Cooper figuratively points out the implications that are associated with miscegenation. For Cooper, it is impossible to create a harmonious union between Cora and Uncas. Cora must be condemned to death because she is part of an accursed race: “the curse of my ancestors has fallen heavily on their child”, says Cora. Ostensibly the author who is committed to a colonial ideology which is an extension of perspectives enunciated by advocates of western imperialism wants to exterminate the natives because to him the colonized “is hardly a human being. He tends rapidly toward becoming an object” (Memmi, *The Colonizer* 86). In the death of Cora and Uncas, the readers see the strong “apartheid” feelings of Cooper being evinced and reinforced in the novel. In this respect, Tamenund, the Indian sage, expresses his own view: “the dogs and cows of the white man's tribe would bark and caw before they would take a woman to their wigwams whose blood was not of the color of snow” (Cooper, *The Last* 362). In Cooper's world, Cora and Uncas must remain separated in death because their “blood was not of the color of snow.” Finally, Cora is separated from both worlds-white and native-and she is buried between two civilizations belonging to neither of them.

The Racialization and Marginalization of the Native Subaltern

In Cooper's fiction, the native American is apparently “a European invention” (Said, *Orientalism* 2). The ritual of invention is contingent upon a racialization process which requires the aesthetic function of stimulating the western reader's fantasy. In this context, Cooper's representation of the frontier confrontation is a vivid example of the American invention of the native as a savage. In Cooper's fiction, the colonized native is viewed as violent and cruel, a stereotype which is repeated in Western literature and culture until it becomes integrated into the popular and the collective consciousness of the American people. After being racialized and exhibited to the readers, the native has to conform to the American norms of the savage in the sense s/he should be a replica of Satan, an incarnation of evil.

In order to undermine the validity of indigenous struggle against colonial powers, the colonizer usually attempts to demonize the colonized viewing his revolution for the sake of independence as erratic violence. Obviously, the central narrator in Cooper's narrative ignores the fact that the occupation and colonization would naturally lead to resistance and struggle on the part of the colonized. By viewing the protest of the colonized natives against the inhuman practices of the invading colonizers as acts of terror and savagery, Cooper's fiction justifies the violence of the colonizers against the native civilians as necessary warfare to protect the colonial community in a volatile western frontier. Further, in Cooper's fiction Indian warriors who bravely challenge the white settlers and defend their lands on the frontier are delineated as savage barbarians, corrupted by their bestial drinking habits. Since alcohol addiction on the part of Indians is a result of intercultural contact and since "contact with whites only makes bad Indians worse, transforming them into degraded and drunken derelicts on the fringes of a prosperous society" (Barnett 91), Indians as Cooper suggests in his fiction, should be kept removed from contact with the civilized world of the settlers.

In terms of the treatment of the issues of race and culture, Cooper's fiction is hostile to the notion of cultural and racial mixing between Indians and whites on the frontier. Natty Bumppo, the most visible philosopher on racial issues, insists on his own pure racial identity and on the emphatically separate identities of whites and Indians. Ironically, Bumppo's fate is determined by the Indian knowledge he acquires from living in the wilderness. On this basis the fate of Bumppo, Uncas and Cora symbolizes both an internal and an external conquest. In other words, savages are purged from the continent, savage blood is purged from the white race, and the savagery necessary to perform these tasks is purged from the civilized mind. The readers are left with Judge Temple and the descendants of Duncan Heyward and Alice Munro. Therefore, Cooper's fiction emphasizes the value of cultural and racial purity and rationalizes the inevitable expansion of whites and the annihilation of the indigenous people of America and hybrids such as Natty Bumppo and Cora.

An application of what Edward Said calls "contrapuntal reading" of Cooper's text will reveal the colonial dimensions of the novel. The contrapuntal approach includes a discourse dynamics disseminated by Said to prevent hostility between different races by incorporating a counter discourse mechanism able to expose colonial constructs in western texts (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 92). Located in the discourses of racism and colonialism, Cooper's novel aims to distort the identity of the natives by transforming them into people "without history" (Said, *The Question* 23). In this context, the novel provides support for the powerful at

the expense of the powerless equating between the brutalities of the colonizers and the humble resistance of the colonized, humiliating those who are historically humiliated. Shaped by western monolithic discourse on the colonized other, the native subaltern in Cooper's novel, remains the colonized victim of racial representations which "repress the political history of colonialism" (Jan Mohamed 79). Attempting to degrade and defame the subaltern native by delineating him as an enemy to humanity, Cooper not only encourages colonization, but also disseminates a hostile ideology toward other races.

By identifying the native as a decadent, Cooper's imperial narrator exercises his power as colonizer. In other words, the colonizer uses his power to classify, categorize and represent the colonized subaltern. By calling the victimized native as barbarian, the narrator/ author utilizes his strength as a colonizer who is able to name and identify. Since naming and addressing, to use colonial / theoretical terms, is "an act of possession performed by the dominant oppressive culture" (Gohar, *Narrating the Palestinian* 109), any name attributed to the colonized native is the hegemonic act of naming, i.e. erasing the real or original name. It is then a re-naming intended to deprive the native from his/her identity in order to affiliate him/her or obliterate his/her identity. In another context, the colonized native is dealt with as a newborn baby appropriated by the father / colonizer when given his/her name. This process also aims at stereotyping the victim by placing him/her at the bottom of the Darwinian hierarchy.

By making the whole tale narrated by a narrator who promotes a colonial agenda, the native voice is either marginalized or muted. Further, the dispossessed native is reduced to an object, a horrible simulacrum of a human being. Due to Cooper's narrative strategy which obliterates the identity of the native enclosing him/her into a racist classification, the counter-narrative of the native is totally underestimated. As a strategy of presentation rooted in colonial discourse and racist degeneration, Cooper's narrative apparatus placed the colonizer at the center of the text marginalizing the colonized native because he represents the horrible side of the human being. As a monster, the colonized native is humiliated by appropriating his land and subverting his history.

In the entire novel, Cooper only dramatizes the attitude of the colonizer sidelining and marginalizing the perspective of the native toward the conflict over the frontier. By silencing the subaltern native and narrowing his/her overview toward the colonizer, Cooper seeks to restrict the space in which "the colonized can be re-written back into history" (Benita 39). In a novel, shaped by authorial pro-colonial tendency, the natives exist in, what Edward Said refers to as "communities

of interpretation” ultimately without form until they are reconstructed by the biased author. Obviously, Cooper’s representation of the frontier experience is marred by a narrative strategy that favors the colonizer and deprives the colonized native from entering the text, except as a total non-entity or as an embodiment of terror and hatred. Moreover, the native characters are delineated in a way that fulfills doubtful authorial agenda. Even Cooper’s positive attitude toward the good natives “the noble savages” is ostensibly undermined by his insinuations about the difficulty of assimilating them into the mainstream culture. Casting doubts on the humanity of the natives, the author attempts to distort history and obscure the hegemonic policies of colonization and displacement.

According to Fanon, colonialism “turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts it, disfigures it and destroys it” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 169). In this context, the indigenous American who is supposed to be the signifier turns out to be the signified. It is accurate that the illusory existence of native communities as delineated in Cooper’s novel is emphasized by the incidents of a narrative which attempts to mystify reality. In addition to distorted characterization, represented mostly by villains such as Magua, the events of the novel are historicized by a narrative dynamics which emphasizes the colonial perspective which dominates the text. Therefore, the image of the native as a barbarian fits the fantasy of the author and fulfills the horizons of expectations of a wide category of nineteenth-century readers swayed by the Darwinian legacy. Instead of viewing the native as a fellow human being with all the potential and frailties that condition implies, Cooper introduces the native as a repulsive villain with Mephistophelian nature. In his attempt to racialize the native subaltern, Cooper portrays him as representative of a backward race.

Failing to undermine the central premises of colonialism, Cooper places white characters at the center of the text preventing the colonized natives from introducing their counter-narrative of the conflict in an appropriate manner. Instead of lamenting the deliberate atrocities committed against the native Indians, Cooper attempts to create a kind of cultural amnesia abandoning the real discourse of white violence and replacing it with an alternative discourse which reproduces the frontier conflict in a new form to fulfill dubious ideological purposes. Moreover, Cooper utilizes several narrative subtleties which aim to silence the voice of the subaltern natives and re-inscribe negative stereotypes about a colonized and marginalized people. Such stereotypes, according to Paul Brown contribute to a “discursive strategy” which aims to “locate or fix the colonized other in a position of inferiority” (Brown 58). Reveling in colonial descriptions of the natives where

scenes of barbarism and elaborate accounts of savagery prevail, Cooper attempts to reconstruct an imaginary enemy who fits his society and the western colonial concept of inferior races.

In a related context, Edward Said points out: "I do not believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class or even economic history, but authors are, I also believe, very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* xxii). Due to the impact of the American frontier mythology and its founding tales, the native appears in Cooper's fiction as a marginalized and a self-destructive individual who bears no resemblance to the typical indigenous American citizen. Apparently, the distorted image of the native and the fake historicity of the western frontier conflict aim to stereotype the colonized native and obscure the realities of colonization.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Cooper's fiction is explicitly dominated by a hegemonic narrative and the tale is introduced by a narrator/author sympathetic with the white colonizers. At the same time, the indigenous American characters are viewed in the text as monsters and personifications of evil. Moreover, the colonized native is humiliated by appropriating his land, culture and his history. When the native subaltern, is allowed to speak, his utterances conform to his stereotyped image in western colonial iconographies. In addition to the narrow space given to the natives in the textual canvas of Cooper's novel, the ultimate fictional discourse reveals the existence of racial and ideological demarcations separating between colonized and colonizer. As a reproduction of discourses advocated by colonial powers in the era of imperialism, Cooper's narrative reinforces Rudyard Kipling's famous statement: "let the white go to the white and the black to the black" (Kipling 48).

Combined with the technique of one-sided dialogue, Cooper's narrative strategy aims to distort history by ignoring three centuries of violence committed against the indigenous inhabitants of America. In order to revise the colonial history of displacement and marginalization, Cooper introduces a new image of the colonizers which does not exist in reality. This process is part of the colonial discourse of the novel which aims to justify occupation and put the blame on the victim. By delineating the colonized native as despicable in his character and totally blameworthy for the suffering of the colonial community on the frontier, Cooper negotiates the possibility of his extermination. This vision subverts the author's few hints about the possibility of assimilating the "noble savages" in the mainstream

white culture. In his depiction of the subaltern native, Cooper incorporates what Noam Chomsky identifies as “garbage language” (Chomsky 65) which “is not only the voice but also the deed of suppression.” As Herbert Marcuse argues: this language not only defines and condemns “the Enemy,” it also creates him, and this creation is but rather as he must be in order to perform his function for the establishment (Marcuse 74). There is no doubt that in different parts of his fiction, Cooper attempts to degrade the colonized native categorizing him as a savage in order to justify his displacement. In other words, the destruction of the humanity of the native Other is achieved in different ways in the text by muting his voice or by assigning him roles which conform to his stereotyped image in western colonial culture or by conflating him with a degraded status which reflects his position in the colonial taxonomy of inferior races.

In a related context, Cooper’s racist portrayal of native characters as savages and representatives of a decadent community aims to deflect attention from the colonial atrocities committed against the natives. These atrocities are identified by Frantz Fanon as “violence in its natural state” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 61). Fanon argues that the colonizer usually “owes its legitimacy to force and at no time tries to hide this aspect of things” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 84). In Cooper’s novel, colonial violence is mystified and native resistance is underlined and amplified. To Cooper’s central narrator, all massacres committed against the natives do not lend credibility to any reaction from the natives toward the frontier conflict. He only focuses on the murder of the English soldiers by the Huron Indians during the French and Indian wars in 1757. This situation is reminiscent of the Albert Memmi’s argument: “all that the colonized has done to emulate the colonizer has met with disdain from the colonial masters. Everything is mobilized so that the colonized cannot cross the doorsteps, so that he understands and admits that this path is dead (Memmi, *The Colonizer* 125). While the colonizer’s violence against the colonized is justified on moral grounds, the self-defense of the colonized is condemned as barbarism, an evidence of his savage and primitive nature. By advocating this approach, the colonizer ironically teaches the colonized the importance of using violence as the only means to reach one’s ends: “he of whom they (colonizers) have never stopped saying that the only language he understands that of force, decides to give utterance by force. In fact, as always, the settler has shown him (the colonized) the way he should take if he is to become free” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 84).

Fanon reveals the horrors of colonial domination explicating how colonialism functions at the discursive and ideological levels of engaging in various disciplinary strategies that depict the colonized as savage fit to be ruled by a superior culture. In

his analysis of colonial politics, Frantz Fanon demonstrates that there is a time in which the colonialist reaches the point of no longer being able to imagine a time accruing without him. His eruption into the history of the colonized is defied, transformed into absolute necessity. He also points out that the colonial system functions by deploying racial paradigms which widen the gap between colonizer and colonized leading to psychological colonization: “you are [civilized] because you are [colonizer] and you are [colonizer] because you are [colonized] (Fanon, *Black Skin* 40). In *Mohicans*, Cooper advocates what Edward Said calls “the moral epistemology of imperialism” (Said, *The Question* 18) where the approved history of colonial nations such as America, South Africa and Australia, starts with what he identifies as “a blotting out of knowledge” of the native people or the making of them “into people without history” (Said, *The Question* 23). Thus, the native people in Cooper’s novel remain the colonized victims of the author’s political ideology and cultural representation which aim to banish them from collective memory. By suggesting either the evacuation of America of its native inhabitants through genocide or isolating them in reservations, the author aims to deprive the natives of their history. Once the colonized natives are banished from collective memory as a nation of cultural heritage, the colonizer’s moral and intellectual right to conquest is claimed to be established without question.

Notes

1. The colonization of America was affiliated with violence against the native inhabitants of the land. To rationalize colonization the western settlers constructed a web of colonial mythology. For example the image of the Indian as a savage was created by the European colonizers as justification for obscuring indigenous Indian culture and for physically marginalizing the American first nations into the extreme West. The image of the Indian as savage, bestial, barbaric and uncultured, popularized by seventeenth-century captivity narratives became a central motif in American western literature in particular.

2. In *The Man-Eating Myth* by William Arens, the author, questioned Columbus’ accounts about the existence of man-eaters on the southern islands in the Caribbean. Arens argues that Columbus’ account was based on stories he heard from a native group called “the Arawakes” in their attempt to move him against their enemies, another native group called the “caribs” living in the Southern Caribbean islands. Arens points out that when Columbus landed to colonize the southern islands, “the Caribs ran from their villages at the sight of the Spaniards”. Arens ironically argues that “perhaps they too had heard of the existence of man eaters on distant islands” (46). For more details see William Arens. *The Man-Eating Myth*. New York: Oxford

university press, 1979.

3. Columbus' reports provided a pretext for Indian enslavement and genocide by European settlers. For example, the American Puritans, the archetypal colonists, had a tremendous antipathy to all things Indian. They had a long tradition of accusing Indians of cannibalism and infanticide manipulating this mythic notion for political ends. The Puritans saw in the Indians a threat to the "pious Puritan society". To the Puritans, Indian religions and civilization were the Devil's "city on the Hill" opposed to their own Biblical commonwealth. These issues are obviously reflected in Seventeenth-century captivity narratives.

4. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper associates the indigenous people of America with savagery and barbarism. He illustrates that barbarism is deeply ingrained in the native Indians who failed to be civilized. He offered them two options: to be enslaved or exterminated. Considering interracial relationships as anathema, Cooper's novel also reveals that the white Europeans only are able to civilize America. This process is contingent upon the termination of the original inhabitants of the land.

5. The rituals of cutting the ears and noses of the colonized also took place in Southern Arabia during the colonial era. The invading army of Portugal mutilated the natives of the Ras al-Khaimah region, currently the northern part of the United Arab Emirates, located on the Arabian Gulf. Documented reports about incidents of brutal mutilation including the cutting of fingers, noses and ears are disseminated in the historical chronicles of the country.

6. For example, in an eighteenth century poem, Daniel Bryan embodies the myth woven around the native inhabitants of the Kentucky wilderness: "Where naught but beasts and bloody Indians / Dwelt throughout the mighty waste, and cruelty / And Death and superstition, triple leagued / Held there their horrid reign, and imperious sway / The guardian seraphs of benign Reform / With keen prophetic glance, the worth beheld / of the immense expanse, its future fame / its ponderous moment in the golden scales / of Freedom, Science, and Religious Truth / When by Refinement's civilizing hand / Its roughness shall all smoothed away O yes / companions in the joys of bliss / We will refine, exalt and humanize / The uncivilized Barbarians of the West (P. 365). For more details, see Daniel Bryan *The Mountain Muse: Comprising the Adventures of Daniel Boone and the Power of Virtues of Refined Beauty*. Harrisonburg, Virginia: Davidson, 1813.

7. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper justifies his concept of the Indian as a savage by underlining the difficulty of assimilating the native Indians in the mainstream white culture because of the total failure of missionaries to convert them to Christianity. Thus, Cooper's concept of savagery is not only based on social and cultural explanations of differences but it also involves the issue of race. Therefore, it is relevant to argue that the novel was profoundly influenced by 17th-century captivity narratives. In these narratives, Indian captivity was cast as a trial of the spirit. Under Puritan clerical authors such as Cotton Mather, Indian captivity became an instrument of religious manipulation. It is used to highlight God's great protecting providence.

In this connection, Jeffrey Victor argues that the Puritans saw the Indians as belonging to a “Satanic cult” and that Indians/Satanists were fond of kidnapping and sacrificing “blond, blue-eyed virgins” (52). For more details see Jeffrey Victor. “Satanic Cult Rumors as Contemporary Legend”. *Western Folklore* 49 (1990): 52-61. The rumor of the “satanic cult”, promoted by Seventeenth century Puritans in James Town/New York, and popularized in captivity narratives, accumulated over time and European settlers demanded the speedy apprehension of Red Indians at any cost.

8. Cooper’s novel affirms the wide differences between the Indian community and the European colonizers’ world – savage Indians and civilized whites cannot mix in anyway. The emerging American nation in Cooper’s novels is an amalgamation of European races. Constituting only of white/civilized races, Cooper’s America is supposed to eliminate rather than assimilate the Indian barbarians. In this sense, Cooper’s novel emphasizes the radical otherness of the Indian natives consolidating their savagery by freezing its tents into myth and by emphasizing the racial differences between native and white races.

9. In their attempt to terminate the native Indians, the white settlers considered thousands of years, the history of native Americans prior to Columbus’ arrival as inconsequential. This notion mounts to a political mythology which reinforces the views held by the dominant culture that Indians were primitive savages, infant killers and cannibals living in darkness.

10. In a related context, Francis Paul Prucha points out that the US federal government attempted to erase the Indian identity by calling them American Indians and by forcing them to accept the white man’s moral codes and ways of living. Prucha argues that native Indians were forced to become individual farmers like white Europeans thereby the tribal ties and tribal organizations were undermined and disrupted. Under the pressure of the federal government “the Indians must conform to the white man’s ways, peacefully if they will, forcibly if they must” (75). For more details see, Francis Paul Prucha. *The Indians in American Society: From the Revolutionary War to the Present*. Berkeley: University of California press, 1985. Further, many years after the official closure of the frontier, the federal government paid ultimate efforts to turn the Indians into white American citizens. Alvin Josephy illustrates that “from the time of Jamestown and Plymouth, the most benign attitude of the white man concerning Indians was, assimilate or die. Missionaries and agencies of government tried to rush Indians into becoming Christianized farmers, and from the administration of George Washington until the present day national policy has been directed toward the turning of the Indian into a white man, the alternative seeming to be continued primitivism, economic stagnation, and ultimate obliteration by white society (103). For more details see, Alvin M. Josephy Jr. *The Civil War in the American West*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.

11. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, the colonized Indians are not only racially different but also unequal. To James F. Cooper, the native Indians represent the primitive childhood of the human

race (savagery) and Euro-Americans represent mature humanity (civilization). Therefore, in Cooper's novel, Indians lack proper clothing, writing and agriculture preferring a culture of warfare and hunting. Indians equally lack to the rule of law adopting a politics based on personality and revenge. Though acknowledging that Indians possess their own cultural logic that might be respected, Cooper presents white cultural values as superior to their Indian counterparts.

12. Justifying the Euro-American dispossession of the native Indian, Cooper's leather-stocking fiction particularly *The Last of the Mohicans* removed the Indian in time just as he was being removed physically beyond the Mississippi during Cooper's life. In his defense of an appropriation bill augmenting federal support for the native Indians who had been removed to "Indian territory", Indiana Senator, John Tipton made the following confession by the end of the nineteenth century: "There is something painful in the reflection that these people (the Indians were once numerous and that by our approach they have been reduced to a few. It is natural that we should feel averse to the admission that the true causes of their decline are to be found among us. Hence we have sought for the seat of the disease among them" (cited in Randall Davis 1994: 215).

13. Contributing to the racial delineation of Indians and perpetuating perverted cultural stereotypes, *The Last of the Mohicans* spotlights the necessity of the segregation between the white and Indian races in the New World. The novel's underlying theme affirms that the Indians should be confined to the boundaries set out for them by the white man. Prohibiting interracial relationships between Indians and whites, Cooper's novel reflects the domination of European religion and civilization over the lifestyle and culture of the original inhabitants of the land.

14. The frontier novels of Lydia Maria Child and Catharine Maria Sedgwick are extensions of Cooper's racial concept of the Indian as a savage. They approach the issue of miscegenation and the possibility of establishing interracial relations between Indians and whites.

15. Reflecting a racial attitude toward the native inhabitants of America, Seventeenth century captivity narratives portray the Indian as a savage who must be exterminated in order to pave the way for European expansion and settlement. The savage image of the Indian, popularized by captivity narratives in the American colonial era, is also emphasized in the nineteenth century novels of Cooper, Catharine Maria Sedgwick and Lydia Maria Child as well as in the early twentieth century fiction of Zane Grey. During the colonial era, the seventeenth-century captivity narrative genre, written by famous American Puritan writers, manipulated current western mythology and cultural beliefs about non-European races and minority groups. Affirming Puritan hostility toward Indian culture, William Simmons observes that the Puritans ultimately saw the world as the scene of a continuing battle between the forces of light and darkness, between saints and devils (Simmons 1981: 56). This mental framework provided the Puritans with a ready-made theory for interpreting cultural differences between themselves and the Indians. To them, the Indians were cannibals who worshipped devils and who were bewitched or were themselves

witches. These beliefs became a matter of fact assumptions in the vocabulary of the Puritan captivity narratives.

16. A scrutinized analysis of the testimonies of frontiersmen who were in a lifetime contact with Indians throw doubts on the credibility of Cooper's fictional accounts of the natives as savages. John Cremony criticized Cooper's frontier novels because they "*tended to convey false and erroneous impressions of Indian characters, and have contributed to misguide our legislation on this subject to such an extent as to become a most serious public burden* (Cremony 1951: 310). William "Bigfoot" Wallace, an Indian fighter, clarifies that Cooper's Indians "stalk about in a lofty sort of way, wrapped up in their robes with an eagle's feather on their heads, and talk in a manner that the Indians of this country couldn't comprehend at all"(Cited in Duval 1966: 119). Richard Irving Dodge points out that that Cooper did not know anything about Indian culture and customs: "the ideal Indian of Cooper is a creation of his own prolific brain. No such savage as Uncas ever existed or could exist and no one knew this better than Cooper himself. All hostile Indians are painted as fiends in whom the fiends themselves would have delighted" (Dodge 1959:54). Robert Montgomery Bird states that Cooper's frontier fiction runs counter to nature and common sense. Cooper's frontier fiction runs counter to nature and common sense according to Bird's claim. Bird demonstrates that the young Mohican, Uncas, does not resemble a genuine Indian. Likewise, Magua, the villain of Cooper's tales, is a less untruthful portrait. In Cooper's novels the Indians were presented as stereotypes -"ignorant, violent, debased, brutal: Cooper drew them as they appear in war when all the worst deformities of the savage temperament receive their strongest and fiercest development" (Bird 1939:8).

17. Obviously, Cooper's novel leads to conclusions different from those reached by critics who considered the leather-stocking tale as adventure story on the American frontier. Cooper's image of the Indian and his treatment of the issue of miscegenation affirm that his novel was racially oriented and was written for a white audience. His presentation of the Indian as a savage generates racial stereotypes which eventually resulted into racial delineation and false concepts of superiority and inferiority of the races.

18. In his novels, Cooper rejects any interracial marriage and considers it catastrophic. In *The Pioneers*, the romance between Elizabeth temple and Oliver Edwards, allegedly of mixed Delaware Indians and white ancestry, can only be consummated when it turns out that Oliver Edwards is really Oliver Effingham, a white man in disguise with no mixture of American Indian blood (Cooper1980: 441). In the beginning of the novel, it is assumed that Edwards is part Indian and thus part savage. Due to this premise, Cooper keeps him and Elizabeth separated. People of mixed blood, according to Cooper, cannot be placed on the same socio-economic level as pure white people, thus Oliver and Elizabeth are not permitted to get married. But when it eventually turns out that Oliver is white, heir to part of the Judge's estate and merely an honorary member of the Indian tribe, he is allowed to marry Elizabeth.

19. The most famous fictional incident of Indian drinking involves old John Mohegan in *The Pioneers*. John is depicted in a tavern called *the Bold Dragon*, drinking heavily at the encouragement of several American people: “he is drunk and can do no harm. This is the way with all the savages. Give them liquor and they will make dogs of themselves”(Cooper1980:166).

20. In *The Oak Opening*, Cooper’s last frontier romance, the Potawatomis warriors reached a spot where they discovered a cask of whiskey which was just broken and they consequently fell to their knees at the smell of the liquor. Cooper depicts them at the zenith of their degradation literally rooting their noses into the ground: “once, not satisfied with gratifying the two senses connected with the discoveries named (sight and smell) began to lap with their tongues like dogs, to try the effect of taste” (Cooper 1990: 118). In this context, Cooper claims that “whiskey had unfortunately obtained a power over the native men of this continent likened to the influence of witchcraft” (Cooper 1990: 106).

21. The eventsof *The Last of the Mohicans* took place in 1757 during the French and Indian War, when France and England battled for the colonization of the American and Canadian colonies. Written at a crucial period of the white/Indian conflict, Cooper’s novel promoted the nineteenth century debate on Indian savagery reflecting the stereotypical thinking of the American cultural imagination at that time.

22. As a reflection of the racial structure of American society in the nineteenth century, Cooper’s novel prohibited interracial relations with Indians aggravating the Indian motif by giving readers an image of the Indians as savages who must be isolated in reservations. The same motif was disseminated in the frontier novels of nineteenth-century female authors like Sedgwick and Child.

23. In Cooper’s novel, the white man of the wilderness accepts the Indian as equal because in the wilderness both of them are closer to primitive nature than to white civilization. For example, Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook are outcasts from the civilized world. Chingachgook is the last member of a “once powerful nation”-the Indian Mohicans -and Natty assumes to be the wild white man who lives in the woods and who knows the way of the wilderness and its inhabitants. Both of them are illiterate and both of them kill but only the Indian, Chingachgook, scalps his victims.

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