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THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THOMAS COLE AND JAMES
FENIMORE COOPER.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1976
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192

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THE POWER OF THE LORD IN THE HOWLING WILDERNESS:
THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THOMAS COLE

AND

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

Edward Carl Yasuna, B.A., A.M.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The Cry for an American Art.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Background Painting and Fiction.</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sublimity and Association Psychology</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. James Fenimore Cooper</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Thomas Cole</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLATES</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

*Inter silvas quaerere verum*

Thomas Wharton, 1826

In the early 1820's the American nation could celebrate nearly fifty years of freedom, yet virtually no native aesthetic existed nor were there any novelists or painters in the land who could seriously anticipate Emerson's exhortation, "We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds."¹ The artist in America in 1820 was still mimicking European models, sometimes with qualified success, more usually with an accompanying breakdown of creative force.² The parting with the Old World would come, and soon, though its recognition by many American critics might be slow, as evidenced by Francis Parkman's review of James Fenimore Cooper's *Works* in 1852: "... we are still essentially provincial. England once held us in a state of political dependency. That day is past; but she still holds us in an intellectual dependency far more complete."³ Parkman, not yet thirty but already the historian of the far-reaching and very
American Oregon Trail, should have understood and con­sidered American culture more deeply, for America had begun to sever the oceanic cord during his own infancy.

For this severing, done admittedly with much labor and sometimes questionable quality, Thomas Cole and James Fenimore Cooper deserve primary credit. During the 1820's, half a decade still before Andrew Jackson's election and a full dozen years before Emerson's famous address, Cole and Cooper emerged with almost instant success, both popular and critical, as the first truly American artists to break from European movements and influence and, consciously or otherwise, to incorporate complex and long-developed aesthetics and translate them into something more purely American. Cole and Cooper took one thing that was undeniably American, the land, and wove an American art from it. The content of American painting and fiction could not be English or Italian, French or German; to be American, the material must be native, and the land was what was distinctly American. That fabric that emerged in Cooper and Cole presented the land as dually sublime. In their vision the land was on the one hand threatening and dangerous, but on the other theistic, filled with the immanence of God, and ultimately promising everything to the American.
The newness of Cole and Cooper, what separated them from the artists and writers who went before, is found in this sublimity expressed in the metaphor of the land. But to arrive at the realization that big things were happening in America in the early 1820's, it is first necessary to trace a number of other developments and concerns that preceded these years. To recognize the historical achievement of Cole and Cooper, one must be aware of both the need and the demand for a national art in America while maintaining in perspective the many obstacles that hindered the American artist during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In my opening chapter I shall outline the difficulties that confronted the artist in America before the 1820's but also examine the advantages for a new aesthetic and a new creativity. Such a discussion will also include some comment on the differences between Europe and America then and how these differences affected the artist.

Once the advantages and disadvantages that the new republic offered are understood, Cooper's and Cole's roles in an emerging national consciousness take clearer focus. This focus is further sharpened by an examination of American landscape painting in the decades before Cole's first public exhibition in a framemaker's shop.
in New York in 1825, and by an examination of the American novel before the publication of Cooper's *The Spy* in 1821. These two brief studies will form the large part of Chapter 2, which will conclude with a re-affirmation of Cole and Cooper as first on the scene with a new, American art.

Cooper and Cole, however, did not break with a past and suddenly produce isolated works. Each artist thrived in a time when studies of aesthetics proliferated, and eighteenth-century aesthetic theory strongly influenced both American and European art. One cannot understand the times, nor can one understand Cooper and Cole, without a prior knowledge of this aesthetic climate, especially two movements. Cooper and Cole forged a new art, but it was an art emergent from one hundred and fifty years that saw theories of the sublime develop and take strong root in the minds of the romantic generation at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, both in America and abroad. Edmund Burke seems the most important thinker on the sublime and the key influence on developments in American literature and painting, but theories from Longinus to Kant should be understood.

In addition to an awareness of the sublime as a developing aesthetic, one should be familiar with the
Scottish School of Common Sense, associationist psychology, and Archibald Alison to understand popular theories about man and the natural world in America in 1820. Alison's impact on American culture and thought in the early nineteenth century cannot be overstressed, for his theory that external objects, colors, motions, and shapes elicit responses or associations from the perceiver is critical to the cultivation of the new ground that Cooper and Cole each work.

Chapter 3 will outline associationist theory, as well as ideas on the sublime, and will then consider how in America the land became the controlling metaphor, through associations, for a new expression of a sublimity both gothic and theistic. This dual sublimity seems evident throughout Cole's major landscape paintings and is equally dominant in his poetry. Likewise, Cooper, in his five Leatherstocking Novels that appeared between 1823 and 1841, uses the land as a similar metaphor to express a similar duality. Chapters 4 and 5 will examine the landscape vision in these paintings and novels, and will show that Cooper and Cole were, like Emerson's scholar, men "who must take up into [themselves] all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future."
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


2. Washington Allston, for example, returning from Europe in 1818 a tremendous continental success, spent the last twenty-three years of his life, until 1843, vainly trying to complete his painting Belshazzar's Feast, commissioned in Boston in 1820.


4. Precaution, his first novel, appeared in 1820, but that book, written in response to the now famous dare from his wife, is more a bad European imitation than a new American creation.


How I have walked, day after day, and all alone, to see if there was not something among the old things which was new.

Thomas Cole

... with the power of the Lord so manifest in this howling wilderness,

James Fenimore Cooper
CHAPTER 1

Are there no scenes to touch the poet's soul?
No deeds of arms to wake the lordly strain?
Shall Hudson's billows unregarded roll?
Has Warren fought, has Montgomery died in vain?
Shame!

Joseph Rodman Drake

In his poem "To A Friend," Joseph Rodman Drake became but one of many in the young republic decrying the lack of a native art, a native literature. Addressing himself to the poet Fitz-Greene Halleck around 1810, Drake expressed the growing awareness in America that, in spite of over a quarter century of independence, no national art or literature independent of Europe, and especially England, had sprung up. The shame that Drake writes of remained in America for at least another decade, though a "new" art was constantly pursued during those years, and for many thereafter.

The demand for a new art was not merely a chauvinist plea; there were numerous valid reasons why a native aesthetic was desirable. Foremost of these reasons, perhaps, centered around the need to create a national identity. For almost two hundred
years the American creative imagination had labored in the shadows of Europe and its centuries-old culture and tradition. An art asserting American values and employing American materials would help the country come from these shadows. The War of 1812 helped ready the stage for just such a performance. America, freed from European entanglements, could raise the curtain on three generations of unmatched and unbridled nationalistic optimism and expansion.

"Come then, Sun of Art," began Richard Ray, somewhat bombastically before the American Academy of Fine Arts in 1825. Americans were awakening to the immense physical presence of their country, and this awareness led to a second reason for an American art: the artist was a fool to mimic English subjects and not use the tools that the American land so freely offered. Continued Mr. Ray,

the Genius of your country points you to its stupendous cataracts, its highlands intersected with the majestic river, its ranging mountains, its softer and enchanting scenery. There, where Nature needs no fictitious charms, where the eye requires no borrowed assistance from the memory, place on the canvas the lovely landscape, and adorn our houses with American prospects and American skies.

For the next forty years, the demand would be to paint and write about America. There would be dissenting
voices and wagging fingers concerned with the lack of history and proper psychological associations in the land, but these voices were never so numerous or powerful as those clamoring for the artistic use of native matter.

Americans were, perhaps justifiably, obsessed with Europe. They recognized it as both a repository of all that was rich, cultured, and old, and simultaneously, an expanse of quicksand into which America's young, green writers and painters could flounder. Emerson recognized the dangers of artistically responding to external objects in dated, traditional ways in his essay "Nature." "When I behold a rich landscape," he wrote in 1836, "it is less to my purpose to recite correctly the order and superposition of the strata, than to know why all thought of multitude is lost in a tranquil sense of unity." Beware prescribed rules, he romantically cautions, for therein lies the danger of the Old World.

Cooper perceived the urgency of establishing a native school in a letter to the sculptor Horatio Greenough. "All that is wanting is men of talents to give the country a tone and confidence in itself. We must break the chain of mental dependence which enslaves us." In a letter from 1830 Cooper praised American
artists, especially Greenough, and encouraged American patrons to commission works from them, and not ask for copies of European art. Two years later Cooper addressed himself to Andrew Jackson in the White House, urging the President as the spokesman for the government to offer a commission to Greenough, the "only American sculptor." His letter continued with the hope that support of American artists in general would follow.5

Europe might offer the young artist unlimited insights into the arts, but it could also freeze that artist in time and place, inhibiting growth and sucking him into the past, into imitation and repetition. When Cole, already the foremost landscape painter in the United States, left for his first trip to Europe since he had arrived in America eleven years earlier in 1818, his friend William Cullen Bryant, fearful of what might happen to the twenty-eight year old painter abroad, penned a sonnet "To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe."

Thine eyes shall see the light of distant skies; Yet, Cole! thy heart shall bear to Europe's strand A living image of our own bright land, Such as upon thy glorious canvas lies.

Lone lakes--savannahs where the bison roves-- Rocks rich with summer garlands--solemn streams-- Skies where the desert eagle wheels and screams-- Spring bloom and autumn blaze of boundless groves.
Fair scenes shall greet thee where thou goest—fair
But different—everywhere the trace of men.
Paths, homes, graves, ruins, from the lowest glen
To where life shrinks from the fierce Alpine air.
Gaze on them, till the tears shall dim thy sight,
But keep that earlier, wilder image bright.6

Bryant, extolling the brightness and boundlessness of America, understood that Cole had learned his craft in America; would Europe alter or dim his vision or would he return to America and "keep that earlier, wilder image bright?"

"Why should we grope among the dry bones of the past ...?" asked Emerson, and he answered his own question a moment later: "There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works...."7

"Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close.... We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe."8

The very presence of Europe, be it gleaming 'cross the sea with its museums and galleries, palaces and ruins, or squatting behind the American and cancerously chewing on his new land, became yet another reason for the urging and developing of an American art and an American literature.

John Neal, one of the first art critics in America and sometime novelist, detailed yet another reason why the new nation needed its own art. Neal, jack of many
trades--haberdasher's clerk, soldier, writer, critic, lawyer--possessed an unwavering faith and an optimism in America, and in 1830 published a tiny book at Portland, Maine, titled Our Country. For thirty-six pages he predicts in florid prose the nation's downfall, the "Retrocession of Empire," but outlines finally what can save the nearly doomed republic. He stresses educating the children and keeping "the clergy upon their good behaviour," and adds that the country must reform its laws, and its lawyers too. Furthermore, the press must be purified and honest men promoted.

Whether the fate of the nation was really contingent upon Neal's dicta is questionable, but his last prescription is most interesting: "we may encourage native literature" to help save the nation.\(^\text{10}\)

There is at least one further compelling force behind the creation of an American aesthetic in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. Historically, the second and third generations of art movements have been judged more harshly than the first generation. What possesses force and energy when original most often becomes imitative and vapid when reworked by succeeding artists. Baroque disintegrates into rococo ornamentation, romanticism slips into sentimentality, art created solely for and according
to fashioned and fashionable rules is the mutation of neoclassicism. For an American art to copy European models, to imitate forms and subjects that belong "over there," is to risk all. Impotent and mannered painting would be the result. Art, to live in America, had to be "realizing westward," as Robert Frost has written, to be born from within, not adopted from without.
The presence, physical and psychological both, of Europe and all its history hindered a new art in America. The muse in Europe was old, indeed, and most compelling, and the American response to this muse was long, loud, and unresolved. Virtually every American artist felt obliged to make the "Grand Tour"; many, in fact, relished such a prospect, including both Cole and Cooper. Arguments over the merits of study abroad consumed artists; some who went to Europe, such as Benjamin West, never returned; others returned but never created with the same zest or imagination, including Washington Allston. None denied that there was much to see in Europe; the conflict usually centered on the use of European style and matter, or, conversely, the use of American forms and materials. Some of these problems and conflicts demand a closer look.

Joseph Rodman Drake had charged the American people with "Shame!" for not producing poets and painters worthy of America's history and landscape. His own verse, ironically enough, is a prime example of all that he decried. In forced, stilted, imitative
Spenserian stanzas, Drake fell victim to the very sins he was attacking. Nevertheless, what he pointed at was a key stumbling block to the American writer and painter. He continued in his poem "To A Friend" to raise the nationalist cry and ask why it is left to foreign talent the task of creating from American stuff.

while every mountain, stream, and plain
Hath theme for truth's proud voice on fancy's wand,
No native bard the patriot harp hath ta'en,
But left to minstrel of a foreign strand
To sing the beauteous scenes of nature's loveliest land. 12

The celebration surrounding the opening of the Erie Canal illustrates America's dependence on European forms and models. DeWitt Clinton, Governor of New York, accorded the honor of glorifying one of the signal chapters of American history to the Scottish drawing instructor Alexander Robertson, who commemorated the event with a painting of hoofed Pan canoeing from the frontier into New York, bearing goods from the settlements to the big port, to be greeted by the merman Triton and by Neptune, armed with his classic trident (Plate 1). 13 No wonder Drake cried "Shame!"

But Drake wasn't finished; he didn't merely grieve the leaving of American stuff to Old World painters and poets, and to Old World neoclassical
conceptions, he also demanded that Americans answer his charge and not only use the American land but create works that will make Europe take notice:

Waft wide the wonders of your native clime,
With patriot pride and patriot heart inspire,
Till wondering Europe hear Columbia's matchless lyre.

Drake, considered by Poe in 1836 America's leading poet along with Halleck, asserted both the need for an American aesthetic and the potential superiority of that aesthetic.  

But America was afflicted with a severe case of Europe-itis. Hardly a traveller, be it the European discovering America for the first time, or the American touring the continent, failed to compare mores, fashions, or scenery, and the number of travel books, essays, and letters delineating the virtues or faults of both worlds is staggering. Much of the comparisons naturally stemmed from simple bewilderment and awe. Cooper, for example, in 1831, wrote to Benjamin Silliman,

When I first reached Europe I was all wonder at the ignorance of this part of the world concerning ourselves, and now that I have leisure to look about me, I am all wonder at the ignorance of America concerning Europe.
The American Scott, as Cooper came to be known, and not entirely to his displeasure, never outgrew the virtually obsessive fascination with American-European contrasts, and in *The Home Book of the Picturesque*, published a year after his death, in 1852, Cooper's essay "American and European Scenery Compared" appeared. "America generally is impressed with an air of freshness, youthfulness," he wrote, "and in many instances, to use a coarse but expressive term, rawness, that are seldom, if ever, met with in Europe." Cooper, for all his waverings about the merits of one landscape or the other, has touched upon a crucial point here. America is different from Europe, and that difference revolves about America's newness.¹⁷

Thomas Cole, too, gazed at the European landscape, but he found the scenery of his beloved Catskills most thrilling and, hence, fit for his art. Susan Fenimore Cooper, daughter of the novelist, also wrote an essay on American scenery for *The Home Book of the Picturesque* about "those sublime [American] scenes, where no trace of man meets the eye..."¹⁸ She might well have had in mind Bryant's words:

Fair scenes shall greet thee where thou goest--fair
But different--everywhere the trace of men.
Much American land was without trace of men, as Cole himself knew. In a letter to his patron Robert Gilmor shortly before leaving for Europe in 1829, Cole wrote that he was planning a visit to Niagara Falls: "I cannot think of going to Europe without having seen them. I wish to take a 'last, lingering look' at our wild scenery. I shall endeavour to impress its features so strongly on my mind that, in the midst of the fine scenery of other countries, their grand and beautiful peculiarities shall not be erased."

Cole remembered the reason for his westward excursion well. Europe and its scenery touched him strongly, yet each favorable impression only led to a greater appreciation of his native vistas. He wrote to Gilmor again, on January 29, 1832:

The galleries of Florence are paradises to a painter. I have seen no natural scenery yet that has affected me so powerfully as I have found in the wilderness places of America, and though there are peculiar softnesses and beauty in Italian skies, ours are far more gorgeous.

Ten years later, on another trip to Europe, Cole's love for the beauties of America remained steady, though his canvases were now beginning to depend more and more on religious allegory. "Must I tell you," he wrote to George Washington Greene,
Consul at Rome and later biographer of both Cole and Cooper,

that neither the Alps nor the Apennines, no, nor even Aetna itself, have dimmed, in my eyes, the beauty of our own Catskills? It seems to me that I look on American scenery, if it were possible, with increased pleasure. It has its own peculiar charm—a something not found elsewhere. I am content with nature: would that I were with art! 21

Cole's preference for American scenery, however, was not simply a chauvinist stance or a gut response. He knew why the two sceneries were so often contrasted and he understood what many so often found lacking in the New World. The aesthetics of the eighteenth century were still powerful forces in America during the early years of the nineteenth century, and hardly a traveller could notice landscape and not attempt to integrate some knowledge of the beautiful or the picturesque or the sublime, and some acquaintance with association psychology, into his remarks on and appreciation of that landscape.

Cole knew well these aesthetics, but allowed little sympathy for those who maintained excessively narrow aesthetic positions. Before the American Lyceum in 1836 he presented an address that was later printed in The American Monthly Magazine in which he criticized
condemnations of American scenery on associationist grounds.

There are those who through ignorance or prejudice strive to maintain that American scenery ... [is] destitute of those vestiges of antiquity, whose associations so strongly affect the mind, [that] it may not be compared with European scenery. 22

Not only were the painters and writers of this time constantly aware of the differences between the two sceneries, and the art and literary critics ever writing of the effects of these differences in native arts, but, if one can trust the theatre of the 1820's and 1830's, the average educated person in America was also quite familiar with the obsession and easily amused by the differences in taste.

William Dunlap, novelist, theatre manager, critic, translator, painter, founder of the National Academy of Design, and author of the all-inclusive History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, had his finger on the pulse of his times. In 1830 he published a short theatrical farce, A Trip to Niagara, in which the Old World English dandy, Wentworth, and his romantic sister, Amelia, are travelling from New York City to Niagara Falls, to view that most American spectacular. The following dialogue illustrates the
theatre-goer's interest in the ubiquitous controversy:

Wentworth: ... I should have gone to Rome, and looked with delight on the ruins of greatness. But here every thing is new--no ivory crowned towers! no mouldering monuments--nothing worth a traveller's crossing a kennel to see--all fresh--all bright....

Amelia: Yes, all fresh, in youth, strength and beauty.... Better the prospect of a glorious futurity, than the remains of past greatness.

Wentworth: ... A traveller's delight is the remains of cities and temples, the proofs of Time's resistless power--as the poet says.--Give me broken pillars and obliterated inscriptions, bricks from Babel, and mummies from Egypt.

Amelia: And give me present joy, in scenes of happiness spread around me, by the hand of my beneficent Creator.

Amelia recognizes the dual sublimity of the American continent, the ominous, wild, impressive wonders that, at the same time, offer proof for the existence of God's hand in this raw, new world. Her brother only has eyes for the past. 23

Cole was to echo and re-echo this duality in most of his landscape paintings and poems, and even in many of his letters, journal entries, and essays. He added to his life-long explication of the differences between European and American landscapes in his "Essay on
American Scenery."

... the most distinctive, and perhaps the most impressive, characteristic of American scenery is its wildness.

It is the most distinctive, because in civilized Europe the primitive features of scenery have long since been destroyed or modified... with the improvement of cultivation the sublimity of the wilderness should pass away... 24

The on-going comparisons finally led to the prescription, "Separation from Europe." 25

The controversy over the relative merits of European and American scenery may not have been resolved, and in fact would continue well past mid-century, but the results of the controversy were apparent as early as the first years of the century. Thomas Cole added his powerful voice to those that had gone before, and on July 6, 1835, he made an entry in his journal that, as much as anything he was ever to write, set forth his credo.

The painter of American scenery has, indeed, privileges superior to any other. All nature here is new to art. No Tivolis, Ternis, Mont Blancs, Plinlimmons, hackneyed and worn by the daily pencils of hundreds; but primeval forests, virgin lakes and waterfalls, feasting his eye with new delights, and filling his portfolio with their features of beauty and magnificence, hallowed to his soul by their freshness from the creation, for his own favoured pencil. 26
Here he spelled out, neatly and precisely, the specialness of the American land. Its newness and freshness, its beauty and grandeur, and its closeness to God, would enable the land, as it was perceived within the American imagination, to become instrumental, indeed imperative, in a new American aesthetic.
Cole was opening doors into America, perhaps even faster than he himself realized. Comparisons between European and American landscape had led most American artists, writers, and critics to the conclusion that, if literature and painting were to succeed in America, the American landscape must become the subject of that new art. The major voice in art circles in mid-century America, the singular quality of the American land that both separated it from the European and qualified it as the substance of this art was its freshness. The art critic James Jackson Jarves, who was, along with Henry T. Tuckerman, the major voice in art circles in mid-century America, wrote in The Art-Idea that "American soil, but half rescued from the wild embrace of the wilderness, is a virgin field of art." When Jarves wrote this passage in 1864 he was referring to the early formative years of American painting at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but he was only reiterating what Cole had entered in his journal nearly thirty years earlier.

Cole, who was among the first American artists to focus on the American landscape, had realized early on the potential of the land to inspire a new form of art. His paintings of the American wilderness were not simply portraits of nature, but rather expressions of his own experience and emotions. That experience was shared by other artists of the time who saw the land as a source of national pride and identity. As a result, the American landscape became a subject of art, and the freshness and originality of the land was celebrated in the works of artists like Cole, who recognized its potential for artistic expression.
Except along the Atlantic coast, America in 1820 was primarily wilderness. A trip across the Alleghenies was formidable then, and only few settlements existed west of the Appalachian Mountains, aside from those that rimmed the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The land was, for the most part, virginal and innocent, and to the mind of the romantics conjured up images of Rousseau's savage state which, if it existed anywhere in the world in 1820, existed in America. The Rousseau ideal couldn't easily be found in Europe, for everywhere was "the trace of men." But America was Eden again, pure, unspotted: "... the fresh civilization of America is wholly different in aspect from that of the old world" wrote Susan Fenimore Cooper in 1852; "there is no blending of the old and the new in this country; there is nothing old among us."  

"Innocent," "virginal," "Edenic," "pure," "fresh," "unspotted," "new": all these words apply, yet they only begin to testify to the specialness of the American land as territory for the creative artist. The viscomte de Chateaubriand, after his visit to the United States in 1791, claimed to recognize the one exceptional thing about America from which an American art could grow. He wrote, "Il n'y a de vieux en Amerique, que les bois, enfants de la terre..." The land is old, and Cole
and Cooper saw that.

America's defect, if lacking vestiges of older, decayed civilizations is a defect, was bemoaned by virtually all the major artistic and literary figures of the period who realized that a paucity of crumbling edifices and broken walls and ruined halls not only left the American landscape barren of sublime objects but of: psychological associations as well.

Cooper, in his Preface to the second edition of The Spy in 1822, acknowledged America's supposed defect: "... if we have got no lords and castles in the book," he explains, "it is because there are none in the country." He elaborated further on this in his Preface to the next edition, that same year, when he rather apologetically acknowledged the following:

... notwithstanding that a murder is at all times a serious business, it is much more interesting in a castle, than in a corn field. In short, all that glow, which can be given to a tale, through the aid of obscure legends, artificial distinctions, and images connected with the association of the ideas, is not attainable in this land of facts. 31

Cooper resolved the problem of dull corn field murders by using melodrama as a dramatic device. 32
Later, writing in his essay "American and European Scenery Compared," Cooper rightly equated the picturesque with ruins, which can also be sublime, and pointed out that his native land had none.

Nothing of the sort, of course, is to be met with here, for we have no castles, have never felt the necessity of fortified towns, and had no existence at the period when works of this nature came within the ordinary appliances of society. It is not to be denied that so far as the landscape is concerned, the customs of the middle ages constructed much the most picturesque and striking collections of human habitations.

Cole, too, saw a landscape without ruins and he too recognized that the artist in America would have to overcome the concurrent lack of associations. "You see no ruined tower to tell of outrage—no gorgeous temple to speak of ostentation" he wrote. But, unlike Cooper, he did not feel that this was a major artistic liability for the new country.

In Bracebridge Hall, a volume of essays and sketches published in 1822, Washington Irving's fictional hero apologizes to his English friends for his native country and assumes the ignorant bumpkin pose, both in defense of and as a result of his country's failure to supply him with picturesque ruins. Naturally, this figure is
fascinated by the English countryside and its wealth of relics. "To a man from a young country," begins Irving's hero, "all old things are in a manner new; and he may surely be excused in being a little curious about antiquities, whose native land, unfortunately, cannot boast of a single ruin."35

Ruins, however, by themselves, were merely rotted buildings. More was needed by way of association; the ruins had to evoke psychological associations, and, of course, it was the past which usually was recalled by the sight of deteriorating forms. But the past did not have to be entirely historical; legends and myths could also be evoked, and such associations were also lacking in America. Irving was to people the Catskill region with legendary characters, Rip van Winkles and Ichabod Cranes and headless horsemen, but before this somewhat artificially created mythos, America had no fictitious past, and the seemingly ubiquitous Drake noted this too in his poem to Halleck:

'Tis true, no fairies haunt our verdant meads,
No grinning imps deform our blazing hearth;
Beneath the kelpie's fang no traveller bleeds,
Nor gory vampire taints our holy earth,
Nor spectres stalk to frighten harmless mirth,
Nor tortured demon howls adown the gale....36
Drake offered a solution whereby the American artist could avoid a prosaic past. He urged that the American develop a new mythology, a mythology that would create an instant past, with heroes, history, and concurrent associations.

Arouse my friend, let vivid fancy soar,
Look with creative eye on nature's face,
Bid airy sprites in wild Niagara roar,
And view in every field a fairy race.
Spur thy good Pacelot to speed apace,
And spread a train of nymphs on every shore;
Or if thy muse would woo a ruder grace,
The Indian's evil manitous explore,
And rear the wondrous tale of legendary lore.

Irving was to create a Catskill mythology and Cooper would use the Indian, the pioneer, and the Adamic Natty Bumppo in the Edenic wilderness as mythic frameworks in his most successful novels.

Drake also saw that other tales from America's history could supply the needed mythos, and he specified the abduction and killing of Jane McCrea by Indians as a prime example. This incident had already been recorded in painting by John Vanderlyn and Washington Allston and in fiction by Hilliard d'Auberteuil.

Cooper and Cole, Irving and Drake were moving towards a consciousness that America, although deficient in broken medieval remnants, was not in itself deficient, for the land and the brief history enacted upon that land
could conjure up many of the psychological associations that ruins usually did. Cooper presented a rather paradoxical perverseness in one of his travel books, *Gleanings in Europe: France*, published in 1837 though based on his stay in France between 1826 and 1828. He noted that it was the American, the person of the future, who was mesmerized by the antiquities of Europe, whereas the European, couched in centuries of webbed history, was often aglow with wonder at the American wilderness. "The European who comes to America" observed Cooper, "plunges into the virgin forest with wonder and delight, while the American who goes to Europe finds his greatest pleasure, at first, in hunting up the memorials of the past."39

But Cooper seems to have misjudged the American's fascination with the past, for the American also recognized the aesthetic worth of his own land. W. L. Nathan asserts that since "America had no medieval castles or cathedrals to evoke romantic longings for the past, her writers—and shortly after, her painters—responded to the appeal of her picturesque nature and colorful history."40 And Cole's friend, James A. Hillhouse, stressed the power of American nature as a subject for the creative artist far more poetically and romantically:
True, we have no mouldering ruins of feudal power, and none of the romantic legends which linger round them, to elicit the unsuspected spark of genius, and to fan its flame. Our forests breathe upon us the freshness of primeval nature, or waft to the ear of fancy only the indignant yell of the dislodged and retiring savage. Whoever rises here, must rise by irrepressible internal energies, and the impulse of the noblest of inspirations,—the grand eternal forms of nature. Vast, solitary, and sublime, pressing on the mind the symbols of creative power, rather than mementos of departed human pride....

An American antiquity had been found--the land--and when Barbara Novak observes that "America's search for some sense of past in the raw new world focused on an idea of landscape" she is merely echoing the understanding that was rampant in America during the first third of the nineteenth century. What Chateaubriand realized in 1791 was to become dominant in the thinking of Americans and Europeans writing about the New World, from Cooper to Scott, from Cole to de Tocqueville. Cole's biographer, the Reverend L. L. Noble, depicts his artist friend as a veritable American Adam, seeing the American trees as monuments of antiquity.

... they were living creatures, ever beautiful, ever new: and so the last time of looking was as the first, and nature grew to him [Cole] youthful
instead of older, and covered tokens of heaven and immortality in its mouldering trunks, as ashes cover the living coals.\textsuperscript{43}

Not only was the land being recognized as something old, filled with psychological associations of the past, and fit for art, but the recognition of all this led to a more purely American aesthetic. Fenimore Cooper's daughter, Susan, when asked what "monuments of our period" would remain if the civilized world were overrun by barbarians, answered, "the mingled vegetation, the trees, the plants, ay, the very woods."\textsuperscript{44}

De Tocqueville, Irving, Scott, and Cooper took turns at verbal landscape painting, each, in rather long passages which I should nevertheless like to quote in full, turning to the American land, to American trees, to American nature as sublime monuments to a traceless past.

In \textit{Democracy in America}, published in 1835, de Tocqueville included the following comment on the antiquity of America:

In these, as in the forests of the Old World, destruction was perpetually going on. The ruins of vegetation were heaped upon each other; but there was no laboring hand to remove them, and their decay was not rapid enough to make room for the continual work of reproduction.
Climbing-plants, grasses, and other herbs forced their way through the mass of dying trees; they crept along their bending trunks, found nourishment in their dusty cavities, and a passage beneath the lifeless bark. Thus decay gave its assistance to life, and their respective productions were mingled together. The depths of these forests were gloomy and obscure, and a thousand rivulets, undirected in their course by human industry, preserved in them a constant moisture. It was rare to meet with flowers, wild fruits, or birds, beneath their shades. The fall of a tree overthrown by age, the rushing torrent of a cataract, the lowing of a buffalo, and the howling of the wind, were the only sounds which broke the silence of nature.

Irving, in *Bracebridge Hall*, also saw giant trees as America's ruins, and in powerful and poetic language described the following scene:

I have paused more than once in the wilderness of America, to contemplate the traces of some blast of wind, which seemed to have rushed down from the clouds, and ripped its way through the bosom of the woodlands; rooting up, shivering, and splintering the stoutest trees, and leaving a long track of desolation. There was something awful in the vast havoc made among these gigantic plants;... I recollect, also, hearing a traveller of poetic temperament expressing the kind of horror which he felt on beholding, on the banks of the Missouri, an oak of prodigious size, which had been, in a manner, overpowered by an enormous wild grapevine. The vine had clasped its huge folds round the trunk, and thence had wound about
every branch and twig, until the mighty tree had withered in its embrace. It seemed like Laocoon struggling ineffectually in the hideous coils of the monster Python. It was the lion of trees perishing in the embraces of a vegetable boa.46

Irving's Crayon Miscellany quotes Sir Walter Scott on the same subject. Scott likens American trees to monuments of antiquity and sublimity:

There is nothing I should like more than to be in the midst of one of your grand, wild, original forests: with the idea of hundreds of miles of untrodden forest around me. I once saw, at Leith, an immense stick of timber, just landed from America.... it seemed like one of the gigantic obelisks which are now and then brought from Egypt,... and, in fact, these vast aboriginal trees ... are the monuments and antiquities of your country.47

Cooper, however, though always a patriot, most often found Europe more desirable and attractive than America, in part because of the development through the centuries of refined manners, and in part because of the intricate associations and evocations of the European landscape. But in Home as Found, a novel sharply critical of American manners and boorishness, Cooper nevertheless allows his heroine to recognize
America's answer to continental ruins. Eve Effingham is found gazing at a giant tree deep in the New York State forests of her home, after an extended tour of Europe.

... its increase, for a thousand years, had been upwards; and it now stood in solitary glory, a memorial of what the mountains which were yet so rich in vegetation had really been in their days of nature and pride. For near a hundred feet above the eye, the even, round trunk was branchless, and then commenced the dark-green masses of foliage, which clung around the stem like smoke ascending in wreaths. The tall, column-like tree had inclined towards the light when struggling among its fellows, and it now so far overhung the lake, that its summit may have been some ten or fifteen feet without the base. A gentle, graceful curve added to the effect of this variation from the perpendicular, and infused enough of the fearful into the grand, to render the picture sublime....

"It is indeed eloquent," answered Eve; "one hears it speak even now ... of all that has passed on the Otsego. ... When the Conqueror first landed in England this tree stood on the spot where it now stands! Here, then, is at last an American antiquity!" 48

Cooper has finally acknowledged, "at last," something old in America. His hesitation to do so, and his championing European models, manners, and history, seems indeed ironic, for he had been working with the sublimity of American monuments and ruins.
that is, nature, since his earliest novels, as I shall discuss in Chapter 4. America did have something old, the land, and both Cooper and Cole were to use that land in their most successful works.
If men of letters, including Cole and Cooper, abundantly recognized the antiquity and, hence, artistic value of the American land, many could still not escape the seeming paradox that America was nevertheless a handicap that the native artist would either have to shuck off or wrestle with. The relative newness of the country, the visible lack of ruins, and the psychological inferiority created by the omni-present awareness of the centuries of culture and art in England and western Europe, all remained paramount to the American writer and painter. Cooper could not escape this paradox, nor later could Hawthorne or Henry James, entirely. But what Cooper referred to as "the poverty of materials" in America was but one yoke that the artist in the United States had to labor under during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. The disadvantages were numerous and monumentally restricting, and even while Cole and Cooper were working out new ways to Americanize painting and the novel, these hardships continued to plague them both.
Cooper wrote in his *Notions of the Americans*, more than thirty years before Hawthorne was to echo the same sentiments, that American literature was locked in a giant struggle, weakened and impeded by the flimsiness of its potential subject matter.

There is scarcely an ore which contributes to the wealth of the author, that is found here, in veins as rich as in Europe. There are no annals for the historian; no follies (beyond the most vulgar and commonplace) for the satirist; no manners for the dramatist; no obscure fictions for the writer of romance; no gross and hardy offences against decorum for the moralist; nor any of the rich artificial auxiliaries of poetry.49

That he himself had already found American material for historical romance in both *The Spy* (1821) and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) seems not to have heartened Cooper; that the satiric *Monikins* (1835) would appear within seven years and the highly moralistic and didactic social criticism of the Littlepage trilogy (1845-1846) would follow the equally preachy *Homeward Bound* and *Home as Found* (1838) he perhaps could not anticipate. In short, the poverty of materials that Cooper discerned did not hamper his own literary output, but he nevertheless was putting his finger on the
foremost problem for the writer (and the painter),
the limited past.

Nathaniel Hawthorne stressed this problem in the
now-famous passage that appeared in his Preface to The
Marble Faun in 1860. He wrote that

No author, without a trial, can
conceive of the difficulty of
writing a romance about a country
where there is no shadow, no
antiquity, no mystery, no
picturesque and gloomy wrong,
nor anything but a commonplace
prosperity, in broad and simple
daylight, as is happily the case
with my dear native land. It
will be very long, I trust, before
romance-writers may find congenial
and easily handled themes, either
in the annals of our stalwart
republic, or in any characteristic
and probable events of our
individual lives. Romance and
poetry, ivy, lichens, and wall-flowers,
need ruin to make them grow.50

But ten years earlier Hawthorne had produced The Scarlet
Letter, an American romance forged from American materials,
and followed that novel with The House of the Seven Gables
and The Blithedale Romance.

In 1879, fifteen years after Hawthorne's death,
Henry James produced an extensive critical study of
Hawthorne and American culture and society in the
nineteenth century. James recognized, as had Cooper
and Hawthorne before him, that a literature must have
roots in an historically developed past, but unlike both Cooper and Hawthorne, James understood that America now had, in the nineteenth century, such a developed past, and that the American writer did have sufficient material. James observed that

the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion. American civilization has hitherto had other things to do than to produce flowers, and before giving birth to writers it has wisely occupied itself with providing something for them to write about. 51

The American past did present difficulties, but they were not as oppressive and overwhelming as Cooper and Hawthorne would have us believe.

Why, then, did James, Hawthorne, and Cooper complain of the lack of materials available to the American writer? Theory and practice seem miles apart, for all three had already produced successful novels from the very material which they claimed did not exist. Their collective whinings smack of convention, and serve, indeed self-serve, certain functions. All three could account for any possible failure in previous writings by pointing out the paucity of subject matter. Likewise, if the writing is successful, then the success is all the greater, for
the novelist will have overcome such a giant handicap. Furthermore, all three were turning to European subjects more and more at the time of their grumblings about America's empty past, Hawthorne in *The Marble Faun*, James in most of his novels, and Cooper in *The Bravo* (1831), *The Heidenmauer* (1832), and *The Headsman* (1833). To emphasize, and even over-emphasize, the problems of the American writer is to justify turning to Europe, as each was doing.

The historical limitations that gnawed at Cooper, Hawthorne, and James, and dozens others like them, arose not out of a totally deficient past, but from a past that failed to match up to that of Britain and France and Italy. No less a figure than John Ruskin, in his autobiographical book *Praeterita* (1885-1889), explained why he had never travelled to America. He wrote, "... though I have kind invitations enough to visit America, I could not, even for a couple of months, live in a country so miserable as to possess no castles." Either Ruskin is being fatuous or he is quite shallow, for it seems almost impossible to take him seriously.

Nevertheless, the American artist would most likely have agreed with James Jackson Jarves' observation that America "has no antecedent art." He would have found that his country presented a paucity of history, mythology,
and antiquity, and the psychological burden of such a finding was indeed heavy. Yet people like Cooper seem to relish this obstacle, making the monster larger than it really is, so that the triumph emerges all the more glorious.

But added to whatever psychological disadvantages that may have existed, numerous very real physical impediments hampered the rise and development of both literature and painting in the United States prior to 1820. Perhaps the realest, most physical disadvantage involved the conditions of life themselves. Art is often a luxury, and perhaps even impossible, when daily life is harsh, drab, and perilous. "While men have to contend with stern nature," wrote Jarves with equal sternness in 1855, "winning civilization step by step from the wilderness, they have no leisure for aught but the necessary." And the Reverend George W. Bethune, in The Home Book, added to this the pragmatism of the Puritan ethic as another burden under which the arts suffered in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America.

Men living in log cabins and busied all day in field, workshop, or warehouse, and liable to attack by savage enemies at any moment, were indisposed to seek after or encourage what was not immediately useful. Their hard-earned and precarious gains would not justify the indulgence. There
were few, or rather no specimens
of artistic skill among them to
awaken taste or imitation. It is,
therefore, little to be wondered
at, if they did not show an
appreciation of Art.55

In colonial America there was a people engaged in
clearing the forests, planting first crops, surveying
for roads and walls, harnessing the land, building
villages and towns, in short, preparing for the creation
of a country. There was neither the time nor the money
for much beyond the essential, and what little
encouragement to the arts existed, usually was
realized in portraiture. Even after the successful
revolution when America became an independent nation,
much remained to be done, and the arts were often
relegated to second-class citizenship. The problems
of forming a new government, coupled with severe economic
depression and the exodus of many loyalists and their
money, cramped the fine arts, and proved but one of
many oppressive disadvantages that discouraged a native
art from emerging prior to Cooper and Cole.56

Not only did the new land demand time and energy
from its people that might have been directed towards a
new art, the land itself, by its sheer bulk and vastness,
 arbitrated against the artist. For the first 150 years,
the American wandered from the perimeter of his farm or village only on the rarest of circumstances, and was ever mindful of the dangers lurking in the wilds, be they Indians or animals or the mere unknown. America's abundant scenery was discovered slowly, for even if the settler wished to travel about the country, travel was difficult. Roads were poor or non-existent, and the horse, or one's own feet, were the primary means of transportation. One didn't go far, and this added to the slowness with which the American painter and author turned to America as suitable subject matter for their art.  

Perhaps it came as a result of too much attention directed towards the hewing out of a new nation, perhaps it was an unfortunate by-product of the great melting pot, perhaps an extension of the somber work ethic that dominated America from the first; whatever, many critics sensed a certain lack of imagination in the American people, and an homogeneity that militated against the development of an artistic class. Jarves feared this in The Art-Idea, first published in 1864. He contended that

If the eye is trained to see only a bush, it sees nothing more; but if the inner vision is opened, as with Moses, the angel of the Lord is beheld "in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush."

57

58
Jarves went on to discuss the "want of imagination" in America that prevented the people from satisfactorily enjoying art and, by extension, prevented the artist from creating for a receptive public.

Cooper, at his most vituperative and least tactful, expressed similar sentiments in two letters to Horatio Greenough, his friend and the most prominent sculptor in America between 1830 and his death in 1852. In 1836 Cooper wrote, rather unsubtly: "As for any feeling with either the arts or literature it [America] has none."59 In equally caustic fashion he explained to Greenough seven years later just why the statue of George Washington his friend had produced was not successful (Plate 2). "As for your Washington, the criticism I hear about it amounts to this--it is naked, and Washington wore clothes." Cooper continued, in that letter, and extrapolated his understandings to include all of the fine arts. "This is no country for the arts or letters," he wrote. "Public Opinion drags everything to its own level ... forming a very reputable mediocrity."60 And elsewhere Cooper had berated his country's sameness and dullness: in Notions of the Americans (1828) in which he wrote "I have never seen a nation so much alike in my life, as the people of the United States ...";62 and again three years later in a letter to his publishers Carey and Lea: "Why Europe
itself is a Romance, while all America is a matter of fact, humdrum...."62

In addition to these various disadvantages, the painter in the United States endured yet a further stricture caused by his physical presence in the New World, one that did not beset the novelist. The country was barren not only of an art tradition but of art as well. Theirs was a technical problem. In 1800, Edgar Richardson notes, there were "no art schools, no collections of art, no professional artist societies, no exhibitions" in all of America.63 This technical problem was a large one, and one that artists and critics at that time were very much aware of. John Neal wrote "of the difficulty to be undergone in this country, by an artist.... Here, he has no academies; no collections; no other painters to consult--if exhausted, he must refresh himself as he can."64 There were few art dealers in America even by 1825,65 and patronage in the first half century after the Revolutionary War was virtually non-existent, except in portraiture. An anonymous critic in The Analectic Magazine of 1815 wrote: "... let us look at home. Here, we see the arts developing and expanding themselves, not in the genial sunshine of wealth and patronage, but in the cold damp shade of neglect and obscurity."66
Though artists' clubs and gathering places began to appear by the mid-1820's--Luman Reed opened his private collection to the public one day each week and The Sketch Club was founded in 1828, at about the same time as Fenimore Cooper's Bread and Cheese Club, known as "The Lunch," whose membership included Cooper, Cole, Durand, Dunlap, Morse, Vanderlyn, Jarves, and others--by 1864 Jarves could still sadly observe that "Academies and schools of design are few, and but imperfectly established. Public galleries exist only in idea. Private collections are limited in range, destitute of masterpieces, inaccessible to the multitude." 

Even inane criticism plagued the arts, both painting and literature, in the first third of the century. Professor Charvat informs us that "before 1822 the North American Review did not even list novels among the new books. There was no respect for the novel as a literary form, and there was no critical tradition or body of rules to give it literary standing." He also notes that there was no criticism of fiction at all in America before the appearance of Scott's Waverly in 1815, except in rare instances when a journal or a reviewer would acknowledge fiction solely to lambast its moral position. 

Jarves points out, also in The Art-Idea, the absurd depths to which art commentary could sink. He
spends fourteen pages attacking criticism in America, and then offers his ultimate example.

Sagacious on-the-fence critic! At the opening of this exhibition [the most recent Artist Fund Exhibition], at which the elite of the artists and literati of the city were present, they listened complacently to the following nonsense, which we find in the "Evening Post": He [the speaker] referred to Cole's picture, hanging before him, as embodying the chief requirements of art, namely shadows." We will not pursue this ungracious portion of our subject farther.70

Such were the disadvantages, and large they were, that faced the artist in America when Cooper and Cole first appeared.
But neither Cooper nor Cole, nor any other artist in America at the time, simply stood at the foot of this mountain of disadvantages shaking his fist and crying aloud that he could do it alone because he was he and the time had come. There was much for the author and the painter to draw from, and many of the lacks and wants in the new country, which seemed to some disadvantageous, were actually plusses. "In the beginning all the world was America," wrote John Locke, and such a bare-chested, brawny, earthy statement seems fitting to go with the new artists. "All nature here is new to art," Cole had entered in his journal in 1835, and affirmation for the advantages freely offered by America to her artists was echoed and re-echoed.

"America is virgin soil for the artist," Jarves had cried, and his contemporary, Levi Frisbie of Harvard elaborated more reasonably on Jarves' enthusiastic observation.

We are free from any of those institutions transmitted to us from past ages, by which other nations are enthralled, and held
back, and allied to the ignorance and vices of their progenitors. The mind is not with us crippled and deformed by prejudices.... We have none of those privileged orders, which are so apt to become stagnant pools of corruption, diffusing moral infection through a people. We acknowledge no claims of superiority, but those which nature has sanctioned, or which are the necessary result of civil society. We have no established church to oppress and bear down the truth.... In short, we are favoured beyond all example; almost beyond any previous imagination of what might possibly be attained.\(^72\)

Freedom seemed the keynote for the growth of an American art, newness the rallying word for literary and artistic development. In The Art-Idea, written nine years after his Art-Hints, Jarves stressed the liberation from European chains as the greatest advantage for the American creative spirit. No longer, he claimed, was it "mind-ridden" by "the weight of a glorious past," but rather, it was energized by "a fresh ... continent" filling with "ambitious" and "enterprising" men.\(^73\)

Elsewhere Jarves argued that young America offered "scope for the entire nature of man."\(^74\)

But if newness and freedom and other abstract arguments buttressed art in the United States, equally important and far more practical considerations were also pointed out. Unlike European movements, American
art was relatively independent; neither government nor an established church nor a socially prominent and powerful aristocracy could dictate. "It is not even under permanent bondage to fashion. It rather leads or misleads it than is led by it," wrote Jarves. 75

Early in his career Fenimore Cooper recognized yet a number of further advantages that his native land could offer, and in his preface to the second edition of The Spy he put forth "why an American ... should choose his own country for the scene of his story." He returned to the one most often considered—the newness of the land—but for different reasons. Cooper realized that only one successful American author before 1822 had used the land, Charles Brockden Brown. Since Brown had been dead for over a decade, by logical extension one can conclude that in 1822 Cooper felt that no one was effectively using native materials.

Cooper also recognized the temper of his times, and sensed a patriotism and a prosperity which would "ensure a sale" for any writer focusing on the American scene in his or her novels. Cooper made one further observation in his preface. He supposed that an author would be more successful in his attempt "to delineate character, and to describe scene, where he is familiar with both." 76 Cooper surely learned this from his own experience, for his first book, Precaution, was an
imitation of an English novel of manners à la Jane Austen, and had nothing American about it. The novel was hardly a success. When he wrote about his own country, he fared much better.

But at heart it was the physical advantages of the New World that spoke out most crisply and compellingly. Potential sales, minimal competition, relative freedom from external restrictions, even the tabula rasa that was America, all took the proverbial back seat to the land itself as a force dictating a new art. The land became not only a source for the grandest associations needed for the painter and the author, but also the material; it satisfied the wherefore, and also the what.

The American naturalist and poet, Alexander Wilson, opened up new fabric for the American when he invited his reader in 1809 to

Come roam with me Columbia's forests through,
Where scenes sublime shall meet your wandering view:
Deep shades magnificent, immensely spread,
Lakes, sky-circled, vast as ocean's bed,
Lone hermit streams that wind through savage woods,
Enormous cataracts swoln with thundering floods;
The settler's farm with blazing fires o'erspread,
The hunter's cabin and the Indian's shed,
The log-built hamlet, deep in woods embraced,
The awful silence of th' unpeopled waste:
These are the scenes the Muse shall now explore,
Scenes new to song, and paths untrod before.
America's lakes and waterfalls, farms and cabins,
Indians and trackless forests--this is what America
must write and paint. England and the continent have
reaped poetic glory, Wilson claims, for their artists
have memorialized tiny hillocks, bleak and insignificant
heaths, "humble" hamlets, "narrow" streams, "brooks of
half a mile," while

Our western world, with all its matchless floods,
Our vast transparent lakes and boundless woods,
Stamped with the traits of majesty sublime,
Unhonoured weep the silent lapse of Time. 78

The land, with its "traits of majesty sublime," was food
for art, especially in the early 1800's when the country
was no longer totally a "waste and howling wilderness,"
but promised wild and thrilling vistas and opportunities. 79

In 1815, six years after the appearance of Wilson's
poem, William Tudor, Jr., addressed the Phi Beta Kappa
Society in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and he spoke on the
subjects appropriate for an American poetry. Tudor found
much in America for the American poet, including the
variations in climate and the special atmosphere produced,
for example, by a city like Boston being on the same
latitude as Rome, but having the snows of Stockholm
beneath a Roman sunny sky. Tudor further focused on
the exciting festivals of autumn colors that were like
nothing in Europe, the variety of birds and animals, and America's Revolutionary and pre-Revolutionary heroes and hours of history. Not totally free of neoclassical theory, he did liken the native aborigines, the Indians, to figures from the classics, from Virgil and Homer. But foremost in his vision was the American land, its scenery, "inland lakes," Niagara: "The region ... abounds with great and beautiful scenery,... calculated to inspire vast and sublime conceptions."80

The band-wagon had begun its journey, and during the next few decades would attract more and more voices, all admonishing America for its artistic failures, and complementing the wrist-slapping with lists of suitable topics for the arts in America. Whereas William Tudor, Jr., had spoken about American poetry, J. Houston Mifflin addressed himself to the fine arts in America; yet their messages were virtually the same. Mifflin outlined the benefits for art in America, and included on his list the rapid advances made since the first settling, the country's past history and the "aboriginal inhabitants," wide-spread, non-aristocratic patronage coupled with no government interference, and an inherent morality in the American system. But first and last he turned and returned to the land.81

DeWitt Clinton, Governor of New York and chief sponsor of the Erie Canal, added his illustrious voice
to the rest, grandiloquently praising the American land, its associations and its potential for art.

And can there be a country in the world better calculated than ours to exercise and to exalt the imagination—to call into activity the creative powers of the mind, and to afford just views of the beautiful, the wonderful, and the sublime? Here Nature has conducted her operations on a magnificent scale: extensive and elevated mountains—lakes of oceanic size—rivers of prodigious magnitude—cataracts unequalled for volume of water—and boundless forests filled with wild beasts and savage men, and covered with the towering oak and the aspiring pine. This wild, romantic, and awful scenery is calculated to produce a correspondent impression in the imagination—.

Washington Irving put it quickest and sharpest, however, when in 1820 he declared, through his mouthpiece Geoffrey Crayon, "No, never need an American look beyond his own country for the sublime and beautiful of natural scenery." Cole and Cooper looked in the direction Irving urged, found that "natural scenery," and began to shape an American art from it.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 1


13. Robertson wrote the following for the picture he designed to commemorate the opening of the Erie Canal: "It represents the visit of Pan to Neptune; Pan seated in a canoe, loaded with the products of our fields, forests, and Mediterranean Seas, from Lake Erie, being piloted by an aboriginal native of the western forests, with brotherly affection embraces Neptune, who, seated in his naval car, and attended by a Triton winding his conch, reciprocates the embrace; and in this attitude, with arms interlocked, Neptune returns the visit to Sandy Hook, by accompanying his brother Pan to his native woods on the shores of Lake Erie." Cadwallader D. Colden, *Memoir ... of the Completion of the New York Canals* (New York: W. A. Davis, 1825), p. 344.

14. Drake, 11. 133-135; Though written in 1817, Drake's poem did not appear in print until March 3, 1832, when it was published in the *New York Mirror*. In 1836 Poe reviewed Drake's and Halleck's poetry; he wrote, "Perhaps at this particular moment there are no American poems held in so high estimation by our countrymen, as the poems of Drake and Halleck." Poe, "Critical Notices: Drake--Halleck," *Southern Literary Messenger*, II (1836), p. 328. Drake's sentiments were reiterated constantly in American journals and essays during the 1810's and 1820's.


25. Louis Hawes writes that this phrase was Edward Everett's "Prescription for Health," and that this attitude for separation was prevalent in America during the 1820's and 1830's. *The American Scene: 1820-1900*, Introduction by Louis Hawes (Bloomington: Indiana University Art Museum, 1970), p. 9.


32. Richard Chase explains in part how Cooper overcame the fact that murders in corn fields, and in America in general, are less interesting than murders in Europe. "He introduced an element of melodrama, believing that this might be suitable to scenes set in the American forest, even though we had no mysterious castles, dungeons, or monasteries." The American Novel and Its Tradition (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1957), p. 14.


34. Hawes, p. 20.


37. Drake, 11. 82-90.

38. Edward Everett Hale, Jr., elaborated on Irving's development of a New York mythology and the accompanying associations in "American Scenery in Cooper's Novels," The Sewanee Review, XVIII (1910), 323. And William Charvat refers to a review of the novel York Town in which the book is criticized. One point of criticism involved the author's depiction of Meg Merrilies, which failed because "the character was not American...." The reviewer further noted that "America has had no dark or romantic age to which we may go for superstitions...." The Origins of American Critical Thought 1810-1835 (1936; rpt. Philadelphia: Perpetua Editions, 1961), p. 149.


41. James A. Hillhouse, Dramas, Discourses, and Other Pieces (Boston: C. C. Little and J. Brown, 1839), II, 97-98.

43. Noble, p. 53.
44. Susan Fenimore Cooper, "A Dissolving View," p. 90.
49. James Fenimore Cooper, The Travelling Bachelor; or, Notions of the Americans (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1852), II, 108.
57. Hale, pp. 318-319.

60. Ibid., IV, #724. Horatio Greenough. The Hall, C'Town. June 25th, 1843. It is of more than passing interest to my argument that Greenough's statue of Washington cast the first President as a Roman senator, draped in appropriate toga. This highly non-American portrayal might account in part for its failure; America wanted American goods, not copies of Greek art. Also, Americans were unable to make the requisite associations between their own leaders and the leaders of Rome, or between their own leaders and the leaders of the Greek gods.

61. Cooper, Notions of the Americans, p. 108. Charles Joseph Latrobe added that Americans "cannot be considered to have a national character." The Rambler in North America (New York: Harper & Bros., 1835), I, 59. And an anonymous author in 1815 wrote in the North American Review that "Unfortunately for this country, there is no national character, unless its absence constitute one...." "Essay on American Language and Literature," III (September, 1815), 311.

62. Cooper also wrote in this letter that "America is of all countries one of the least favorable to all sorts of works of the imagination.... If America is so favorable to fiction why do not people avail themselves of it? Heaven and Earth is ransacked for materials, and yet who has made anything out of America? ... For myself, I can write two European stories easier than I can write one American, and they shall be better and more interesting too...." Letters, II, #245, Dec. 30th 1831. The irony is, of course, that Cooper himself was using American materials, and that his "American" books were far more successful than his European novels, and continue to have a higher critical regard.


65. Hartmann, p. 57.


71. Hawes, p. 8.


74. Jarves, *Art-Hints*, p. 27. Jarves expands on these ideas on pp. 27ff. See also Charles Lanman, "The Epic Paintings of Thomas Cole," *Southern Literary Messenger*, XV (1849), 356, and Bethune, p. 184, for further comments on the opportunities offered by America to the new artist. Though the *North American Review* stressed the need for American writers and, by extension, painters, to use American history and materials because of the naturalness of their associations, some contributors to that journal still maintained that strictly classical matter was best for all art. See Robert E. Streeter, "Association Psychology and Literary Nationalism in the *North American Review*, 1815-1825," *American Literature*, XVII (1945-1946), 243-254.


78. Ibid., Wilson, p. 112, 11. 34-37.


CHAPTER 2

The shaping that Cole and Cooper were to do came slowly. The American republic was fifty years old, two generations old, before a native art managed to root, and the roots were simultaneously tied to the first growth of painting and literature in post-Revolutionary War America and yet paradoxically free from these earlier sproutings. Cole and Cooper certainly grew from traditions similar to those that produced Allston and Copley, Susannah Rowson and Charles Brockden Brown, yet neither seems particularly influenced by or even, especially in Cooper's case, particularly aware of these predecessors. Novels were being written in America before 1820, and landscapes painted. But American literature and painting were seriously checked by over-dependence on European tenets and models and by a simple lack of quality and talent.
Those who possessed the skill to paint and write well were frequently drawn across the Atlantic; those who remained most often possessed little ability, limited imagination, and minimal sensitivity towards the details of American landscape and its potential as material for fiction and painting.

There were Americans writing books before 1820, and, in spite of Sidney Smith's nasty yet provocative question, "Who reads an American book?" American books were read. Had Smith also asked, "Who views an American painting?" one had only to mention that it was the American Benjamin West who succeeded Sir Joshua Reynolds to the Presidency of the Royal Academy in 1791.¹ On the other hand, though, West had left for England in 1760 and had never returned to his native country. But the fine arts in America before Cole began another American revolution, and the state of American literature before Cooper, deserve some examination.

Lloyd Goodrich, Advisory Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, writes that "America of the early nineteenth century killed the higher imaginative faculty in her artists."² This is only partly true, but the reasons behind Goodrich's assertion are essential to an understanding of the emergence of Thomas Cole. In
1815 an anonymously written essay in *The Analectic Magazine* offered some brief yet insightful comments on the problems facing the arts in America. England, France, or Italy, the article contended, could train a hundred artists in the hopes of finding a single genius. What of the remaining ninety-nine? They would suitable and profitably be employed etching, designing, illustrating, and doing portraits and fashionable miniatures. They would certainly not be wasted. But such a luxury America could not afford; the arts were hardly so well encouraged or established here. "The wonder is," wrote *The Analectic*, "that they should have arisen at all, thus as it were spontaneously, without culture and without patronage."³

The article also discussed those American artists who had left for Europe, and those who had remained. Those who had gone abroad had indeed "assimilated themselves to the task and character" of European schools, but not without a price. To a once "wild and vigorous ... genius" had been "grafted" a "high" and "artificial refinement." Those who remained at home, however, possessed one outstanding virtue: "acuteness of observation," or "the power of representing individual nature." But *The Analectic* felt this was not sufficient, for these unnamed painters were "deficient
in cultivated taste, in variety and grace, and in
generality and grandeur of conception."\(^4\) The Analectic,
while expressing popular feelings in America about
American art, leaves native artists little recourse.
It castigates those who go abroad for "artificial
refinement," but in the next breath rejects those
who stay home, "deficient in cultivated taste." The
Analectic exhibits a rather confused aesthetic,
indicative of the ambivalence of most Americans then.

Nevertheless, during the second half of the
eighteenth century and the first quarter of the
nineteenth, the best that America could offer usually
left for Europe, and the best that an American could
produce was most often done on foreign shores. John
Singleton Copley is certainly an exception, as is
Charles Willson Peale, who, upon returning to the
states from his European studies, was able to adapt
himself to American taste. Copley, recognized as a
genius in America, moved to England only after his art
had matured. He was uncertain whether to stay in
Boston painting well-received portraits for "philistines,"
as he saw them, or travel abroad and attempt history
painting and risk failure or oblivion. Copley left
for Europe at 36, in 1774, and his paintings during
the next two decades demonstrated continued growth and
artistic control. But by the mid-1790's his talents disintegrated and, never returning to the United States, he suffered virtually in exile until his death in 1815.

Before 1825 American artists, with the exception of Washington Allston, were shackled with an exceptionally powerful neoclassical tradition, and though many of these artists realized the need to be American, none could easily transcend the Augustan set of aesthetics they had inherited. Copley's move towards Europe, for example, represents a rejection of American material and art and taste, as does his desire to tackle grand manner history paintings.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with neoclassicism, and painters such as Morse and Vanderlyn, as well as West and Stuart, all clung tenaciously and fairly successfully to its canons. But neoclassicism was totally separate from the American experience, for it emphasized ancient history, the classics, and mythology. The common man in America could hardly relate to its ethos or its pathos. There was little if anything of the democratic or the common in its rigid doctrine and aristocratic intellectualism.

West and Copley certainly were geniuses, as Bethune noted almost 125 years ago, but neither patronage from other than portraiture nor training
were generally available in the Colonies, and they and others thus naturally turned to England, "depriving their country of all share in their fame except the credit of having given them birth." When West viewed the Pythian Archer in the Vatican and likened it to "a young Mohawk warrior," he was translating American experience from the present into the past, and that was the wrong direction (Plates 3, 4).[^6]

When Copley painted his now-famous Watson and the Shark, depicting the Lord Mayor-to-be Watson about to be rescued from the shark's third attack in Havana Harbor, he may have at first appeared to focus on a New World topic. But Watson, when turned upright, is in the exact position as the neoclassically perfect Apollo Belvedere (Plate 5). Copley presented this picture in 1779, the same year, appropriately, that he was elected to full membership in the Royal Academy.[^7]

Vanderlyn, in his Death of Jane McCrea (1803) (Plate 5), did tackle native matter, but his Indians, sans tomahawks and feathers, would be no different than any of a score of graceful neoclassical figures in togas. Each is highly modeled, carefully posed, and neoclassically rigid. His Marius Amidst the Ruins of Carthage (1807) (Plate 7), appropriately togaed, Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos (1812) (Plate 8), and Morse's Dying Hercules (1813) (Plate 9) are no closer
to the American experience or sensibility than Alexander Robertson's ludicrous Pan canoeing towards Triton and Neptune to celebrate the opening of the Erie Canal (see also Plates 10-12).

Samuel F. B. Morse, primarily a history painter, also executed a number of landscapes, including View of Niagara Falls and View from Apple Hill (1828-1829) (Plate 13), before turning from art permanently in the 1830's to concentrate on his scientific studies. Lack of patronage and financial security led to this decision. Undoubtedly as talented as any American of the first third of the nineteenth century, Morse, though not painting in the grand style, nevertheless was a student of the neoclassical tradition, and his paintings exhibit the "fine balance ..., wide vistas and orderly design" of that tradition. Had he continued painting and been given adequate public support, Morse might have become one of the most important painters in America.

These painters, and Trumbull might be added to the list, were talented and serious men, but what artistic success they may have enjoyed can be traced primarily to European movements. But neither Trumbull nor Morse nor Vanderlyn could achieve popular success in America. Trumbull died embittered and unhappy,
unable to sell his paintings; Vanderlyn eventually went bankrupt; and Morse was forced to give up painting because he too reaped no financial benefits from his craft. He expressed his rancor to Fenimore Cooper in a letter of 1849: "Painting has been a smiling mistress to many, but she has been a cruel jilt to me. I did not abandon her, she abandoned me." America would not support a European-flavored, neoclassical tradition in her artists. The move to an American art using American materials, however, would have to wait until the 1820's and Thomas Cole.

An aspiring American landscape painter, then, had to adapt the tenets of eighteenth-century Europe to American experience. But he also had to free himself of another fetter. Since the Renaissance, the human figure had been esteemed the noblest subject for art, and by 1800, according to Edgar Richardson, "the only painters active here were the portrait painters." Portrait painting, furthermore, was deemed practical by the Puritan tradition in America, whereas landscapes were primarily decorative or ornamental and hence led away from the proper concern with the worship of God and the hardships of everyday life. Likewise, the struggle for survival on an often hostile land eliminated that land from the choices available to the painter. The
land was there to be tamed and mastered, not to function as a subject for pretty pictures.

Richardson's observation that only portraitists were active in America in 1800 isn't totally accurate, for numerous painters were pedestrianly producing landscapes, as we shall see, and there were the various historical painters already mentioned. The latter, however, were effectively hindered by the dearth of public buildings in the United States to exhibit such canvases, the scarcity of European models present in America, and few commissions from government or the wealthy. Portraiture was the only really profitable avenue for the artist in America until the 1820's. Even Cole, his biographer Louis Noble records, was forced to abandon landscape painting in his youth for the more profitable, hence practical, portrait painting.

Recently a frontier, and without proper roads, the country was new and isolated. Men were utilitarians from necessity. Things were valued in proportion to their capability to supply the common wants of life. Thought for the fine arts, in such a state of affairs, could not reasonably be entertained.... Landscape was resigned with regret [by Cole], and portrait-painting, a department of art for which he had neither taste nor ambition, taken up with reluctance.
There were, nevertheless, a modest number of landscapes painted in America in the eighteenth century. Nathaniel Emmons of Boston, in his own "rather crude" way, produced various river scenes which, according to his obituary in 1740, were "such admirable imitations of nature, both in faces, River Banks, and Rural Scenes that the pleased Eye can not easily leave them."\(^{15}\) John Smibert (1688-1751) had thirteen "landskips" in his studio when he died, valued at all of £2, 13 shillings.\(^{16}\)

Sydney Kellner claims that Benjamin West was attempting an occasional landscape around 1750, when he was twelve years old, and that other prominent portrait and history painters, including Peale, Neagle, and Trumbull, tried their hands at landscape. They were all done in the English manner, however, and "left practically no influence upon subsequent painters ...."\(^{17}\) Nearly all landscapes before 1825 were no more than "portraits" of the land, topographic representations of specific locales demonstrating limiting talent. Most were produced on commission to adorn the walls of the estates of wealthy landowners.\(^{18}\)

During the 1790's a number of landscape painters worked steadily in the United States, and though their work is now forgotten, passing mention should be made.
Dr. J. Hall Pleasants, in a lengthy paper presented to the American Antiquarian Society in 1942, identifies George Beck, William Groombridge, Francis Guy, and William Winstanley as the first artists in America to focus primarily on landscape painting.¹⁹

All four came from England in the first half of the decade and all four were schooled in the Old World. Beck was a self-taught, topographical artist whose Falls of Potomac (1796-1797) seems his only departure from that mode. This painting depicts a rugged river with a storm passing on the right and a peaceful landscape at left, an arrangement which Cole was to use most successfully thirty years later. But generally Beck's paintings are far closer in style and vision to his Baltimore from Howard's Park (1796) (Plate 14).

Groombridge was technically a strong painter, but his canvases are pastoral throwbacks to the eighteenth-century concern for manicured lawns, trimmed hedges, and mathematically perfect walks and avenues: his work is true to the niceties of eighteenth-century neoclassical taste. Groombridge's paintings are far removed from the realities of the American landscape (Plates 15, 16).

Guy's paintings are primitive portraits of the land, primarily of country estates near Baltimore or
of Baltimore scenes (Plates 17-19). According to Rembrandt Peale, Guy painted his first landscapes on black gauze stretched across a window in a tent. He would trace what he could see through the gauze with white chalk, and then transfer the whole view to canvas. Guy's influence as a painter, however, was non-existent.20

Winstanley was no more effective, either in assimilating the American experience or in producing acceptable landscapes. His paintings are, at best, pretty and lyrical, featuring such delights as boys fishing, as in Genesee Falls (1793-1794), Morning, Hudson River, and Evening, Hudson River (Plate 20).

It is interesting to note that none of the four achieved any financial security from landscape painting. According to Oliver Larkin, "Winstanley opened a panorama in New York; Groombridge painted portraits; Beck made chemical experiments and translated the Odes of Anacreon; Guy dipped into marine painting, frescoed the walls of a Baltimore tavern, wrote essays on Deism, and announced a cure for toothache."21

Ralph Earl (1751-1801), a pupil of Benjamin West, was another who left behind "graceful," pretty, and basically neoclassical portraits of specific places, and his Looking East from Leicester Hills (1800)
(Plate 21) is one of his better efforts, but it, like other landscapes of the time, "owes its charm to the faithfully portrayed landscape rather than to merits of artistic treatment." \(^{22}\) This is a lovely painting, but it depicts the American land entirely within the traditions and in the manner of European landscape painting.

William Birch and his son Thomas produced topographical illustrations of Philadelphia landmarks (Plate 22), views which were intended to circulate as engraved prints and thus were faithful to the details of the subject, "sober and clear," as Wolfgang Born notes. Such paintings and engravings were pleasant and achieved a certain popularity, but they impart no awareness of "the continuity of nature," as James Thomas Flexner observes, nor did they achieve "any unified emotional effect." \(^{23}\)

William G. Wall (1792-1862) also can be included with the two Birches and other topographical artists. His works are naive and primitive (Plate 23). No attempt to create atmosphere is present, nor is he able to create a successful recession into depth.

Landscapists William J. Bennett (1787-1844), Archibald Robertson (Plate 24), and John Trumbull (Plate 25) contributed no more than the Birches or
Wall or the other figures of this time to an American landscape tradition. Hale calls these artists "topographical draughtsmen" and Elliot Vesell, in his introduction to Noble's biography of Cole, recognizes that the landscape painters in America before Cole "thought little about nature or ... the details of a landscape." Landscapes to these painters seem more the result of applying rules and devices of structure than of observing the actual shape of the land or the movement of the trees or the effects of light and atmosphere. Perhaps these men would be remembered more kindly, even in spite of their firmly neoclassical approaches, had they possessed the talents of a Claude or a Poussin. But their vision was primarily provincial and their skills minimal.

Washington Allston, certainly the most important painter in America in the quarter-century before Cole's first exhibition, executed a number of landscapes, and was the first American artist to break from the topographical manner. But his break from landscape portraiture did not lead to any understanding of what an American scene may actually have been. A close friend of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Allston created landscapes that are filled with tempestuous romantic feelings. Born describes his Deluge (1804) (Plate 26)
as a "vision of gloom with bodies, flotsam, and serpents floating in the bleakness of the watery desert."  

Like Deluge, Elijah Fed by the Ravens (1818) (Plate 27) and The Rising of a Thunderstorm at Sea (1804) are impressed with romantic spirit and an eerie, other-worldly imaginative aura (see Plate 28, Moonlit Landscape (1819)). F. Lanier Graham correctly notes that "Allston was the only native American artist to paint major landscapes" between 1800 and 1820, a time when the young country was groping for "reflections of national identity, and beginning to sense an expressive distinctness in the actualities of the natural landscape. Allston was not painting this landscape. Filled with Renaissance and Baroque ideals, his romanticism was of another time and place." Emerson wrote in his Journal in 1839 that Allston's landscapes were "Elysian; fair, serene, but unreal." Allston never attempted an American landscape, his only non-imaginative ones being of locales in Switzerland and Italy (Plates 29, 30), and he does not seem to occupy a notable place in the developing tradition of American landscapists which leads to Thomas Cole.  

One man, however, does rival Cole as the first important landscape painter in America: Thomas Doughty.
Goodrich calls him the "pioneer of the Hudson River School" and Born identifies him as "the oldest of the landscape painters who explored the pictorial charm of the Hudson River Valley." But Doughty's critical reputation is strongly diluted. He painted "the placid and peaceful aspects of nature ... with a quiet pastoral charm," writes Goodrich, but Born calls his paintings "conventional" and in the manner of Claude and Poussin. Kellner is less kind. "The influence of Doughty was slight," he claims, not altogether correctly, and in *Romantic Painting in America* Soby and Miller label him "a man of limited imagination and skillful hands" (Plates 31-34).

Flexner best sums up Doughty's position in the developing American landscape movement when he observes that Doughty's paintings are "either unusually elevated examples of the old topographical manner or the first, incomplete statement of the style that was to characterize the Hudson River School." It was left to Cole to combine the imaginative possibilities unleashed by Allston with the love of and sensitivity towards the American land first hinted at by Doughty. Landscape painting "had come of age in America in the 1820's" writes Larkin, and "Cole ... surpassed them all."
Landscape painting began to mature because various conditions were being met in America. The land was slowly but steadily being mastered by settlers and pioneers, leaving time and energy for the development and appreciation of the arts, and with this mastering came an awareness of the continent's amazing natural wonders. Two other forces also bear on the rise of American landscape art: the growing chauvinism of the nation that resulted in the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, and the rise of an urban bourgeoisie similar to that of the seventeenth-century Dutch burghers, who also liked and encouraged landscape, perhaps as a predictable response to the often harsh conditions of city life. In addition, landscapes in America before 1820 were generally in the European manner, dependent upon English theories or emerging from the likes of Poussin or Claude, save those that were merely topographical and technically limited. None of these types exerted any tangible influence on later American landscape painting.  

Lastly, and most important, the American land was perfect for a new art. The land "possessed the requisite associations for the creation of a viable art" and, according to James T. Callow, easily adapted itself to eighteenth-century aesthetic theories.
Cole and the Hudson River School were to be successful in large part because of their relative freedom from European standards of taste, from European subject matter, and from the past, even if the freedom is largely theoretical and almost imaginary, for Europe was to supply the theories of associationism and sublimity upon which much of this art rested. Landscape painting was, indeed, about to come of age.
If painting in America was weak or derivative before 1820, literature, and specifically the novel, was equally so. R. H. Stoddard, in a "Memoir" for Bryant, could assert, but with only partial accuracy, that "there was no original writing in America" in 1806. But what little original literary output there was in the country was distinguished by its lack of quality. James Kirke Paulding, a leading literary figure of the time, yet like Drake committing the very sins he deplored, touches both advertently and inadvertently upon the principal deficiencies of American literature in 1818.

Neglected Muse! of this our western clime,
How long in servile, imitative rhyme,
Wilt thou thy stifled energies impart,
And miss the path that leads to every heart?

American writers, as Paulding notes, were excessively imitative of European writers, but also, as Paulding
demonstrates, notably lacking in talent.

Terence Martin calls the productions of American novelists before Cooper "sub-literary" and blames this weakness on "the lack of a valid concept of fiction." Spiller corroborates this opinion in the Literary History of the United States. For early American fiction, "the harvest is singularly meager" and this seems to be because "the impulse to produce an independent, indigenous literature vied with the national tendency to carry on a distinguished European tradition." Parkman, in his 1852 review of Cooper's Works, had pinpointed the problem with American fiction before Cooper and had pulled no punches: "the highest civilization of America is communicated from without instead of being developed from within, and is therefore nerveless and unproductive." American fiction between 1785 and 1820 was totally generated by British and continental forms. The novel in America was a shadow of any one of four European types: the sentimental, the satiric or allegorical, the Gothic, and the historical. The sentimental novel grew directly from Samuel Richardson and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and was by far the most popular form until imitations of Scott's historical romances began to proliferate after 1815. Novels copying Richardson and his style appeared by the hundreds in America, and
The American Moral and Sentimental Magazine catered to
the growing fad for sentimentality after 1797. 39

The Power of Sympathy (1789), "a poor and stilted
narrative in epistolary form," and recently attributed
to William Hill Brown, is usually considered the first
American novel to be published, and the influence of
Richardson "is written all over" this book, according
to Edward Wagenknecht, though Professor Loshe also
sees parallels with The Sufferings of Young Werther,
and Carl van Doren, who recognizes its "stilted narrative,"
with Sterne. 40 Mrs. Susannah Rowson became the leading
writer of the sentimental novel in America, producing
among others Charlotte Temple (1791), Trials of the
Human Heart (1795), Reuben and Rachel (1798), and Sarah
(1803-1804 in magazine serials; 1813 in book form), and
Richardson was her model. Carl van Doren neatly sums up
Mrs. Rowson's methods: she "embroidered with every
device known to the romancer--sentimentalism, bathos,
easy tears, high-flying language, melodrama, moralizings
without stint or number." 41

Other sentimentalists abounded, including Hannah
Foster, who wrote The Coquette in 1797; but she was,
according to Charles Angoff, "a second-rate Mrs. Rowson."
Indeed, the heavily didactic sentimental novel in America,
borrowing all the worst from Richardson and offering
little of his insight and social acumen, justified Spiller's comment that its "quality ... is not high." 42

Not only was the quality not high, but sentimentalism as a view of life or reality "tended to distort and obscure," observes William Charvat, because it "pretified and melodramatized life." 43 Women and juveniles comprised the bulk of the readers of such fiction, and the facts of existence in America between 1785 and 1820 were simply not as the sentimentalist would have them.

The popularity of this mode of fiction, however, can be traced to an integral part of the American mind during these years. Perhaps stemming from the seventeenth-century Puritan culture, likely re-inforced by the fierce warnings of the Great Awakening, certainly buttressed by the practicality of such a powerful eighteenth-century figure as Franklin, Americans were told by their religious and intellectual leaders that reading novels was hazardous. Books led to a discontentment with life by presenting scurrilous and dangerous views of existence, and by putting forward characters who were not happy, or were even criminal. Terence Martin sees such warnings against fiction leading to a "fear of imaginative experience." He also understands the preponderance of didactic sentimental
books as a direct result of this fear. Early American fiction is highly moralistic, highly didactic, and displays little imagination, though a lot of good old Scottish Common Sense philosophy is present.  

Fiction in America took a second form, the satiric. This form, most notably typified by Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797) and Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*, grew directly from such European writers as Swift, Hume, Cervantes, Smollett, and Fielding. Satire often involved allegorical figures, for the creation of types was a convenient way to attack a person or a position. The allegorical short pamphlet, *A Pretty Story*, appeared in 1774 and borrowed heavily from Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" for its satiric approach and content.  

Jeremy Belknap's *The Foresters* (1792, enlarged 1796) also uses allegory, as does Brackenridge in *Modern Chivalry*, a picaresque novel which appeared in installments from 1792 to 1815. Brackenridge admitted his debt to Hume, Swift, and Fielding, and the parallels with Cervantes are always evident in the "roadside adventures" of a "master and servant." The book "contains many of the stock elements and devices of eighteenth-century British fiction," yet it was the "most popular piece of prose fiction to
come out of the region west of the Alleghenies before the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{47} Angoff sees Brackenridge as America's first respectable novelist and Russel Nye recognizes a foreshadowing of Twain in Modern Chivalry's warning "that the misconception and misuse of democracy may destroy it--...."\textsuperscript{48} But as Cooper was to note, there really wasn't much folly in America for the satirist, and what satire was produced, was imitative in both form and content of European satire.

The same problem infected the third mode of the early American novel, the Gothic. This form was carried across the Atlantic from Walpole and "Monk" Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe and William Godwin, to such American practitioners as Sally Wood and Isaac Mitchell. Mrs. Wood's now-forgotten Julia and the Illuminated Baron (1800), set in France and Spain, and Dorval, or the Speculator (1802), like Mitchell's The Asylum, or Alonzo and Melissa (1811), grew from the European Gothic vocabulary, not from anything native. There were relatively few abbies and castles in America, and even fewer hidden passage-ways, creaking door jambs, or haunted grave-yards peopled with sinister Italian clergy. Such books, and others like Count Roderick's Castle (1795), "were all reflections of English literature rather than American."\textsuperscript{49}
The Gothic mode did, however, produce one important and noteworthy author, Charles Brockden Brown, though, as Russel Nye observes, his style, a little of the sentimental and a lot of the Gothic, was "already obsolescent" when he wrote his six novels, Wieland, Arthur Mervyn, Clara Howard, Edgar Huntly, Jane Talbot, and Ormond between 1798 and 1801. But not only was Brown's style "obsolescent," his inspiration and content were directly traceable to British sources, and particularly Godwin. Brown especially fancied Godwin's favorite plot structure: the virginal, naive, and vulnerable youth who becomes the victim or prey of a formerly kind benefactor.  

Nevertheless, Brown, for all his stylistic weaknesses and his fondness for European models, did seem conscious of being an American writer and cognizant of the dearth of American models, for he incorporated American scenery and matter into his novels on occasion. In Edgar Huntly Brown actually uses the American landscape as a working part of the novel. But the problem facing the American novel troubled him, for in Clara Howard he wrote, "Our books are almost wholly the productions of Europe...." He seemed aware of the potential of his native country for art, but as Spiller notes, "Powers, he indubitably possessed; his
failure lay in his inability to focus and sustain them.  

For reasons that have not yet been satisfactorily analyzed by cultural historians, for over twenty years after Brown there appeared very little prose fiction in America, and what did surface was of poorer quality than what had already been thrust upon the young country. Brown remained "an isolated figure in the American literature of his time" writes Loshe, and Angoff concurs, for Brown "did not establish a school of American fiction." Professor Loshe also points out that Brown "exerted no immediate influence on American fiction." "There is little to note in American fiction" after Brown stopped writing in 1801.  
Tabitha Tenney's _Female Quixoticism_ (1801), Isaac Mitchell's _The Asylum_ (1811), and Samuel Woodworth's _The Champions of Freedom_ (1816) were the "best of the sorry lot" and van Doren seems correct when he asserts that between Brown and Cooper America "produced no memorable fiction whatever." Mitchell is "absurdly sentimental," and "exhibits the worst qualities of Mrs. Radcliffe" while Woodworth reached the "nadir of the old-fashioned, sensational, sentimental romance,... Ossian mixed with Stern and Cicero.... ineffable."
There was one further type of novel in America during the thirty to forty years preceding Cooper's *The Pioneers* in 1823, the historical novel. Ann Eliza Bleeker (1752-1783) wrote *The History of Maria Kettle*, perhaps as early as 1779, though it did not reach print until the *New York Magazine* published it in five installments in 1790 and 1791. This novel, like Hilliard d'Auberteuil's *Miss MacRae* (1784) which treated the same incident as Vanderlyn's painting, *The Death of Jane McCrea*, *The Emigrants* by Gilbert Imlay (1793), *The First Settlers of Virginia* by John Davis (1805), and John Neal's *Keep Cool* (1817), deals with the frontier and the dangers of Indian attack and capture, while attempting to weave historical romance from the yarn of American experience in the wilderness. Since the Revolutionary War was generally considered too recent to supply adequate historical fare for fiction, the Indian and frontier life were frequently deemed acceptable subject matter.

American material may have been used in these novels, but Henri Petter observes that it "went little further than a listing of place names or the names of historical figures and events." And here Petter is merely echoing Loshe: "... all these early attempts at historical romances and Indian tales are, with the
exception of *Edgar Huntly*, always trivial and often absurd...." American writers were occasionally using American material, but Charvat touches upon the key problem: "the treatment was unsatisfactory."\(^56\)

The historical romance, despite its trivialities and absurdities, re-emerged in the 1810's as the primary hope for a successful native literature. The tremendous success of Sir Walter Scott, whose poetry and novels grew from actual Scottish events and locales, and the slightly lesser success of James Hogg, who wrote rustic verse, including *The Mountain Bard* (1807) and *The Queen's Wake* (1813), led to critical demand for satisfactory treatment of American material. When coupled with America's military victory over England in the War of 1812, the example of Scott and Hogg made it apparent that America would soon strive for artistic independence as well. Half a million novels by Scott were purchased in America by 1823, and imitators of the great Scottish lion abounded: James Kirke Paulding, Catherine Sedgwick, John Pendleton Kennedy, William Gilmore Simms, Daniel Thompson, John Neal. None had particular success, however. But the direction in which they looked was significant.

The earliest American fiction had looked backward, finding its models in the schools of Richardson and
his contemporaries, already passing
as a literary fashion. The stories
of gothic terrors and of political
speculation merely kept abreast of
the fashions of the day. But these
tales of history and of Indian
adventure look forward, however
feebly and short-sightedly, to
another great period of fiction. 57

One major prose writer did appear on the American
scene during the first quarter of the nineteenth
century: Washington Irving. Irving, eminently more
talented than any previous fiction writer in America
and certainly a finer stylist than Cooper, is usually
paired with Fenimore Cooper as the founder of American
prose literature. With Cooper, Irving was a national
literary hero, and the two made the first lasting
contributions to the nation's literature. If Brown
was the first proclaimed professional writer in America,
Irving, and to a lesser extent Cooper, were the first
to make the profession pay. Irving cleared $23,500 in
1829 while Cooper was earning between $6,000 and $7,000
annually during the 1820's. Such incomes had been
unheard of in literary America, and were still beyond
the reach of any other writer in the United States
until after the Civil War. 58

If critical acclaim recognizes Irving's obvious
literary talents, it also recognizes his enormous
concern with foreign materials and subject matter.

In 1827 the Paris Globe, writing about American literature in general and Cooper's novels specifically, rightly observed that "the earliest American literature crept ... along British paths." When its overview of American writing turned to Irving, the Globe concluded that he was an ambiguous figure, as much British as American.

It is not without hesitation that we place Washington Irving among American men of letters. Born, it is true, in the New World, he has courted his literary naturalization in the Old World... he has harvested the vestiges of the Spectator school, and found even more outmoded means of getting by in its overworked manner.

The Edinburgh Review agreed with its Parisian counterpart. In rather scathing tones it argues against Irving's Americanness, and then acknowledges Cooper's gift to his country's literature. This anonymously written article, attributed to William Hazlitt, argues that Irving

takes Old England for granted as he finds it described in our stock-books of a century ago--gives us a Sir Roger de Coverley in the year 1819, instead of the year 1709; ... we can conceive
Mr Irving enchanted with the style of the wits of Queen Anne; ... We thank Mr Cooper he does not take everything from us.... He has the saving grace of originality.

American reviews concurred with these European evaluations, though hardly with such eloquence. "Washington Irving is English in his tastes and style," wrote The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal in 1827, and a century later opinions of Irving had not changed appreciably. These reviews attack not Irving's ability, which has seldom been seriously questioned, but his subject matter. When Cooper is praised for his originality, it is his use of American material that is being commended, and not his frequently clumsy technique.

Furthermore, after 1820 or so, Irving turned from fiction and concentrated his talents on essays, sketches, and travel books. Between 1826 and 1832, and again from 1842 through 1846, he was attached to the American embassy in Madrid, after 1842 as ambassador to Spain, and during these years he produced a number of books using Spanish themes and contents. Only a small number of his more than 100 essays and sketches involve American places and figures, though these are among his most successful, e.g. "Rip van Winkle" and
"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

The principal difference between Irving and Cooper hinges on the former's dependence on European contents. If Irving brought "American writing into English literature," as Orm Överland so finely puts it, then Cooper brought "America itself into literature." Spiller also recognizes this critical distinction: Irving "helped create an art for America, but Cooper took the first strong step toward an American art."62 Neither author is free of foreign influences--probably few authors ever are--but Cooper's distinction rests on his bringing foreign influences to bear on native subject matter.

The early novels, then, had been failures, "marked by the limited range of their authors," achieving at best "new combinations of old and familiar elements," resorting to "conventional plot situations" and employing "language worn down to clichés."63 Radcliffe's gothicism, Richardson's mannered didacticism, Fielding's picaresque and bawdy comedy--American fiction perhaps did not belong here. The forms themselves are not totally the problem. The weakness of the early American novel stemmed from the lack of talented American writers to generate acceptable material within these European forms in any but the most hackneyed ways. Two questions
arise from the recognition of this literary failure: Why was American literature so barren? and, What were the prospects for an American literature?

American periodicals in the early 1800's continually raised the first question, as have critics since, and a catalog of answers has been put forward. Amazingly, the North American Review in 1815 wondered if America wasn't hampered by sharing the "same language as England, a totally different country." Can Niagara and the Falls at London Bridge be described in the same language? The North American Review felt not. Earlier, in 1807, The Monthly Register, in an essay titled "Hints on the State of American Literature," had brought out other disadvantages that the American had to overcome. There were few libraries in the United States, and liberal education in the new country was "defective," the Register claimed. Furthermore, the government failed to support the arts or the sciences adequately, and there was a total "want of literary competition, ... honour and reward."65

There was, also, no copyright agreement between England and America. Pirated British editions could be hawked at half the price of an American book. American readers were naturally reluctant to buy, at twice the expense, an American book. Likewise, American
writers couldn't expect to receive royalties from beneficent publishers when those same publishers had access to free European novelists. Related to this handicap were others: America was simply too small a country to support financially both a British and a native literature, and no tradition of literary patronage existed on this side of the Atlantic. Much of the energy, both monetary and intellectual, had been directed to the nation's political and commercial life, and the arts had been the poor sister.

Less tangible obstacles also confronted the American writer. Many in the country could not conceive of a nation resting on principles of equality producing a viable literature. The leveling that would be the end result of the democratic process would, believed some critics, surely dilute talent and purpose and lead to a general mediocrity of the arts. Many critics also claimed that American authors, sensing an artistic lag behind Europe, had tried to "catch up all at one jump, ... to create by imitation a literature ... at once full-blown and distinctly American." "The first generation had over-reached itself," according to Robert Spiller; "a grass-roots literary movement" required printers, booksellers, critics, librarians, readers; America didn't have such an adequate base
by 1800, and the fledgling European Romantic movement was barely out of its own infancy. Thirty-five years later this romanticism would spawn an American offspring, but in 1800 it could offer no stable foundation. In short, European literature could not furnish the American what he needed for a literature, yet that American nevertheless copied his overseas inspiration and inevitably failed to give any meaningful depiction of the American experience.

The prospects for an American literature, however, were not bleak. Royall Tyler recognized one ray of light in his preface to *The Algerine Captive* in 1797: "There are two things wanted ...: that we write our own books of amusement, and that they exhibit our own manners." An American literature could emerge when an author succeeded in melding American history, American society, and American scenery into a fiction. Cooper's first novel, *Precaution* (1820), failed completely, as had virtually all American literature before, because it completely aped European models.

Published in 1820, *Precaution* grew from an amusing challenge. One evening, the story goes, Cooper was seated with his wife in their parlor, reading a recently acquired English novel of manners. Suddenly he tossed the book down and announced, "I can write a better book
myself!" Susan Cooper took him up on this boast, and *Precaution* was the result. Few authors probably have had such inauspicious beginnings. The novel is awkwardly written and far removed from the American experience. Had Cooper's style been stronger, perhaps he would have followed a mildly successful but forgettable career as an American follower of the school of Jane Austen. But the book failed.

*Precaution* is a poorly composed English novel of manners and morals that happened to be written by an American. The story is stock and clumsily controlled. Concern with marriage, money, and lineage; the deception of the wealthy Earl of Pendennyss pretending to be poor Mr. Denbigh; and the need for continuous precaution regarding appearance and reality serve as the backbone of the plot.

The novel opens with Clara Moseley wondering "if we are to have a neighbor in the Deanery soon."

Immediately she is answered by her father, Sir Edward, and her brother, John, who also are interested in the new neighbor, for, teases John, "no gentility, no husband" (1). Emily, the youngest sister, interrupts, mentioning "a certain gentleman ... at Bath" who had inquired about Clara's "lineage, and a few other indispensables" (2). The rector of the parish, a
frequent guest of the Moseley's, adds that "a great deal of money is a very good thing in itself" (2). The basic issues of the novel have been quickly introduced.

Other equally British and Jane Austen-like touches dominate the opening chapters. The Moseley children and their aunt, Mrs. Wilson, take advantage of a beautiful day to walk to the Rectory. On route, "a rather handsome travelling carriage and four" passes, followed by "the whirling of a tilbury and tandem," and then by "a couple of servants on horseback" (8).

But it is the stiff, awkward, and basically empty presentation of values and dialogue, plus the poorly conceived coincidences that render this novel flaccid. Cooper presents Lady Mosely in Chapter 1:

The baronet was warmly attached to his wife; and as she was a woman of many valuable and no obnoxious qualities, civil and attentive by habit to all around her, and perfectly disinterested in her attachments to her own family, nothing in nature could partake more of perfection in the eyes of her husband and children than the conduct of this beloved relative. Lady Moseley had her failings, however, although few were disposed to view her errors with that severity which truth and a just discrimination of character render necessary. (4)
This introduction is meaningless, vapid and vague. The reader knows virtually nothing about Lady Moseley from this description of her virtues and supposed failings.

Dialogue is equally empty. After the "handsome travelling carriage" has passed, the following thrilling exchange occurs:

"Ah! true; who the deuce can this colonel be then, for young Jarvis is only a captain, I know. Who do you think he is, Jane?"

"How do you think I can tell you, John? But whoever he is, he owns the tilbury, although he did not drive it, and he is a gentleman both by birth and manners." (10)

Similar forced and stilted conversation peppers the entire novel.

"I could never find, although I have looked over our family tree so often, that we are in any manner related, Howell."

"I believe it is too late to mend that matter now," said the admiral, musing.

"Why no--hem--I think not, Howell; take a glass of this burgundy." (338)

Contrived situations and predictable characters also mar this novel. To allow the Moseley's to meet their
new and hopefully aristocratic neighbors, Cooper conveniently has the latter's gig overturn by the Deanery gate. Earlier in the novel Cooper had arranged for Mrs. Wilson's illness, allowing her to visit Bath with John and Emily, "her nephew and favorite niece" (6). During an excursion near Bath, John and Emily "were of accidental service to a young and very beautiful woman, apparently in low health."

They had taken her up in their carriage and conveyed her to a farm-house where she resided, during a faintness which had come over her in a walk; and her beauty, air, and manner, altogether so different from those around her, had interested them both to a painful degree.... John had given himself some trouble to ascertain who she was, but in vain. They could merely learn that her life was blameless, that she saw no one but themselves, and her dialect raised a suspicion that she was not English. (6-7)

Precaution failed because the characters are stock, the events contrived and predictable, the content English upper class, and the handling weak. This novel prompted Brander Matthews, professor of literature at Columbia in the 1890's, to remark: "American literature did not exist. No one had yet declared that the one thing of which an American literature could be made was American life." But that "American life" had to
be handled and presented competently; the form had to match the content.

Yet the new nation did present some distinct advantages to the writer. Tyler himself noted in 1797 that "In no other country are there so many people, in proportion to its numbers, who can read and write." And unlike in Europe, reading was not a pastime primarily reserved for the upper classes and domestic servants. Libraries, publishing houses, and colleges multiplied in America during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Between 1821 and 1830 more than four times as many novels were published than in any of the three preceding decades, and by 1825 "the libraries of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore had more than twenty times as many books to lend as the entire nation had owned in 1800." Less concrete advantages also abetted the American writer. Nearly every essayist and scholar examining the state of the nation's literature in 1820 recognized various intangibles. The nation was newly independent and possessed its own special history, like that of no other country. The Indian represented "a new race to lend strength to a new literature." And American nature, by its very size and singular
beauty, "opened new views" to the writer. "Puerile superstition and exploded manners; Gothic castles and chimeras" could not lead to a native literature, wrote Charles Brockden Brown in 1799; "Indian hostility, and ... the western wilderness, are far more suitable." Brown's conception far exceeded his ability, but his conception was on target. Literature in America, like landscape painting, was set to come of age.
If painting and literature were on thresholds by 1820, then Cooper and Cole were fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time. Three points must be stressed and constantly remembered when considering these two figures. First, they did not spring, like Athena from the brow of Zeus, full-blown and beautiful from the immensity of the American continent. Rather, they were the products of an accumulation of thought and experience, effort and failure. Second, their own artistic shortcomings, especially Cooper's, were large, and the advances they made were in spite of these weaknesses. Nevertheless, their successes and vision overshadow their deficiencies. Third, they in no way brought American painting and literature to fruition; they merely supplied the initial energies to shove American contributions in the fine arts and belle-lettres to a point of international respectability. Hawthorne, Whitman, and Melville; Durand, Bingham, and Homer: these are
the writers and artists that Cooper and Cole helped make possible.

Cole died in 1848, Cooper in 1851. At their deaths, the leading figures in painting and literature, as well as in other disciplines, acknowledged the monumentality of their legacy to American arts. George Bancroft, Secretary of the Navy, founder of the United States Naval Academy, author of a ten volume *History of the United States*, minister to Britain and later Prussia, praised Cooper in no uncertain terms.

I say that he was an embodiment of the American feeling, and truly illustrated American greatness. We were endeavouring to hold up our heads before the world, and to claim a character and intellect of our own, when Cooper appeared with his powerful genius to support our pretensions. He came forth imbued with American life, and feeling, and sentiment. Another like Cooper cannot appear, for he was peculiarly suited to his time, which was that of an invading civilization.

Cole, too, received the highest acclaim from his contemporaries. William Cullen Bryant, opening his *Funeral Oration* for Cole presented in 1848 before the National Academy of Design, eulogized:

His departure has left a vacuity which amazes and alarms us. It is as if the voyager on the Hudson were to look
toward the great range of the Catskills, at the foot of which Cole, with a reverential fondness, had fixed his abode, and were to see that the grandest of its summits had disappeared, had sunk into the plain from our sight. I might use a bolder similitude; it is as if we were to look over the heavens on a star-light evening and find that one of the greater planets, Hesperus or Jupiter, had been blotted from the sky. 78

At the heart of Cooper's and Cole's contributions to American literature and painting is their transitional role. Terence Martin contends that "American historical fiction [faced] almost insurmountable problems" as evidenced by such literary horrors as Samuel Woodworth's *The Champions of Freedom* (1816). That is, until "Cooper demonstrated how it could be done." Thomas Lounsbury, Cooper's first serious biographer, expressed similar views in 1882. He noted that Brown had been dead a decade, that Irving and Paulding were producing "short sketches," that John Neal had "perpetrated" a novel that "was never known enough to justify the mention of it as having been forgotten." Cooper, Lounsbury continues, appeared at the right time to fill this "vacant place." 79

Cole's first biographer, Louis Noble, writing in 1853, also stressed the transitional impact of his
subject and friend. Cole "rejected" what was "conventional," and turned from "the usual methods of the picturesque." Cole desired "to seize the true character" of America, and "to identify his pencil with it." Sixteen years later the foremost art historian in America, James Jackson Jarves, focused on Cole's paintings "as proofs of innate capacity in the native American for high art," and recognized Cole as "having inaugurated" a new school of American painting "with lofty intellectual motives." His paintings were "in advance of their time."  

Most other critics and historians of the nineteenth century agree with Lounsbury, Noble, and Jarves as to Cooper's and Cole's contribution to an American aesthetic. Brander Matthews: "Cooper was the first American novelist"; George Washington Greene: "one of the real founders of American literature"; Bancroft: "He was a forerunner,... the first to tell how the Hudson flows with inspiration to the poet"; Francis Parkman: "Of all American writers, Cooper is the most original, the most thoroughly national."  

Cole received similar tribute from the most influential critics of mid-nineteenth-century America. Tuckerman: "No American painter has so completely identified himself with his land's features"; Lanman:
"the originator of a new style" and "the greatest of American Landscape Painters"; Jarves: "Cole was the father of landscape art in America."82

Twentieth-century critics but echo similar sentiments. Miller: "Thomas Cole, foremost of the landscape painters of the Hudson River School"; Baur: "principal founder of the movement"; Nathan: "its most eminent member"; Kellner: "the first major landscape painter in America"; Merritt: "the father of American landscape painting."83

Critics today accord Cooper the honor of opening the wilderness, both actual and metaphoric, to the American novel. Petter: "the Cooper era is...considered as a new beginning"; Pattee: "the first to enter and explore"; Cowie: "the first strongly original delineator of the American scene"; Clough: "Cooper inaugurated the romanticizing of the new man in fictional form, amid the native scene"; Cady: "America's first significant novelist"; Loshe: "Cooper and his followers actually established novel-writing in American literature"; Nye: "When Natty Bumppo walked into American fiction and leaned on his long rifle, the American novel came of age."84

These various critics and historians, and dozens more who, like them, recognize Cooper and Cole as pioneers
in American literature and painting, are basically correct. Some other historians, however, far over-estimate the merits of these two men, for no matter how important was the legacy each left, both were seriously flawed in the execution of their conception. If Cole's vision of the potential of his adopted country was enlightened, and if his landscapes were often quite fine, there was still much that he did poorly.

When Oliver Larkin claims that Cole "was becoming what Goethe called an Imaginant, a man with the power to create worlds," he seems to forget that Cole's human figures and animals are horrendous: stiff, unnatural, awkward; blights on an otherwise graceful landscape. When Charles Lanman asserts that "the Course of Empire is a work of art worthy of any nation or any painter," that Cole "is unquestionably the most gifted landscape painter of the present age," and that "no landscape painter superior to Cole has ever lived," not only is he overlooking Cole's later preachy, didactic paintings and allegorical canvases, as well as his overly dramatic and sometimes repetitious trees and clouds, but Mr. Lanman is most obviously uninformed about what he is talking about. Thomas Cole is not as fine as any landscape painter who ever lived.85
Cooper, too, receives treatment that does criticism a grave disservice. Cooper, we are asked to recall, is that "genius which has rendered our native soil classic ground," and he is described as "one of the most impressive and original" novelists of the century, a man who possessed "an almost giant stature." But Cooper's faults are legend, as Mark Twain and hosts of others have delighted in noting. His characters are placed in the most unlikely situations--just why are Alice and Cora Munro in The Last of the Mohicans travelling through Indian-infested forests at the most dangerous time of the French and Indian War in 1757 to visit their father, commander of Fort William Henry? And why, when friendly soldiers are also journeying to the fort as reinforcements, does the Munro party choose a seldom-travelled short-cut that leaves them virtually unprotected?

If the reader isn't a bit curious about these improbabilities, that reader has only to wait a few moments. Natty Bumppo, here called Hawkeye, and Chingachgook, not called Chicago, are conveniently waiting under nearby trees to accompany the party north. That novel, like most of Cooper's novels, continues to offer one unlikely escape after another, punctuated by unbelievable coincidences, captures, and
meetings. The ability of Hawkeye and Chingachgook to arrange a meeting days and miles hence, and then for each to arrive under some mystical oak tucked anonymously amid the thousands of square miles of untracked forests of upstate New York, boggles the reader's mind.

Cooper's "literary offences" do not end at the implausible demands upon the reader's imagination, however. Natty Bumppo can shift seemingly in mid-sentence from backwoods bumpkin to poetic Oxford scholar. From The Prairie comes the following:

"This is neither more nor less than mortal wickedness! Here have I been a dweller on the earth for fourscore and six changes of the seasons, and all that time have I look'd at the growing and the dying trees, and yet do I not know the reasons why the bud starts under the summer sun, or the leaf falls when it is pinch'd by the frosts. Your l'arning, though it is man's boast, is folly in the eyes of Him who sits in the clouds, and looks down in sorrow at the pride and vanity of his creatur's.... Here is something skeary...." 87

And dialogue generally in Cooper's fiction is stiff and stilted, often wordy and inappropriate to the moment.

Cooper's treatment of secondary characters is also tremendously flawed. His women, or "gals" and
"females" as he persists in calling them, are cardboard stick figures, unreal, unconvincing, unsympathetic. His minor comic figures, characters like Dr. Obed Battius and David Gamut who are inserted for comic relief, are seldom funny and tend to clog up movement rather than to ease it along. They seldom offer any relief. Cooper as stylist is hardly first-rate; Cooper as conceptualist, as visionary of an American aesthetic, may be.

Cole's ability to execute his vision of the American wilderness is certainly greater than that of Cooper, but the point is that both shared in the vision, both saw that the American land could be the primary ingredient of an American mythos and aesthetic. Cole was the first painter "to embody ... the cult of the wilderness," and this embodiment allowed subsequent generations to find the land a useful tool in American painting. Cole did more than just offer the land as a device to the American painter. "We may legitimately see symbolized in Cole," writes Howard Merritt, "the emergent self-consciousness and self-confidence of the American artist," and James Thomas Flexner notes that Cole brought "a conviction of importance" to both the land and the arts in America.
Cooper, like Cole, injected a tone of confidence into American literature. His financial success undoubtedly encouraged others to follow, and he was seen in his own day as the person who finally made it apparent that America itself could be the subject of fiction, for his novels were of American stuff. "The scenes, the characters, and the history of his native land" were all part of Cooper's fiction, notes Brander Matthews, and van Doren and Charvat add that Cooper adapted the romance to America, using the pioneer and the Indian, as well as American antiquities and class struggle. But primarily he used the land; he was the "spokesman ... for natural scenery."  

"... There was promise in [his] rude vigor," wrote Parkman; "hope that from such rough beginnings the country might develop a literary progeny, which ... might one day do honor to its parentage." "A literature indigenous to the new republic was being created," writes Warren Walker, and F. O. Matthiessen concurs: in Cooper, American literature "had begun to find its voice."  

For all their faults, Cooper and Cole were fresh starts for American literature and painting. Their creations may not always have been equal to their visions, but when Cooper published The Pioneers in 1823,
the same year Cole came to Philadelphia and began painting landscapes at the Pennsylvania Academy, and in 1825 when Cole's first canvases were shown in New York, something special was happening to American culture and aesthetics. Cooper and Cole were creating "from the inside out, from the feeling to the form," as Robert Spiller puts it. From American to America.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2


4. Ibid., pp. 368-369.


9. S. F. B. Morse to James Fenimore Cooper, November 20, 1849, in Letters and Journals of S. F. B. Morse, ed. Edward Morse (Boston, 1860).


12. Richardson, p. 6. Richardson mentions the following portraitists: Stuart, Malbone, C. W. Peale, Trumbull, Saint-Mémin, du Simétrie, Jarvis, Frothingham, Eichholtz, and Field.


15. Larkin, pp. 46, 136; Goodrich, p. 5.


19. J. Hall Pleasants, "Four Late Eighteenth Century Anglo-American Landscape Painters," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, n.s. 52 (October, 1942), 191. Pleasants offers biographical data for each figure and also traces all known paintings, giving size, provenance, and description, pp. 187-324.


23. Born, p. 26; Flexner, p. 17; see also Edward Everett Hale, Jr., "The Early Art of Thomas Cole," Art in America, IV (1916), 28; Larkin, p. 137; Nathan, p. 34; Sweet, p. 30.

24. Hale, p. 28; Noble, p. xxviii; see also Larkin, p. 139; Sweet, pp. 30-31. Larkin presents a fairly good account of early landscape painting in America, pp. 135-143, as does Barker, pp. 176-177, 287-293, 296-304, 417-423. A brief survey of early landscape painting can be found in Hans Huth, Nature and the American (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), pp. 39-44; and still more information is in Plesants, pp. 188-189 and Graham, pp. 74, 76. As Graham notes, "these embryonic efforts were not enough to generate an indigenous landscape tradition."

25. Born, p. 31; see also Nathan, p. 35.


40. Van Doren, p. 3; Spiller, *LHUS*, p. 178; Wagenknecht, p. 4; Loshe, p. 9.

41. Van Doren, p. 8.


44. Martin, pp. 107, 126.

45. Van Doren, p. 4.


49. Agnes Addison, *Romanticism and the Gothic Revival* (1938; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1967), p. 16; Nye, *American Literary History*, p. 241; Loshe, pp. 29, 52-53, 56. Loshe hints at the failure of such American copies as Mrs. Wood's when she observes that her later books are "of no particular interest, either to the student or the modern reader" p. 53.
50. Nye, American Literary History, p. 243; see also Parrington, II, 188-199; Quinn, pp. 25-39. Loshe attests to Godwin's influence again and again: "It is from Godwin that Brown received the impulse ..." (p. 30); "... looked to William Godwin ..." (p. 32); "... like Godwin ..." (p. 32); "... reflects many of Godwin's views ..." (p. 32); "... the influence of Caleb Williams." (p. 34); pp. 35-39 are about Caleb Williams; "In the matter of style, also, Brown was early influenced by Godwin ..." (p. 51); see also p. 57. For more comment on Godwin's influence on Brown, see The Cambridge History of American Literature, 4 v. ed., W. P. Trent, et al. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), I, 288, 290.


52. Spiller, LHUS, p. 181.

53. Loshe, pp. 57, 58; Angoff, I, 325; Trent, CHAL, I, 292; Nye agrees: "...no novelist of his stature appeared in America for another generation" p. 244.

54. Van Doren, pp. 22, 15, 22-23.


57. Loshe, p. 81; see also Charvat, p. 66; Nye, American Literary History, pp. 244-245; John C. McCloskey, "The Campaign of Periodicals After the War of 1812 for National American Literature," North American Review, III (September, 1815), 313-314.


61. "Tales of Indian Life," The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal, XX (1827), 82; see, e.g., Cowie: "Irving easily accommodated his talents to a well-established English tradition in letters...." p. 115; Spiller, *Fenimore Cooper: Critic of His Times* (New York: Minton, Balch, & Company, 1931): "Cooper attempted the task which Irving deliberately avoided and which no one else seemed capable of undertaking." p. vii.


74. Nye, *American Literary History*, p. 183; see Peter, p. x, for publishing figures.


86. Charles King, editor of the New York American and later President of Columbia College, quoted in Lounsbury, p. 128; Trent, CHAL, p. 306; Spiller, LHUS, p. 253.


88. Goodrich, p. 9; Merritt, p. 12; Flexner, p. 20.


92. Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature, p. 35; see also Flexner, p. 17.
Painting and literature in America in 1820, and more specifically the achievement of Thomas Cole and James Fenimore Cooper, cannot be understood fully without an awareness of the intellectual climate of the time. America generally accepted the aesthetics then fashionable in England and the continent. Eighteenth-century Europe, in addition to fostering an intellectual milieu that made romantic thought both possible and pervasive, had spent an almost inordinate amount of time pondering the aesthetics of taste and perception, and from such ponderings set forth and refined two theories that became of utmost importance to nineteenth-century American thought, those of the sublime and associationist psychology.

The theory of the sublime grew steadily from the last quarter of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth, though Edmund Burke's work on the
subject, published in 1757, became the best known and most influential. Associationist psychology emerged from the Scottish Common Sense school of philosophy, and especially from David Hartley's *Observations on Man* (1749). In 1790 Archibald Alison's *Essays on Taste* appeared and for the next thirty years was a staple in the intellectual diet of any educated American or Englishman.

Alison incorporated Hartley's psychology along with various theories of the sublime and the beautiful into a theory of taste based on associations. Cole and Cooper both knew Burke's and Alison's works as well as general theories of sublimity and associationism. In America during the 1820's they were to enfold these two aesthetic considerations, meld them together, and emerge with a vision of the land that embodied the promise of America and the concurrent danger and precariousness of that promise.
In an article detailing the causes of literary nationalism, Robert E. Streeter lists a number of reasons why America moved towards a native literature in the 1810's and 1820's. He catalogs the end of serfdom to England and the recognition of American scenery, general anti-British sentiment after the War of 1812, and specific battles with "unimpressed" English travellers in and critics of America. Streeter also finds an attitude prevalent in the young country that the American brand of democracy would ensure maximum "social happiness," which, when linked to the "natural combativeness of an expanding nation," would help account for the nationalist outburst of these years. Streeter adds, however, one further cause: associationist psychology, with David Hartley as the source and Archibald Alison the principal prophet. Streeter claims that the American was moved by the associations from his own land to create a native literature and art.
Professors Charvat and Martin have established the pervasiveness in America of the Scottish Common Sense school of aesthetics, of which association psychology is a part. The North American Review championed a nationalist aesthetic in terms of common sense aesthetics. The Scottish aestheticians argued that one is capable of apprehending all objective reality with the senses, and that this reality is then grasped by one's understanding or intellectual reasoning. The Scottish School grew directly from Locke, who had discarded the notion of innate ideas and instead theorized that each person, as a child, is a tabula rasa, a blank slate. Each succeeding experience and perception becomes engraved on that slate, and the adult is the accumulation of all these experiences and perceptions. There was something wonderfully democratic about such a theory, for each individual was equal at birth and theoretically capable of any perception or experience, and this inherent democracy accounted for much of the school's appeal in America.

The Scottish School further attracted the American for it emphasized the common sense of the average man; one did not have to be a philosopher to comprehend its basics. The school was also strongly opposed to mysticism and involved, subtle philosophy. In addition,
according to Charvat, common sense aesthetics buttressed
religion by emphasizing "the reality of our intuitive
convictions" and "the authority of the conscience."
It further appealed to the basically religious American
in its assertion of a benevolent God. The American saw
himself and his country as specially singled out by a
kindly God who held greatness in store for him. The
empiricism of the Scottish aesthetics also fit into a
peculiarly American phenomenon: the importance of
seeing, the "eye of wonder." The verifiable reality
of the country is everywhere embedded in American
thought: knowledge comes from the senses and from
individual experience. Through Kames, Hutcheson, and,
finally, Alison, associationism became the link between
the observed reality of the Scottish aesthetics and
individual, romantic imagination.4

Associationism, as Alison presents it, stems from
certain basic assumptions.5 External objects in
themselves are neither beautiful nor sublime. They
become one or the other only through ideas or qualities
which the mind comes to associate with them.

When any object, either of sublimity or
beauty, is presented to the mind, I
believe every man is conscious of a
train of thought being immediately awakened
in his imagination, analogous to the
character or expression of the original
Thus, when we feel either the beauty or sublimity of natural scenery,... we are conscious of a variety of images in our minds, very different from those which the objects themselves can present to the eye. (I, 4-5)

... the Sublimity or Beauty of Forms arises altogether from the Associations we connect with them, or the Qualities of which they are expression to us.... (I, 317-318)

Both the quantity and quality of the object's beauty or sublimity are totally dependent on the associations the individual brings to that object.

If the mind is in such a state as to prevent this freedom of imagination, the emotion, whether of sublimity or beauty, is unperceived. (I, 8)

... the more that our ideas are increased, or our conceptions extended upon any subject, the greater the number of associations we connect with it, the stronger is the emotion of sublimity or beauty we receive from it. (I, 37)

The conclusion, therefore, in which I wish to rest is, THAT THE BEAUTY AND SUBLIMITY WHICH IS FELT IN THE VARIOUS APPEARANCES OF MATTER, ARE FINALLY TO BE ASCRIBED TO THEIR EXPRESSION OF MIND; OR TO THEIR BEING, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, THE SIGNS OF THOSE QUALITIES OF MIND WHICH ARE FITTED, BY THE CONSTITUTION OF OUR NATURE, TO AFFECT US WITH PLEASURE OR INTERESTING EMOTION. (II, 423)
The mind, once the Lockean tabula rasa but now filled with perceptions and experiences, may feel emotion at the sight of particular objects in nature, such as waterfalls or storms, ancient ruins or historical sites. This felt emotion may lead one to ascribe to external nature and scenery the tags "beautiful" or "sublime."

The sight of a torrent, or of a storm, in the same manner, impresses us first with sentiments of awe, or solemnity, or terror, and then awakens in our minds a series of conceptions allied to this particular emotion. Whatever may be the character of the original emotion, the images which succeed seem all to have a relation to this character....

(I, 77-78)

... no objects or qualities are experienced to be beautiful or sublime, but such as are productive of some simple Emotion.

(I, 79)

... if no such affection is excited, no Emotion of Beauty or Sublimity is produced.

(I, 81)

The Strength of the Oak, the delicacy of the Myrtle, the boldness of a Rock, the modesty of the Violet, &c. are expressions common in all languages, and so common, that they are scarcely in any considered as figurative; yet every man knows, that Strength and Weakness, Boldness and Modesty, are qualities, not of Matter, but of Mind, and that without our knowledge of Mind, it is impossible that we should ever
have had any conception of them....
the effect of descriptions of natural
scenery arises from that personification,
which is founded upon such associations....
(I, 183-184)

... Beauty or Sublimity is to be ascribed,
not to the material, but to the associated
qualities.
(I, 189)

Alison develops his theory of taste further. Of
all the senses, that of vision is the most important.
Each of the other senses supplies us with "only single
qualities of objects;" but sight allows us to discover
the "assemblage of qualities which constitute, in our
imaginations, the peculiar nature of such objects"
(I, 290).

In his Essays on Taste, Alison argues against
the neoclassical idea of the innate beauty or sublimity
of objects. Beauty and sublimity are subjective,
dependent on the individual's perceptions and experiences.

One upshot of Alison's theory is this: taste
leads to a religious position. When we experience or
perceive something, we undoubtedly feel a "temporary
pleasure,... what Lord Kames has profoundly and
emphatically called the 'Sympathetic Emotion of Virtue;'
... our own bosoms glow...." After the perception and
the experience, "we return to life and to its duties,
with minds either softened to a wider benevolence, or awakened to a higher tone of morality." Alison concludes, in part, that "the Material Universe around us becomes a scene of moral discipline" (II, 440). The "moral discipline" that external nature teaches us, by means of associations leading to visions of beauty and sublimity, ultimately leads beyond morality to God, to "RELIGIOUS Sentiment." Alison sees, in the observation of nature and in the mind's response to that nature, empirical evidence of God's presence: "nature ... ought only to be felt as signs of his providence, and as conducting us, by the universal language of these signs, to the throne of the Deity" (II, 441-442).

Both Cole and Cooper used natural scenery as Alison theorized. A beautiful or sublime landscape in either is not simply a borrowing from eighteenth-century painting or literature, or merely decorative à la mode. In The Last of the Mohicans, for example, Cora, Alice, Heyward, and their party are traveling through the forests of upstate New York. At one point they emerge "from the broad border of underbrush which grew along the line of the highway," and proceed under "the high but dark arches of the forest" (15-16). Cooper expects the reader to associate the "high but dark
arches" of the natural world with the interior of a
Gothic cathedral and recognize the immanence of God
in nature.

Frequently Cooper describes natural settings
that enable the reader to draw associations from the
landscape that lead to beautiful or sublime thoughts
and on to God. During a quiet interlude in The
Deerslayer the land is presented in peaceful and
uplifting terms.

It was a glorious June afternoon,
and never did that solitary sheet of
water seem less like an arena of strife
and bloodshed.... Even the forests
appeared to be slumbering in the sun,
and a few piles of fleecy clouds had
lain for hours along the northern
horizon like fixtures in the atmosphere,
placed there purely to embellish the
scene.

(137-138)

The intentional embellishment is Cooper's way of
directing the reader's attention to the possible
associations that may be felt from such a vista.

A similar scene appears near the end of The
Prairie.

The sun was beginning to fall, and a
sheet of golden light was spread over
the placid plain, lending to its even
surface those glorious tints and hues,
that the human imagination is apt to conceive, form the embellishment of still more imposing scenes.  

The "glorious tints and hues," the "sheet of golden light," the setting sun and "placid plain" can all lead the "human imagination" to thoughts of stained glass windows, evensong vespers in a quiet church, and a gentle, benevolent God. Indeed, Cooper's land is often seen as a sprawling, outdoor church.

Cole's Peace at Sunset (Plate 53) and Sunny Morning on the Hudson, (Plate 38), for example, function much as do Cooper's landscapes. The viewer is meant to be awed by the powerful rock formations, the driving, clearing clouds, the occasional twisted, blasted tree, and the immensity of the land. These paintings, and numerous others like them, lead the viewer into a land simultaneously threatening and beneficent and, through associations, on to visions of God.

Natural scenery to both Cooper and Cole expressed moral truths: the American land is filled with God, sometimes a dangerous and threatening God, sometimes, and ultimately, a benevolent God, but a God which man discovers through associations.
However, not everyone agreed that America had objects which produced proper associations. Hawthorne, James, and Cooper himself had bemoaned the lack of ruins. These complaints grew from the awareness that ruins and ancient artifacts were the primary source for the kinds of associations which had previously made literature and painting successful. Without the psychological interplay of object and imagination, neither the artist nor the experiencer could relate to an art object. Such complaints often centered on the Europe-America contrast, and on America's supposed defects. In *Bracebridge Hall* Washington Irving expressed what so many Americans felt about their own country, and about Europe:

> Having been born and brought up in a new country, yet educated from infancy in the literature of an old one, my mind was early filled with historical and poetical associations, connected with places, and manners, and customs of Europe, but which could rarely be applied to those of my own country....
the most ordinary objects and scenes,
on arriving in Europe, are full of
strange matter and interesting novelty.

... Such too was the odd confusion of
associations that kept breaking upon
me as I first approached London.... I
had read so much about it.

America did not have cathedrals and abbeys and ruins
dating back centuries. If taste depended upon
associations conjured up by the mind from external
objects, as Alison suggested and which seemed generally
accepted in American aesthetic circles, could the
American painter and writer still produce art works
which appealed to good taste? Here was the basic
problem.

Cole knew well this problem. He knew Alison's
Essays, was aware of their popularity and influence,
and believed that successful art did have to stem
from and produce adequate associations. "After all,"
he wrote in 1835, "beauty is in the mind. A scene is
rather an index to feelings and associations." Six
years earlier he had even mentioned Alison's work in
his journal, under "Notes on Art." Alison and the
problems of associationism were very much with Cole,
and he himself was much influenced by Alison's theories.
Cole addressed himself to the kinds of objections that Cooper had raised and that Hawthorne and James were to raise regarding the newness and glossiness of America in his "Essay on American Scenery" of 1836.

... a few remarks on what has been considered a grand defect in American scenery—the want of associations, such as arise amid the scenes of the old world.
... He who stands on Mont Albano and looks down on ancient Rome, has his mind peopled with the gigantic associations of the storied past; but he who stands on the mounds of the West, the most venerable remains of American antiquity, may experience the emotion of the sublime, but it is the sublimity of a shoreless ocean un-islanded by the recorded deeds of man.
Yet American scenes are not destitute of historical and legendary associations—the great struggle for freedom has sanctified many a thought, and many a mountain, stream, and rock has its legend.... American associations are not so much of the past as of the present and the future.
... You see no ruined tower to tell of outrage—no gorgeous temple to speak of ostentation; but freedom's offspring—peace, security, happiness.
... mighty deeds shall be done in the now pathless wilderness; and poets yet unborn shall sanctify the soil.

... the consequent associations [when one looks upon untouched wilderness] are of God the creator—they are his undefiled works, and the mind is cast into the contemplation of eternal things.
Here indeed was an answer, and a viable one at that. Not only could American scenery be substituted for European ruins, but it could evoke emotions of the sublime as powerful as anything the Coliseum or Tintern Abbey could. Furthermore, American scenery did have historical and legendary associations, and an added bonus, associations of future greatness, and, finally, of God.

The American land led the mind to the highest levels, fulfilling the very dicta of Alison's theory of taste, and echoes of Cole's understanding rolled across the Catskills and all of America. Wrote Francis Parkman in 1852: "... where the moral instincts are originally strong, they may find nutriment and growth among the rude scenes and grand associations of the wilderness." That same year E. L. Magoon had asserted that mountains were the most powerful part of scenery, and added in The Home Book of the Picturesque:

Deep caverns, contracted lakes, projecting crags, impending avalanches, and glittering pinnacles, which rise in serene majesty till they are lost in mist and cloud, rolling over their summits like the waves of ocean, realize prospects which seem to conduct the contemplator from this to another world.
Even the English traveller Charles Joseph Latrobe had to agree that American scenery was indeed powerful. "The New World! ... It was the renewal of youth and boyhood." Irving, also in the Home Book, was inclined to incur: "The Catskill Mountains especially called forth a host of fanciful traditions."*11 We come full circle when we note what Cole himself wrote in his journal on February 26, 1843.

How the soul is linked in harmonies and associations! A word spoken now recalls one spoken years ago. A strain of music, a single tone of the voice, wings the mind into the past. A mountain here sends one, in a thought, to a mountain in a foreign land; the streamlet, warbling at one's feet, is answered to by another on a far-off continent. Things not only suggest their like but their very opposite. A feather can remind us of greatness and empire; a mist, of Heaven; a rock, of the very lightness and mutability of things upon earth; a leaf, of the unchangeable nature of paradise. By this magnetism of ideas is the world of the mind drawn together, and bound. This world of the mind is, in infancy, a point; it increases with the hours, the weeks, the years. As old age approaches, the accumulated materials begin to fall away,—the latest first, and so on towards the point of infancy. *12

The soul moves forward through time and then backward, inward unto itself and outward in space to all infinity.
All becomes romantically linked as the mind associates a present moment of external reality with something far removed spatially and temporally.
All hail, Sublimity! thou lofty one,
For thou dost walk upon the blast, and gird
Thy majesty with terrors, and thy throne
Is on the whirlwind, and thy voice is heard
In thunders and in shakings: thy delight
Is in the secret wood, the blasted heath,
The ruin'd fortress, and the dizzy height,
The grave, the ghastly charnel-house of death,
In vaults, in cloisters, and in gloomy piles,
Long corridors and towers and solitary aisles!

... how blest is he
Who feels the genuine force of high Sublimity!

Tennyson, "On Sublimity"

If taste was the result of the mind associating
one thing after experiencing or perceiving something
else, what one often felt was the emotion of the sublime.
Much aesthetic theory of the eighteenth century was
directed towards definitions of either the beautiful
or the sublime, with the concept of the picturesque
later developed as a cross between the two. In American
painting and literature, the sublime seems the tool
which both Cole and Cooper used most often, and to
understand the message that each presented, an
understanding of that aesthetic is necessary.

The sublime surfaced as early as the seventeenth century. Its chief components, awe, terror, and exhaltation, were feelings Christian man previously had reserved primarily for God. But during this century of reason and humanist thought, man's own world became a subject for wonder and admiration, as did man's contributions to that world. Especially evocative of such emotions was the landscape of this world as opposed to that of some imagined City of God. Mountains and oceans became awe-inspiring and exhilarating. Landscape had been noticed before the seventeenth century, but as Marjorie Hope Nicolson has so ably shown, the discovery of the sublime totally changed man's perceptions of that landscape. The "sense sublime" which Wordsworth was to write about in "Tintern Abbey" in 1798 had begun to alter the way a person viewed natural wonders as early as the 1670's. There is no one definition of the sublime; instead, it develops through many aestheticians, more than a dozen modifying and offering variations on what had gone before, until it reaches its most subjective point in the writings of Immanuel Kant. The origins of the sublime seem to stem from Nicolas Boileau's 1674 translation of Longinus' Traité du
Sublime ou du Merveilleux dans le Discours, an essay supposedly from the third century which considered style, not scenery. Longinus enumerates various qualities of the sublime style, including "boldness and grandeur" and "the power of raising the passions to a violent and even enthusiastic degree." This style "ravishes and transports us" and may lead to "Admiration," "Astonishment," and "Surprise." Longinus' contribution to the aesthetics of the sublime became the foundation of eighteenth-century thought on the relation between style, scenery, perception, and taste.  

Boileau's translation gave birth to an excitement that led to a whole flowering of aesthetic theories of the sublime. Thomas Burnet appears to be the first to recognize in the natural world what Longinus had written about style. In The Sacred Theory of the Earth (1681) Burnet was "rapt" and "ravished" by vast and majestic natural scenes. Emotions he had only felt when considering God now enveloped him, and though Burnet could not account for his feelings, he realized it was not Beauty he was responding to but something that fell outside of the confines of that particular aesthetic emotion. Unaware of his discovery, Burnet was nevertheless making a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime in nature while at the same
time recognized that such qualities are subjective, internal, residing within the individual.  

A first inkling of associationism had emerged. The eighteenth century sensed not only that natural scenery produced emotional responses in people, but that these responses differed depending on the kind of scenery. Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, in 1711 published *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc.* Shaftesbury saw the sublime in a different light than had Longinus or Burnet seen it. To him, the sublime was not a rhetorical style, nor was it found in nature itself; instead, its source was God. God created everything in this world and all things when perceived should lead man to the emotion of the sublime.  

John Dennis, a contemporary of Shaftesbury, also found God the source of the sublime, but where Shaftesbury felt no real terror at the thought of God's power and massive creation, Dennis experienced terror, fear, and exaltation. The sublimity of "a God of Power," as Nicolson puts it, could literally overwhelm Dennis; Shaftesbury felt no such astonishment, and only a "natural awe." Terror and fear are the bases of Dennis' theory: "The common emotion of terror is.
a Disturbance of Mind, proceeding from an Apprehension of an approaching Evil, threatening Destruction or very great Trouble either to us or ours. And when the Disturbance comes suddenly or with surprize, let us call it Terror; and when gradually, Fear. Things then that are powerful, and likely to hurt, the more they become the cause of Terror; which Terror, the greater it is, the more it is joined with Wonder, and the nearer it comes to Astonishment: Thus we have shewn what Objects of the Mind are the Causes of Enthusiastick Terror.

The most powerful terror stemmed from religious ideas; the greater the power behind something, the greater the terror evoked. "The source of sublimity was in God and in the manifestations of His greatness and power in Nature," Nicolson observes. Much of Dennis' theory grew from Locke and the idea of association.

The sublime needed to be differentiated from the beautiful by 1700, for the former was predicated on power, awe, even terror. Beauty, on the other hand, stemmed from things being neat, ordered, precise; regularity and compliance with the rules were the keynotes for the beautiful. The sublime would lead to romanticism, the beautiful back to neoclassicism.

Joseph Addison found the sublime primarily in vastness. Large panoramas, sprawling mountain ranges, and especially the ocean, ideally during tempests,
create the sublime. Though concurring with Dennis that the origin of one's feeling for the sublime was in God, unlike Dennis, who stressed power, Addison stressed size. Gigantic stretches of scenery often overwhelm the viewer, especially if storms are present or danger possible, but even the dangerous leads only to an "agreeable Horrour," and hence to the sublime. Mark Akenside's Pleasures of the Imagination (1744) adds little to Addison, basing sublime feelings also on vastness and identifying a desire in all people for the infinite. 18

In 1739 David Hume offered still further modification to the growing corpus of thought on the sublime. Consistent with current thought, Hume agreed that beauty and ugliness were not inherent in objects. But Hume explains their existence in a novel way in his Treatise on Human Nature. Things are beautiful if they produce pleasure in us, ugly if they produce pain. "The order and construction" of the object contribute to these emotions, arising either from something basic within us, or from "custom and caprice." Certain beautiful things lead to the sublime, especially things at a distance, elevated objects and mountains viewed across plains. Hume explained the feelings of the sublime that occur by means of psychological association, a
full decade before Hartley. The "interspars'd distance" between viewer and object leads to a reflection on the magnitude of space which then leads to great ideas and aesthetic pleasure. 19

Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) primarily re-emphasized what had already been theorized: the vast grandeur of nature leads to the sublime. Blair did, however, add that loud sounds, thunder, cannon blasts, the roar of waterfalls, all lead the mind to great ideas, and thence to the sublime. 20

It is a small step from the "agreeable Horrour" produced by storms at sea or by an almost endless expanse of mountain crags or foggy heaths to the supernatural itself. Terror caused by the inexplicable and the unknown produces the sublime, and this was a lode the romantic poets were to mine. But before the romantics of the early 1800's used the sublime, still more was to be added. Thomas Ashton, for example, found the sublime in "grand images and aspects of Nature" as well as in eternal and vast objects. John Baillie's Essay on the Sublime (1747) emphasized sublime terror created by the conception of an Old Testament angry God. 21

These various theories contributed to a number of new literary developments, including the work of
the graveyard poets, the fascination with and success of MacPherson's forged Ossian poetry, Rousseau's return-to-nature writing, and the appearance of the Gothic novel. Graves and ruins had become objects evoking the sublime, for they dealt with God, mutability, immensity of time, and the unknown. A convenient storm, a darkened forest, a craggy mountain cliff, all added to the awe and terror and helped ensure the success of these developments.

However, were the danger real, that is, if the viewer actually were in peril from the storm, for example, then no sublime feeling would arise. There must always be a bit of detachment between the person and the source of terror and fear. Richard Hurd and Joseph Priestley incorporated these ideas into their aesthetics. Hurd found the "gothic marvellous" the "height of poetry," for it both challenged and elevated the imagination. Priestley recognized the sublimity of ruins. Decaying buildings and Gothic cathedrals become associated in the mind with the passage of time and with all that has happened during those centuries; hence, sublimity. 22

Nature in the latter half of the eighteenth century became a religion, and the sublime the link with its God. The individual can merge with nature,
with reality immanent in that nature, and in the process merge with the Deity itself. James Usher and Thomas Reid carried the sublime to this point. "The grandeur of the universe is the grandeur of the mind of God;" God is thus reflected everywhere in nature. To both Usher and Reid, the emotion of the sublime produced by wild nature became a religious experience. 23

The key figure in any discussion of the aesthetics of taste in the eighteenth century, however, remains Edmund Burke, whose *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* appeared in 1757. Burke's *Enquiry* links the beautiful with pleasure and the sublime with pain, and like others before him, he places emphasis on the emotion which the viewer feels, not on the object being viewed. When the mind associates something with pain and danger, the soul experiences a certain delight and exhilaration, and feelings for the sublime are produced. One important qualification must be remembered: the danger and the pain must be non-threatening. If they "press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible" (I, 7). 24 The sublime is the "strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (I, 7), for a sense of self-preservation is at the core
of each individual's being, and danger and fear excite this sense: terror, though slightly detached, is the ruling principal of the sublime (II, 2).

Burke's delightful terror is similar to Addison's "agreeable Horror," though Burke details his theory more fully than do Addison or anyone else before him detail theirs. A number of emotions or experiences can produce sublime terror, according to Burke: Astonishment, where all the soul's "motions are suspended, with some degree of horror," where "the mind is ... entirely filled with its object" and cannot explain the experience through reason (II, 1); Obscurity, which creates apprehension by hindering understanding and reason (II, 3,4); Vastness and Infinity, which "fill the mind with ... delightful horror" (II, 7,8) and "grand ideas" while turning "the soul in upon itself" (p. lvi); Magnificence, the "profusion of things which are splendid or valuable in themselves," such as the "starry heaven" (II, 13); Bright Light, which "obliterates all objects, so as in its effect exactly to resemble darkness" (II, 14); Loud Noise, "sufficient to overpower the soul," including the "noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery" (II, 17); Suddenness, especially "a sudden beginning, or sudden cessation of sound" (II, 18);
Cries of Animals, the "angry tones of wild beasts" (II, 20).

The ultimate experience producing the sublime centers on the power of God as felt in his creation. Everything sublime for Burke involved "some modification of power." Great strength leads one to imagine potential ravaging and destruction; wild animals come "upon us in the gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness"; finally, God's strength is "by far the most striking.... to be struck with his power, it is only necessary that we open our eyes." Burke notes that whenever God appears in Scripture, the most awful and solemn objects accompany him: burning bushes, eclipses, desolate mountain peaks, thunder and lightning (II, 5). Burke recognizes, ultimately,—and here his theory of the sublime becomes most powerful and far-reaching—that to see God's work is to see God himself: "we may be admitted, if I may dare to say so, into the counsels of the Almighty by a consideration of his works" (I, 19).

Burke's Enquiry is clearly dependent not only on theories which had been developing for nearly a century, but on David Hartley's Observations on Man published eight years previously. The growing swell of romantic thought clearly linked theories of taste, and specifically of sublimity, with theories of association psychology.
What is evoked within creates the emotion; the object inherently is nothing. If Alison was the foremost proponent of Hartley's psychology, and pervaded American aesthetic considerations in the first half of the nineteenth century, Burke was the last word on the sublime and also penetrated American thought completely during the same years. Not surprisingly, given Burke's popularity, nearly all of Alison's discussion of the sublime stems from Burke's *Enquiry*: "sublimity ... is increased by the circumstances of horror ... connected to it" (I, 29); the sublime is "associated with Ideas of Danger; ... Power or Might; ... Majesty or Solemnity" (I, 193), and with "violence," "intensity," "horror," "fear," "despair," "rage," and "agony" (II, 389).25

European aestheticians devoted more than a century to defining just what it is that prompts particular responses. Definitions of taste and distinctions within theories were crucial to eighteenth-century romantic thought. But in America by 1825, concern for subtle differences in theory was vanishing. Sublimity meant Burke's ideas, but included simply anything overpowering and tended towards a Christian moralistic view of the natural world, a view which by the 1840's would emerge as Manifest Destiny. The
American after 1825 responded to mountains, waterfalls, cliffs, and storms, calling such natural wonders "sublime," or "picturesque," or "beautifully sublime," or "sublimely picturesque." Terminology may have been sloppy, but the impact of eighteenth-century theory was retained. 26

Some of the fuzziness of nomenclature surely grew from Sir Uvedale Price's Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and Beautiful, published in 1794 and expanded two years later. Price was the first to elevate the term "picturesque" to the level of aesthetic significance which "sublime" and "beautiful" then occupied. Originally, the picturesque included some of the sublime and some of the beautiful, wedged between the two to account for scenery which was neither fish nor fowl, as it were. The picturesque embodied intricacy and variety, could be expressive of awe and even terror while being capable of denoting the playful and the gay as well. Rough and irregular forms were picturesque, but infinity was not. Uniformity, endless expanse of prairie or ocean, for example, were sublime, not picturesque. 27 The picturesque was a long step removed from the dread and terror of the sublime, or from the sublime's concern for cosmic, infinite thoughts and associations, yet it maintained a romantic
charm and capriciousness which the neoclassically
beautiful did not possess. Nineteenth-century America
found the word "picturesque" most convenient, for it
applied to almost any scenery, but often the word was
misused, for the sublime was actually being described.

The concept of the sublime in nineteenth-century
America seems best summed up by James Jackson Jarves
in Art-Hints (1855). "Sublimity's chief attribute is
Power ... displayed in the fearful phenomena of
Nature....

Its noblest developments are to be
found in the aroused energies of the
human mind, consecrated to lofty
purposes, and in the presence of God
when He comes, not in the fire or
the whirlwind, but in the "still
small voice," while all nature lies
hushed at the advent of its Maker.

Jarves' vision of the sublime flows directly from
Burke's Enquiry, still immensely influential in America
a century after its initial publication and appearance. 28

But generally the sublime had come to mean
something identifiable and profound in American thought
in the first half of the nineteenth century: "From
Infinite God through vast Nature to the soul of man;
from the soul of man through vast Nature to Infinite
God." 29 The experience of the sublimity of the land.
led man to his Maker. Though virtually unknown in America in the early nineteenth century, Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1763) anticipates much of the American response to the sublime. Kant found the sublime an essential moral component of the individual; man himself is sublime, for in his greatness and simultaneous simplicity, he is able to transcend the natural world by means of that world and begin to understand God and his creation. From man to Nature to the Infinite.
The sublimity of nature would take man from this temporal and temporary world to his God. Though the detailed aesthetic theories of the previous century had blurred, these theories still dominated American taste. Nature was undoubtedly the key to aesthetic pleasure in the New World. "This is indeed sublime," spouts Amelia, gazing at the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson below, in William Dunlap's *A Trip to Niagara*. Americans and foreign visitors alike agreed that the American land was sublime. But the special feature of this awe-inspiring landscape was its duality. It is pastoral and alluring, direct from the brushes of Claude and Poussin, yet simultaneously wild, untamed, filled with the unknown, threatening and dangerous. Henry T. Tuckerman, one of the foremost art critics of mid-century America, captures this duality in *The Home Book of the Picturesque* (1852):

The pioneer, like the mariner, alternated between long uneventful periods and moments fraught with
excitement; the forest, like the ocean, is monotonous as well as grand; and its tranquil beauty, for weeks together, may not be sublimated by terror....

Perhaps it is this very succession of "moving accidents" and lonely quiet, of solemn repose and intense activity, that constitutes the fascination which the sea and the wilderness possess for imaginative minds.

In the aesthetics of the sublime, Nature leads to God for it is of God. The American land was no different, though the duality present seems to parallel closely the duality of the Biblical God, the thundering, fearful, Old Testament Deity and the forgiving, benevolent, New Testament Christ. Most nineteenth-century Americans accepted the romantic attitude towards nature which found God present everywhere. Cole recognized this pantheism in his "Essay on American Scenery": "Prophets of old retired into the solitudes of nature to wait the inspiration of heaven.... the wilderness is YET a fitting place to speak of God." Cole's observations were echoed often in the succeeding years.

The conclusion seemed evident: God was everywhere in nature. Such a realization led the American to yet another, regarding his own place in the universe. The
permanence of God is discovered in the permanence of nature. But such a lesson also exposed man to his own transience; the mutability of the individual, even of mankind itself, could not be escaped, and the duality of nature impressed this fact on nineteenth-century America.

Throughout the Leatherstocking Tales Cooper returns frequently to the theme of mutability. The five-volume series chronicles Natty Bumppo's life from youthful initiate in The Deerslayer to aged scout in The Prairie. In addition, Natty Bumppo, growing older, moves ever westward, seeking a receding frontier, escaping the confines and encroachments of civilization. The death of Uncas and the passing of the Mohican nation is, finally, central to The Last of the Mohicans.

Cole, too, focuses on the problem of mutability. His five-canvas Course of Empire follows an imagined cycle of civilization from the barbaric wilderness state through culmination of empire to decay. All this unfolds while nature remains constant in the paintings; the great overhanging cliffs and mountains survive the course of empire.

To both Cole and Cooper the land becomes a moral teacher and a metaphor for experience. The virgin
forests are also the dangerous wilds; the fertile lands harbor Indians, wild animals, and the unknown, "alternately chilling with horror, or dazzling with astonishment" declares Joseph Story; George Washington Greene, in his biography of Cooper, describes the quiet, gurgling streams that meandered near Cooperstown in the author's youth. But he also notes that these streams begin in mountainous clefts, "gushing from sunless caverns ... [amid] dark shadows of cliffs and crags, and giant old trees." The experience that is taught grows from the seeming paradox of the American land. The romantic promise that nature holds, the possibility of all things for the individual, the direct bond between man and nature and God, are all tempered by the awareness of man's own impermanence, of his own mutability. But the land remains, frequently sublime, and both threatening and promising.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 3


6. All quotes from Cooper's novels are from the following editions: The Last of the Mohicans (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1901).
The Deerslayer (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1901);
The Prairie (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1950).


17. Nicolson, pp. 299, 281-282; Monk, pp. 52, 49.


23. Monk, pp. 143-147.

24. Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, ed. and with Introduction and Notes by J. T. Boulton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 40. Burke sub-divided his Enquiry into minute sections and parts. I shall refer to these rather than to page numbers; thus, any edition of Burke can be used by the reader.

25. See also in Alison, I, 162, 320-327; II, 207-215.


28. James Jackson Jarves, Art-Hints (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1855), pp. 82-83; see also Henry T. Tuckerman, "Burke," Southern Literary Messenger, XV (1849), 273-278, which indicates that Burke was still of interest in America at mid-century. Jarves also refers to Burke, and Burke only, of all eighteenth-century aestheticians, in Art-Hints, pp. 79-80.


33. Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," pp. 2-3; "In viewing magnificent scenes, the soul, expanded and sublimed, is imbued with a spirit of divinity, and appears, as it were, associated with the Deity himself," wrote E. L. Magoon in 1852, The Home Book of the Picturesque, p. 7. Three years later, Asher B. Durand, advising young artists on appropriate subject matter for paintings, directed his students especially to landscape: "There is yet another motive for referring you to the study of Nature early--its influence on the mind and heart. The external appearance of this our dwelling-place ... is fraught with lessons of high and holy meaning, only surpassed by the light of revelation." "Letters on Landscape Painting. Letter #2," The Crayon, I (1855), 34. Magoon added that the American owes God a special note of thanks, for "there are yet wild spots and wilderness left, unstained fountains and virgin hills," p. 37. Alfred B. Street compared
American mountains to "a sublime cathedral of nature, whose stillness awes the soul, and whose voice, supplied by the storm, lift[ed] a tremendous anthem to the God whose wonderful power was employed in its creation." Alfred B. Street, "The Adirondack Mountains," The Home Book of the Picturesque, p. 163. Charles Joseph Latrobe found the United States singularly deficient in picturesque nature, but strangely rich in the sublime. He noted the "primeval forest," "swelling ridges," "the tempest-stirred ocean," "giant trees," "vast estuaries," "boundless prairies," "inland seas," "numberless rivers," "silent forests."


James Fenimore Cooper's five volume Leatherstocking Tales, embodying the almost ninety years of Natty Bumppo's life and stretching across eighteen years of the novelist's own highly prolific literary career (1823-1841), illustrate the originality of Cooper's conception and his departure from so much that came before him in American fiction. These five novels, The Pioneers (1823), The Last of the Mohicans (1826), The Prairie (1827), The Pathfinder (1840), and The Deerslayer (1841), paint pictures of the American landscape that combine a conscious use of the sublime with associationist psychology. Whereas earlier novelists in America, most notably Charles Brockden Brown, had used the American land primarily as background setting and only incidental to the action of the novel, they had not ventured far from European models for inspiration for either style or content. For Cooper,
setting becomes considerably more than a theatrical backdrop tenuously related at best to the intention of the novel; it becomes inseparable from both the plot and the meaning.

In all the **Leatherstocking Novels** Cooper takes the American landscape and endows it with the elements of the sublime. His sublimity takes two simultaneous paths, however. All the terrors and associations within nature that Burke and other eighteenth-century aestheticians singled out as components leading to the sublime are found in Cooper's five-part production. Thus on the one hand Cooper uses the sublime for gothic purposes without importing specifically European trappings—monks, castles, hidden passages, and the like—to create the gothic mood. On the other hand, manifestations of God are also part of the sublime. Cooper recognizes the American land as filled with the necessary associations to conjure forth not only terror but the divine as well.

Often present in Cooper, and so too in Thomas Cole, is the simultaneous presence of both gothic and theistic sublimity, frequently opposing one another. This dual sublimity of the American land emerges as a metaphoric figure vying with Natty Bumppo as the main concern of Cooper. The development of the
story within Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* cannot be isolated from the symbolic, moral, and philosophical significance of his landscape. The setting and the narrative are inseparable and fuse together to form a distinctly American vision and mythos.
In the five *Leatherstocking Tales* Cooper frequently turns to the sublime. Every aesthetic theory concerning the sublime agreed that a primary component of the sublime was vastness, and these five novels employ the grand visual and emotional effects of this device. The first chapter of *The Pathfinder*, in its opening lines, declares Cooper's intention to derive maximum mileage from the impact of the boundless tracts of forest and lake where his romance, intrigue, suspense, and denouement will occur.

The sublimity connected with vastness is familiar to every eye. The most abstruse, the most far-reaching, perhaps the most chastened of the poet's thoughts, crowd on the imagination as he gazes into the depths of the illimitable void. The expanse of the ocean is seldom seen by the novice with indifference, and the mind, even in the obscurity of night, finds a parallel to that grandeur, which seems inseparable from images that the senses cannot compass. With feelings akin to this admiration and awe—the offspring of sublimity—were the different characters with which the action of this tale must open, gazing on the scene before them.1 (I, 13)
Moments later one of these characters, Mabel Dunham, lovely daughter of the sergeant of the regiment and the only "female" in Cooper even seriously to tempt—but with the purest of motives—the Adamic and upright Pathfinder, gazes across the seemingly boundless expanse of virgin forest but a few miles from the shores of Lake Ontario.

On the present occasion, her full blue eye reflected the feeling of sublimity that the scene excited....

And, truly, the scene was of a nature deeply to impress the imagination of the beholder. Towards the west, in which direction the faces of the party were turned, and in which alone could much be seen, the eye ranged over an ocean of leaves, glorious and rich.... The elm, ... the maple, ... the noble oaks, ... the broadleafed linden ... mingled their uppermost branches, forming one broad and seemingly interminable carpet of foliage, that stretched away towards the setting sun, until it bounded the horizon, by blending with the clouds, as the waves and the sky meet at the base of the vault of Heaven....

It was the vastness of the view, the nearly unbroken surface of verdure, that contained the principle of grandeur. The beauty was to be traced in the delicate tints, relieved by gradations of light and shadow; while the solemn repose, induced the feeling allied to awe. (I, 14-15)
Cooper quite consciously desires his reader to sense both the beauty and the sublimity of the American scene, and his placement of these aesthetic considerations at the opening of his novel emphasizes the importance of such considerations to both the setting and the meaning of the novel. Such a concern is not limited to The Pathfinder. In The Last of the Mohicans the giant forests swallow whole armies, dwarf forts, and function powerfully to create tension, suspense, fear, and wonder. The sublime vastness and expanse of forests in both The Pioneers and The Deerslayer become, however, more than setting. Vastness in each novel is designed to boggle the reader's mind. Further, it should conjure forth the American vision of illimitable plenty. Whereas in The Deerslayer, though, the untouched expanse becomes a positive, reinforcing part of the novel, uplifting both the reader and the major characters, in The Pioneers such expanse leads to horror as the characters ravage and waste the land with little regard to the future.

In The Pioneers the forests seem unending as do all the riches and bounties of the native landscape. Templeton, carved from the untouched expanse of upstate New York, hardly seems to have dented the untold millions of wooded acres stretching in all directions. But
throughout the novel wholesale plundering of this land takes place. Thousands of fish are netted and dragged from Lake Otsego, many left to wriggle and die on the beaches after the townspeople have stocked their larders. As flocks of pigeons migrate north in April across New York state, the Templeton villagers gleefully kill hundreds and hundreds, competing for the honor of most killed. But few of the pigeons will be cooked and eaten; the rest will rot on the ground.

In one poignant scene Natty Bumppo, aged and settled in a rugged cabin on the fringes of the ever-receding wilderness, demonstrates his marksmanship; goaded to shoot by Billy Kirby, master wood-cutter and clearer of acres, Natty kills a lone pigeon with a single ball—a fine piece of shooting—yet feels instant remorse for such an unnecessary act. Even the forests are cleared wholesale. Stumps are everywhere throughout the village and the novel, and Billy Kirby is an object of wonder for his weeks-long chopping of whole mountainsides of timber. The vastness and expanse of both the American land and the waste of that land is awesome and hence sublime.

In *The Deerslayer* Lake Glimmerglass and the surrounding forests of north-east New York are totally untouched by civilization. The magnitude of such
unspoiled land becomes again a path to the sublime. So much purity fills the mind almost to overflowing, and when Chingachgook and Natty Bumppo return to the scene of the novel's actions fifteen years later, the lake and forests are completely unchanged. The passage of so many years and the births, deaths, and innumerable changes that have affected the lives of the two heroes are contrasted to the unaltered, still untouched landscape.

Vastness and immensity reach the highest levels of the sublime in The Prairie. Cooper's living desert, which he imagined stretched from the Mississippi to the Rockies and represented God's curse upon the land for unmentioned and perhaps even unmentionable human sins, was meant to do nothing less than overpower the mind. The prairie extends to the horizons and then beyond, challenged in magnitude but feebly only by the steadily plodding and lumbering pioneer Ishmael Bush and his equally stolid wife and sons and oxen.

The figure of Natty Bumppo alone stands out from the sweep of the prairie. The power of such a sublime setting was recognized instantly upon the novel's publication: "... the interminable waste of huge meadows, covered by long grass," wrote The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal in 1827, was "sublime
... from their magnitude and their distance from human dwellings." The almost unimaginable reach of prairie is underscored by an occasional blasted tree, by a sudden, steeply rising butte, or by an unexpected human figure.

Cooper knew the sublime impact of such vast, sweeping scenes and set each of his five *Leatherstocking Tales* within giant, expansive landscapes. He also was aware of the potential effect of other natural elements which the viewer or reader would readily associate with the sublime, and he punctuated his large, almost limitless forests, lakes, and prairies with numerous other objects that would lead his reader to that aesthetic feeling. One such object was the blasted tree.

The expansive forest which Mabel saw at the opening of *The Pathfinder* was viewed from atop a pile of broken and uprooted trees reaching thirty feet in height, dumped and piled by a recent storm.

The vast trunks that had been broken and driven by the force of the gust, lay blended like jack-straws, while their branches, still exhaling the fragrance of wilted leaves, were interlaced in a manner to afford sufficient support to the hands. One tree had been completely uprooted, and its lower end, filled with earth, had been cast uppermost, in a way to
supply a sort of staging for the four adventurers, when they had gained the desired distance from the ground.

(I, 14)

Certainly such piled trees are carefully arranged and staged by Cooper himself as author and director. Like medieval buildings constructed meticulously by master craftsmen, so too is Cooper's nature frequently contrived and orchestrated for special effects. Cooper is concerned with effect, with the sublime and its function within the plot, more than with nature as scenery or backdrop or botanical truth, and as such takes much liberty with the structure of his landscapes. His nature is as often unreal as real, but it nevertheless most always begins with verifiable American natural scenes.

Storms uprooting trees are not uncommon in Cooper. The significance of Cooper's trees, however, lies in a certain ambivalence they possess. They are beautiful, old, stately, mighty, even inspirational; but a falling tree or branch, of course, is highly dangerous. They are America's ruins, as Cooper so often tells us, and like European ruins, often carefully arranged, even in their disarray. But they are as threatening as they are awesome.
Marmeduke Temple, founder of Templeton in *The Pioneers*, touches upon these feelings briefly as he speaks to his daughter, Elizabeth, shortly after a falling decayed tree has been blown down and has narrowly missed them both. "But, happily, the winds usually force down most of these dangerous ruins ..." (245). Such "ruins" are common in Cooper's novels, for the juxtaposition of massive, hundred year old trees and meagre man frequently induced the proper associations leading to the sublime.

Cooper constructs such a scene in *The Deerslayer* not only to accentuate human frailty and to create mood but also to present his recognition of nature as America's ruins and antiquity.

On the immediate point there was a small open area, partly in native grass, and partly beach, but a dense fringe of bushes lined its upper side. This narrow belt of dwarf vegetation passed, one issued immediately into the high and gloomy vaults of the forest. The land was tolerably level for a few hundred feet, and then it rose precipitously in a mountain-side. The trees were tall, large, and so free from underbrush, that they resembled vast columns, irregularly scattered, upholding a dome of leaves. Although they stood tolerably close together, for their ages and size, the eye could penetrate to considerable distances; and bodies of men, even, might have engaged beneath their cover, with concert and intelligence. (108)
Cooper combined in one scene from *The Prairie* much that towering and ruined trees could symbolize, from the relative insignificance of an individual human in the face of nature's power, to God's omnipresent concern with mankind, to the span of ages and the course of empire.

Ishmael chose a spring that broke out of the base of a rock some forty or fifty feet in elevation, as a place well suited to the wants of his herds. The water moistened a small swale that lay beneath the spot, which yielded, in return for the fecund gift, a scanty growth of grass. A solitary willow had taken root in the alluvion, and profiting by its exclusive possession of the soil, the tree had sent up its stem far above the crest of the adjacent rock, whose peaked summit had once been shadowed by its branches. But its loveliness had gone with the mysterious principle of life. As if in mockery of the meagre show of verdure that the spot exhibited, it remained a noble and solemn monument of former fertility. The larger, ragger, and fantastic branches still obtruded themselves abroad, while the white and hoary trunk stood naked and tempest-riven. Not a leaf nor a sign of vegetation was to be seen about it. In all things it proclaimed the frailty of existence, and the fulfillment of time. (416-17)

Cooper not only sets stage with such a sketch but, through his own interjected interpretations, embodies his vision of the American and his land. Description becomes definitely secondary here to Cooper's
own philosophy. The author is concerned with the passing of empire, and such phrases as "in return for the fecund gift," "the mysterious principle of life," and "a noble and solemn monument of former fertility" indicate that the prairie is far more than a natural setting. When Cooper writes "As if in mockery" and later calls the branches "fantastic," he is consciously attempting to guide the reader's attitudes towards the significance of the land. If such interjections are not sufficient, Cooper explains in the last sentence exactly what he has been alluding to: "In all things it proclaimed the frailty of existence, and the fulfillment of time." Most of Cooper's landscapes, in addition to setting the scene, embody philosophical or aesthetic positions that contribute directly to the plot and the meaning of the _Leatherstocking Novels_.

Trees alone, of course, are only part of Cooper's sublime toolbox. The novelist's heroes and heroines, as they progress through the vast stretches of untouched forest, frequently come upon thundering waterfalls that totally awe them. Ofttimes the narrow rivers down which they canoe suddenly plunge into frothing rapids. In _The Pathfinder_ the same opening scene which exhibits so much sublimity in terms of expanse and forest also presents the reader with a dangerous river, yet a river
that will prove to be the party's only salvation.

Mabel, her Uncle Cap, Jasper Western, and the Pathfinder himself (Chingachgook is scouting the forests) are within a few miles of the American fort on the shore of Lake Ontario. They have travelled across the wilds of upstate New York for Mabel to visit her father, Sergeant Dunham, whom she has not seen since she was a child. Less than a day's journey from the fort they are inevitably enclosed by danger unlike any they have yet encountered. Hostile Indian tribes in league with the enemy French have been spotted in the woods and Pathfinder determines that the risk of travel by land is simply too great to chance. The river thus becomes the only relatively safe path to the fort.

But the trip down-river will not be easy. First, there are the enemy Indians thirsting near the riverbank for blood and scalps. Too much talk and loud paddling will bring them running. The danger of the canoe trip is further compounded by the fact that it is night; canoeing in daylight Pathfinder knows would be far too hazardous. Fortunately, Jasper Western, the young, heroic, romantic lead, knows the river inch by inch, rock by rock, turn by turn. This will prove immensely helpful, for the silent, night-time run to the fort includes much white water and even a small waterfall. The
danger of the situation is matched only by the skill of Jasper (Eau-douce) and Pathfinder.

"Farther west, boy; farther west--" muttered Pathfinder; "there where you see the water foam. Bring the top of the dead oak in a line with the stem of the blasted hemlock."

Eau-douce made no answer, for the canoe was in the centre of the stream, with its head pointed towards the fall, and it had already begun to quicken its motion, by the increased force of the current.

The rest was like the passage of the viewless wind. Eau-douce gave the required sweep with his paddle, the canoe glanced into the channel, and for a few seconds it seemed to Cap, that he was tossing in a cauldron. He felt the bow of the canoe tip, saw the raging, foaming water, careering madly by his side, was sensible that the light fabric in which he floated was tossed about like an egg-shell, and then, not less to his great joy than to his surprise, he discovered that it was gliding across the basin of still water, below the fall, under the steady impulse of Jasper's paddle.

Most of the river fell perpendicularly ten or twelve feet; but near its centre, the force of the current had so far worn away the rock, as to permit the water to shoot through a narrow passage, at an angle of about forty or forty-five degrees. Down this ticklish descent the canoe had glanced, amid fragments of broken rock, whirlpools, foam, and furious tossings of the element, which an uninstructed eye would believe menaced inevitable destruction to an object so fragile. (I, 46, 47)

The dangers are not completely passed, but, not surprisingly, the group arrives at the fort even as the
hostile Indians chase them to the very portals of the battlement.

As in the previous passage from *The Prairie*, Cooper has again adjected the real world to fit the needs of his novel. The "dead oak" and "blasted hemlock" are far too convenient and unlikely, and the whole feat of running rapids and descending a small waterfall at night highly improbable, yet both the blasted tree and the amazing canoeing conditions increase the suspense of the scene and emphasize the power of the land. Cooper is using tools in much the same way that Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Charles Brockden Brown used them in *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *Edgar Huntly*, for example. But Cooper, unlike Brown, has become the first American novelist to use identifiable American land as his principal tool.

In *Edgar Huntly*, Brockden Brown's most pictorial novel, wild, gothic landscapes abound. The Author, in his "Preface to the Public," asserts that "the perils of the western wilderness, are far more suitable" for an American novel than "Gothic castles and chimeras" and "therefore, are ... the ingredients of this tale" presented "in vivid and faithful colors."³

But a typical landscape description from *Edgar Huntly* seems to counter what Brown claims he is doing.
... I issued forth into a kind of chamber, one side of which was open to the air and allowed me to catch a portion of the chequered sky. This spectacle never before excited such exquisite sensations in my bosom. The air, likewise, breathed into the cavern, was unspeakably delicious.

I now found myself on the projection of a rock. Above and below the hillside was nearly perpendicular. Opposite, and at the distance of fifteen or twenty yards, was a similar ascent. At the bottom was a glen, cold, narrow and obscure. The Projection, which served as a kind of vestibule to the cave, was connected with a ledge, by which, though not without peril and toil, I was conducted to the summit.

This summit was higher than any of those which were interposed between itself and the river. A large part of this chaos of rocks and precipices was subject, at one view, to the eye. The fertile lawns and vales which lay beyond this, the winding course of the river, and the slopes which rose on its farther side, were parts of this extensive scene. These objects were at any time fitted to inspire rapture.

Now my delight was enhanced by the contrast which this lightsome and serene element bore to the glooms from which I had lately emerged. My station, also, was higher, and the limits of my view, consequently more ample than any which I had hitherto enjoyed.

I advanced to the outer verge of the hill, which I found to overlook a steep, no less inaccessible, and a glen equally profound. (4)

A self-conscious striving for extreme effects, both gothic and picturesque, fills this passage. From the "exquisite sensations" in the narrator's bosom to the obscurity and inaccessibility of the glen and cliffs, from the "chaos of rocks and precipices" to the "fertile lawns
and vales" below which "inspire rapture," the land seems closer to the landscapes of Seghers or Bellini-(Plates 35, 36) than to verifiable or recognizable American scenes. Where Cooper stylizes actual details, Brown primarily creates his own imaginary landscape.

Fifteen years before The Pathfinder, in The Last of the Mohicans, Cooper had turned to recognizable American views and used devices similar to those in the former novel. A daring canoe trip down a wild river enables Cooper to create a visually powerful and verifiable American scene. This time the reader follows Alice and Cora Munro, also travelling through the Indian-infested wilderness of New York state to visit their father, commander of Fort William Henry on Lake George. Led by Natty Bumppo, the party is escaping to an island set amid swirling, foaming rapids and above a waterfall where they can seek shelter in caves, safe from the malevolent Indians on both banks.

For many minutes the struggle between the light bubble in which they floated, and the swift current, was severe and doubtful. Forbidden to stir even a hand, and almost afraid to breathe, lest they should expose the frail fabric to the fury of the stream, the passengers watched the glancing waters in feverish suspense. Twenty times they thought the whirling eddies were sweeping them to destruction, when the master-hand of their pilot would
bring the bows of the canoe to stem the rapid. A long, a vigorous, and, as it appeared to the females, a desperate effort, closed the struggle. Just as Alice veiled her eyes in horror, under the impression that they were about to be swept within the vortex at the foot of the cataract, the canoe floated, stationary, at the side of a flat rock, that lay on a level with the water. (49-50)

Left by their guide, the travellers remained a few minutes in helpless ignorance, afraid even to move along the broken rocks, lest a false step should precipitate them down some one of the many deep and roaring caverns, into which the water seemed to tumble, on every side of them. (50)

Again and again Cooper violates natural laws—neither the "sweeping," "glancing" river nor the "frail fabric" of the "light bubble" that serves as a canoe seems probable—yet most American readers in the 1820's would readily visualize the picture Cooper has painted and would feel the emotions the author hopes to elicit. As so often happens in Cooper, a highly idealized nature becomes at once the means and the end to safety while simultaneously presenting all sorts of danger. The setting of the island is sublime as is the route leading to it. Hope, fear, near-death, all are designed to combine with the noise and the darkness and the suddenness of the situation to instill in the reader associations necessary for the sublime.
Part of what has contributed to the sublimity of the two river scenes is the element of darkness. Canoeing through rapids is frightening enough; at night the fright becomes all the more intense. More than fifty pages after the successful shoot over the waterfall in The Pathfinder, Mabel, Cap, Jasper, and Pathfinder are coming within sight of the fort. Mabel now finds a moment to reflect on the sublimity of her immediate experience.

The scene was not without its sublimity, and the ardent, generous-minded Mabel felt her blood thrill in her veins, and her cheeks flush, as the canoe shot into the strength of the stream to quit the spot. The darkness of the night had lessened, by the dispersion of the clouds; but the overhanging woods rendered the shores so obscure, that the boats floated down the current in a belt of gloom.... (I, 94)

The language of the eighteenth-century aestheticians fills this passage: "sublimity," "blood thrill," "cheeks flush," "darkness of the night," "overhanging woods," "shores so obscure," "belt of gloom." Cooper's language is comparable to that used by the English gothic novelists of the late eighteenth century. Following is a passage from Ann Radcliffe's The Italian.

... she had a glimpse of the lofty region of the mountains.... She saw only pin-
nacles and vast precipices of various-tinted marbles, intermingled with scanty vegetation, such as stunted pinasters, dwarf oak and holly, which gave dark touches to the many-coloured cliffs, and sometimes stretched in shadowy masses to the deep vallies, that, winding into obscurity, seemed to invite curiosity to explore the scenes beyond. Below these bold precipices extended the gloomy region of olive-trees, and lower still other rocky steeps sunk towards the plains.

Along this deep and shadowy perspective a river, which was seen descending among the cliffs of a mountain, rolled with impetuous force, fretting and foaming amidst the dark rocks in its descent, and then flowing in a limpid lapse to the brink of other precipices, whence again it fell with thundering strength to the abyss, throwing its misty clouds of spray high in the air, and seeming to claim the sole empire of this solitary wild... the gloom and vastness of the precipices, which towered above and sunk below it, together with the amazing force and uproar of the falling waters, combined to render the pass more terrific than the pencil could describe, or language can express. Ellena... experienced... a dreadful pleasure in looking down upon the irresistible flood.

... that luxurious and solemn kind of melancholy, which a view of stupendous objects inspires. It overlooked the whole extent of plains, of which she had before caught partial scenes, with the vast chain of mountains, which seemed to form an insurmountable rampart to the rich landscape at their feet. Their towering and fantastic summits, crowding together into dusky air, like flames tapering to a point, exhibited images of peculiar grandeur... The silence and deep repose of the landscape, served to impress this character more awfully on the heart. (5)
Especially interesting in these descriptions is the similarity of certain words and phrases which Radcliffe can count on to produce predictable emotional responses in the reader with those often employed by Cooper: "vast precipices," "scanty vegetation," "stunted pinasters," "dark touches," "shadowy masses," "deep vallies," "obscurity," "gloomy region," "rocky steeps," "deep and shadowy perspective," "impetuous force, fretting and foaming," "dark rocks," "thundering strength to the abyss," "solitary wild," "chasm," "convulsion," "the gloom and vastness," "terrific," "dreadful pleasure," "stupendous objects," "fantastic," and "peculiar grandeur." In the various passages looked at from Cooper, we can see that Cooper has drawn upon traditional conventions similar to those worked by Radcliffe, but has placed them in landscape settings unlike anything used by the English Gothic novelists.

Yet another device is turned to by Cooper to achieve the feeling of the sublime. Darkness, throughout the Leatherstocking Tales, becomes a means to heighten tension and emphasize danger. Part of what is fearful in darkness, and part of what Cooper found a ready path into the sublime is silence. The absence of noise can often be as unsettling as the verifiable presence of
actual danger. But silence can also be sublimely comforting, uplifting, and religious. The variation depends on the concurrent associations. Though actual nature would probably never be absolutely silent—-insects, animals, movements of branches would all create sounds--in Cooper's staged, psychological landscapes such total quiet is possible, for the author is striving more for effect than for verisimilitude.

After Mabel and her defenders have arrived safely at the American fort on Lake Ontario, after they have been welcomed and comforted, and after the hostile Hurons have receded to wherever hostile Hurons recede, Cooper brings his reader back to the edge of the dark forest, where the river upon which so much action has recently occurred quietly empties into the expanses of Lake Ontario. "But the same solemn, we might indeed say sublime, quiet, reigned as before; the washing of the water, as it piled up against some slight obstruction, and the sighing of the trees, alone interrupting the slumbers of the forest" (I, 105). From frenzy to repose the scene has shifted, yet there remains the same forest, the same river, the same lake; even sublimity is still present, but the whole effect of the landscape has changed completely. The details of the land that Cooper has chosen, coupled with his selection of
specific dramatic tools, have dictated this immense change.

A few days later, as she walks by the lake's shores, Mabel considers the tranquility and beauty of the area. She finds what she sees sublime, even religious in its comfort and security. "Every thing near appeared lovely and soothing, while the solemn grandeur of the silent forest and placid expanse of the lake, lent a sublimity that other scenes might have wanted" (I, 176). She further considers "the calm and holy even-tide" (I, 177), feels at peace with her world, and realizes that "the hold that the towns and civilization had gained on her habits [was] sensibly weakened" (I, 177) and that "a life passed amid objects, such as these around her, might be happy" (I, 177). The sublime presence of peace and tranquillity, Mabel learns, can exist in the same wilderness that posed sublime dangers but a few hours earlier. The differences, again, depend on Cooper's focus and his manipulation of detail. The land itself is neutral; the author's control of that land, and the subsequent human emotions elicited, create the mood.

The horror of silence contrasted with the religiosity of silence occurs frequently in Cooper's novels. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, Natty Bumppo, Chingachgook,
Cora, Alice, and the others with them, having escaped the island caves and the rapids alive, are approaching Fort William Henry. But their approach need cross enemy lines, and they are halted by a young French sentry in the night woods. Cora's French convinces the less-than-brilliant Frenchman that the party is friendly and they continue through the silent forest. But Chingachgook has slipped away into the darkness. Moments later the quiet is "interrupted by a long and heavy groan" sounding like "the spirits of the departed" (160). The women are naturally uneasy. "Another groan more faint than the former, [is] succeeded by a heavy and sullen plunge into the water, and all [is] as still again as if the borders of the dreary pool [have] never been awakened from the silence of creation" (160-161). Soon Chingachgook rejoins them: "... with one hand he attach[s] the reeking scalp of the unfortunate young Frenchman to his girdle, and with the other he replace[s] the knife and tomahawk that had drunk his blood" (161). The silence, the two dull groans, the silence again, and the appearance of the Indian with his fresh trophy of war all fuse into a scene of sublime horror. The alternating of two potentially sublime elements, silence and sudden noise, in one scene, heightens the
suspense and creates a designed terror.

In the same novel silence and awe are used by Cooper to lead directly to pious sentiments. Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook are beside the graves of Mohawk warriors who had died nobly in battle. The forest is described as church-like, and the quiet is almost divinely overpowering. "The gray light, the gloomy little area of dark grass, surrounded by its border of brush, beyond which the pines rose, in breathing silence, apparently, into the very clouds, and the deathlike stillness of the vast forest, were all in unison to deepen such a sensation" (146).

Cooper uses the vocabulary of the sublime frequently in *The Prairie* where gothic scenes abound. Silence and stillness become part of this vocabulary. Ishmael Bush, taking justice onto his own patriarchal shoulders, has recently hanged his wife's brother for murdering one of Ishmael's sons. The horror not only of the act but of the setting for the act Cooper develops powerfully. Shortly before he cuts down his hanged brother-in-law with one dramatic, if somewhat unbelievable and even unnecessary gunshot, Ishmael Bush is seen trudging slowly towards the lone willow where Abiram White hangs. As he approaches he hears unearthly cries from the dying man.
Ever as he advanced he heard those shrieks, which sometimes seemed ringing among the clouds, and sometimes passed so nigh, as to appear to brush the earth. At length there came a cry in which there could be no delusion, or to which the imagination would lend no horror. It appeared to fill each cranny of the air, as the visible horizon is often charged to fulness by one dazzling flash of the electric fluid. The name of God was distinctly audible, but it was awfully and blasphemously blended with sounds that may not be repeated. The squatter stopped, and for a moment he covered his ears with his hands.

Bush's wife suddenly appears at his elbow, and together they listen for the terrible sounds. But a "profound silence succeeded. Though the wind rose and fell as before, its rushing was no longer mingled with those fearful cries. The sounds were imposing and solemn, but it was the solemnity and majesty of nature" (425). Cooper has here combined the gothic sublime manifest in the sudden, unearthly cries of a dying man with the religious sublime appearing in the solemn quiet of the natural world.

As sudden noise could lead to the sublime, so too could deathly silence, the two often working together to underscore the force of the sublime emotion. Ishmael and his wife, Esther, the dead man's sister, have walked towards the execution site, and
now stand at a short distance from the hanging tree.

The moon broke from behind a mass of clouds, and the eye of the woman was enabled to follow the finger of Ishmael. It pointed to a human form swinging in the wind, beneath the ragged and shining arm of the willow. Esther bent her head and veiled her eyes from the sight. But Ishmael drew higher, and long contemplated his work in awe, though not in compunction. The leaves of the sacred book were scattered on the ground, and even a fragment of the [rocky] shelf [on which the tree stood] had been displaced by the kidnapper in his agony. But all was now in the stillness of death. The grim and convulsed countenance of the victim was at times brought full into the light of the moon, and again as the wind lulled, the fatal rope drew a dark line across its bright disk. The squatter raised his rifle with extreme care, and fired. The cord was cut and the body came lumbering to the earth, a heavy and insensible mass.

(426)

Ishmael Bush's sudden shot and the dull groans of the scalped French sentry amid the still night are but two of the many examples of such devices to which Cooper turned.

The effect of a sudden, unexpected scream shattering the stillness worked also to startle the unsuspecting Cooper hero or heroine. In The Last of the Mohicans Cooper allows both his reader and his various heroes—Hawkeye, Cora, Alice, Duncan—to
become settled and apparently secure in the cave on the island amid the rapids. But without warning the quiet night is pierced;

... a cry, that seemed neither human nor earthly, rose in the outward air, penetrating not only the recesses of the cavern, but to the inmost hearts of all who heard it. 'It was followed by a stillness apparently as deep as if the waters had been checked in their furious progress, at such a horrid and unusual interruption.

And the night is silent once more. The group, frozen, waits in fear. For reasons known only to Cooper, not even Natty Bumppo, so well versed in the lore of the wilderness, can identify the horrid sound. Slowly the tension eases, and Duncan, the male romantic lead, gathers his courage and peers from the cave.

"There is nothing to be seen but the gloom and quiet of a lovely evening," whispered Duncan: "how much should we prize such a scene, and all this breathing solitude, at any other moment, Cora! Fancy yourselves in security and what now, perhaps, increases your terror, may be made conducive to enjoyment--"

"Listen!" interrupted Alice.

The caution was unnecessary. Once more the same sound arose, as if from the bed of the river, and having broken out of the narrow bounds of the cliffs, was heard undulating through the forest, in distant and dying cadences.

"Can any here give a name to such a cry?" demanded Hawkeye. (68)
It is a frightened horse, previously released by the white travellers, whinnying and snorting from fear as it struggles against an attacking wild beast in the night. The effect Cooper hopes for is, of course, fear. The author tells the reader that the group is terrified; but the reader is also supposed to experience the same feelings.

Twice Cooper has allowed character and reader alike to relax. And twice he has ruptured the peace. Yet a third time Cooper will let tensions ease. But soon enemy Indians are discovered closing in, one in particular posing a special and immediate threat by climbing a large tree that overhangs the shore, thus giving him a clear shot into the cave. Fortunately Hawkeye spies the redskin and shoots him. Wounded, the Indian hangs precariously from one branch over the rapids below. As his strength ebbs, his grip loosens, and he falls from the tree with a sudden terrible scream into the rapids where he is washed, presumably dead, down stream. "No shout of triumph succeeded this important advantage, but even the Mohicans gazed at each other in silent horror. A single yell burst from the woods, and all was again still" (83).
Silence and its abrupt shattering could create sublime terror, and so too could the various components of great storms. The shrieking of the wind and the gathering of black, always ominous clouds also could produce the sublime. Lightning and thunder add to the effect. If at sea, Cooper's characters and his readers experience more heightened sensations. In *The Pathfinder* during one storm, "the pitching of the vessel, the hissing of the waters, the dashing of spray, the shocks that menaced annihilation to the little craft as she plunged into the seas, the undying howling of the wind, and the fearful drift" (II, 11) all threaten instant death and demonstrate the danger and power always present in Cooper's carefully manipulated nature. Yet such a terrible and dangerous storm could also make one doubly aware of the emotional intensity the various associations produced: "The peculiar state of the weather served to increase the romantic, almost supernatural appearance of the passage" (II, 8). It is unlikely that Cooper's characters, in terror for their lives, could really appreciate "the romantic, almost supernatural appearance" of the lake. Rather, Cooper inserts this statement to remind his reader what emotions that reader should feel as he takes in this scene.
Cooper often depends on natural visitations such as storms and falling trees to promote appropriate feelings of danger, fear, and the sublime. Forest fires, raging completely out of human control, also promote these feelings. Cooper turns to great fires in both *The Prairie* and *The Last of the Mohicans*, but surely the most dramatic of his forest fires occurs in *The Pioneers*. The drama is heightened because a whole mountain becomes enveloped in flames, because Elizabeth Temple, daughter of Judge Temple, is lost on that mountain, and because John Mohegan, formerly Chingachgook, will die in the flames.

The fire is characteristic of sublime blazes, but arranged and choreographed by Cooper to create a specific mood in the reader: "immense volumes of smoke at that moment rolled over their [John Mohegan and Elizabeth] heads,... whirling in the eddies formed by the mountains.... a roaring sound was heard in the forest above her like the rushing of winds.... presently Edwards [Oliver Edwards, Elizabeth's beloved] rushed to his side, with horror in every feature" (419-420). As the fire inexorably sweeps across the face of the mountain, Cooper focuses on a rocky shoulder of land supporting only the serest, most ruined growth.
The thin covering of earth on the rock supported but a scanty and faded herbage, and most of the trees that had found root in the fissures had already died, during the intense heats of preceding summers. Those which still retained the appearance of life bore a few dry and withered leaves, while the others were merely the wrecks of pines, oaks, and maples. (425)

This gothic outcrop is soon overswept by the raging fire which moves ever closer to the old chanting Indian, John Mohegan, who has resigned himself to die.

The flames danced along the parched trunk of the pine, like lightning quivering on a chain, and immediately a column of living fire was raging on the terrace. It soon spread from tree to tree: and the scene was evidently drawing to a close. The log on which Mohegan was seated lighted at its farther end, and the Indian appeared to be surrounded by fire. Still he was unmoved. As his body was unprotected, his sufferings must have been great; but his fortitude was superior to all. His voice could yet be heard even in the midst of these horrors. Elizabeth turned her head from the sight, and faced the valley. Furious eddies of wind were created by the heat, and just at the moment, the canopy of fiery smoke that overhung the valley was cleared away, leaving a distinct view of the peaceful village beneath them. (428)

This scene is staged to stir sublime feelings in the reader in many ways. The fortitude of the aged,
noble warrior is meant to be awesome; the immensity of the conflagration overpowering; the danger real. But Cooper evokes yet one more sublime association. As the clouds momentarily clear, Elizabeth can amazingly enough see "the peaceful village," and even "the figure of Judge Temple ... standing in his own grounds ... contemplating, in perfect unconsciousness of the danger of his child, the mountain in flames" (428). Elizabeth's danger contrasted with the peaceful village and her unsuspecting father is contrived to make the reader shudder at the terrible ways of the universe. John Mohégan is, of course, immolated in the flames, but Elizabeth is saved and the fire stayed by a flash of lightning, a roar of thunder, and the onslaught of a sky-blackening storm.

Cooper has deployed most of the ingredients of the sublime as prescribed by the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century aestheticians. What once caused the sublime to be so effective seems to be the contrasts involved: noise bursting from stillness; lightning set against a dark, cloudy sky; lone trees on a prairie; so much land flush with so much open water. Cooper recognizes the effectiveness of marked, startling contrast as a sublime device and he turns to it frequently.
In The Pathfinder two vivid contrasts appear. The storm which so nearly was to capsize the Scud, Jasper's sailing vessel, provides the setting for one such contrast. While the tempest rages and all is seemingly lost, and while the viewer sees endless, roiling lake on one side and the gray, obscure, wet forest on the other, the intensity of the emotional impact is tempered by the charming vignettes of life on the shore by the fort.

The roar of the wind was without intermission, and the raging water answered to its dull but grand strains, with hissing spray, a menacing wash, and sullen surges. The drizzle made a medium for the eye which closely resembled that of a thin mist, softening and rendering mysterious the images it revealed, while the genial feeling that is apt to accompany a gale of wind on water, contributed to aid the milder influences of the moment. The dark, interminable forest hove up out of the obscurity, grand, sombre and impressive, while the solitary, peculiar and picturesque glimpses of life that were caught in and about the fort, formed a refuge for the eye to retreat to, when oppressed with the more imposing objects of nature.

(II, 6)

The theatrical orchestration in this passage of an unreal landscape composed from bits and pieces of
real nature is calculated to lead Cooper's reader to certain emotions involving the sublime. The scene is highly staged: the wind roars "without intermission" and the lake responds to these "grand strains." When Cooper writes that the "drizzle made a medium for the eye," it is the reader's eye that is referred to, not one of his characters' eyes.

Cooper uses sharp contrast again in that novel. The first one hundred pages or so of the book chronicle Mabel's hazardous journey to the fort. Finally safe, she sleeps the proverbial sleep of the just, and when she awakens she ventures from the fort to examine her new surroundings. She is instantly overwhelmed by the panorama before her: unbroken forest receding to the horizon on both sides, unending water stretching before her marred by not even a sail.

The starkness of the scene is meant to be sublime, but also inspiring, uplifting, and pleasing. While "a fresh and grateful breeze" fans her cheek, Mabel murmurs "a low exclamation ... of pleasure" as her "eager eyes" behold the "new scene." In all directions before her she sees "a field of rolling waters" but "no sail whiten[š] the surface." The "adjacent coast" to her left and right presents "an unbroken outline of forest" that contrasts with the expanse of lake (I, 113, 114).
It was a scene, on one side, of apparently endless forests, while a waste of seemingly interminable water spread itself on the other. Nature had appeared to delight in producing grand effects, by setting two of her principal agents in bold relief to each other, neglecting details; the eye turning from the broad carpet of leaves, to the still broader field of fluid, from the endless but gentle heavings of the lake, to the holy calm and poetical solitude of the forest, with wonder and delight.

(I, 114)

It is not so much nature that has produced such "grand effects," but Cooper; the turning eye belongs not so much to Mabel Dunham as to the reader of the novel.

While he senses the dramatic effect of sublime devices, Cooper further recognizes the usefulness of truly titanic contrasts. As in George Caleb Bingham's painting Daniel Boone Coming Through Cumberland Gap of 1851, where the principal figure, Boone, appears larger than life from between two gigantic rocks and seems to stare not only at all of Kentucky spread before him but at the viewer as well, so too does Cooper have his characters suddenly emerge larger than life onto his dramatic stage.

Not one to forego theatrical openings in his novels, Cooper begins The Deerslayer in such a way. "In the depths of a forest," on "a cloudless day in
June," and before the reader can even settle himself, "a man of gigantic mould broke out of the tangled labyrinth of a small swamp, emerging into an opening that appeared to have been formed partly by the ravages of the wind, and partly by those of fire" (3). Though The Deerslayer is Cooper's last Leatherstocking novel, the sudden appearance of a character silhouetted bigger-than-life is not something the mature Cooper had only recently developed. In both The Last of the Mohicans and The Prairie Cooper produces such appearances in attempting to create the sublime.

Early in The Last of the Mohicans, before Hawkeye has been fully introduced to the reader, we have the following presentation of the scout:

At the farther extremity of a narrow, deep cavern in the rock, whose length appeared much extended by the perspective and the nature of the light by which it was seen, was seated the scout, holding a blazing knot of pine. The strong glare of the fire fell full upon his sturdy, weather-beaten countenance and forest attire, lending an air of romantic wildness to the aspect of an individual.... (53)

By placing his hero in a bath of firelight emanating from a pine torch, Cooper renders Natty Bumppo superhuman and somewhat unearthly. And indeed he is
super-human, morally and physically. His skills in the wilderness are unrivaled, his upright character unquestionable. His specialness is accentuated by the visual distortion caused by the strange lighting and the odd perspective. Overall, "romantic wilderness" is in fact the effect Cooper desires.

In The Prairie Cooper uses such distorted perspectives and dramatic lighting more effectively than anywhere else in the Leatherstocking Tales. Natty Bumppo in this novel is terribly old, about ninety, and he has watched his beloved wilderness pushed back by civilization. Finally he has retreated to the prairies, those vast reaches of treeless meadows where, Natty hopes, progress will not pursue him. But shortly after 1800 settlers do come, and the squatter, Ishmael Bush, is one of the first. With his family, he has been followed by Cooper on another day's slow trudging across the wastes of Nebraska or Wyoming. It is sunset and the party is anxious to camp for the evening. Suddenly Bush halts.

The sun had fallen below the crest of the nearest wave of the prairie, leaving the usual rich and glowing train on its track. In the centre of this flood of fiery light a human form appeared, drawn against the gilded background as distinctly, and seemingly as palpable,
as though it would come within the grasp of any extended hand. The figure was colossal; the attitude musing and melancholy; and the situation directly in the route of the travellers. But imbedded, as it was, in its setting of garish light, it was impossible to distinguish its just proportions or true character. The effect of such a spectacle was instantaneous and powerful.

Natty Bumppo's appearance is calculated to produce strong sublime emotions. His entire career as outstanding woodsman and person is focused here as he emerges, halving the setting sun, enlarged and distorted in time and space. Throughout the novel, characters and events will be invested with such sublime grandeur.

Cooper echoes this first emergence of Natty Bumppo at the end of the novel. Aged and worn, the scout has led a full life and now, like John Mohegan in *The Pioneers*, awaits death. He is seen seated within a circle on the plains, surrounded by his Pawnee Indian friends (the replacements for the now extinct Mohicans of the eastern forests), facing the setting sun.

The trapper had remained nearly motionless for an hour. His eyes alone had occasionally opened and shut. When
opened, his gaze seemed fastened on the clouds which hung around the western horizon, reflecting the bright colors, and giving form and loveliness to the glorious tints of an American sunset. The hour—the calm beauty of the season—the occasion, all conspired to fill the spectators with solemn awe.

The terror which the unexpected appearance of a character larger than life could evoke has evolved into a second kind of sublimity that Cooper uses, one reaching toward and stemming from the divine.
Fenimore Cooper was intrigued by yet another part of the romantic imagination: the course of empire. Ruins, the passage of great tracts of time, the passing away of whole nations of people: all these charmed, fascinated, and even obsessed Cooper, and in each of the Leatherstocking Tales he turns to the course of empire theme.

Cooper's concern for the cycle of events and peoples was early recognized. In 1830, after the publication of The Pioneers, The Last of the Mohicans, and The Prairie, William Dunlap paid tribute to Cooper's interest in the passing of empire in his play A Trip to Niagara.⁶ As Wentworth and his sister Amelia travel from New York City to the great falls, all the while rekindling the debate over the relative merits of the ancients and the moderns, their journey is highlighted by a chance meeting with Leatherstocking, Cooper's hero, who at this time was one of the best known literary characters in America. Amelia and
Leatherstocking find much in common, especially the grandeur of the American land. Their conversation includes some musings on the movement of water from near Albany on the Hudson to the ocean.

Leather-Stocking: It's a drop for old Hudson. I've sat on the shelving rock many a long hour, and watched the bubbles as they shot by me, and thought how long it would be before that very water would be under the bottom of a vessel and tossing in the salt sea.

(35)

Amelia immediately picks up the idea and continues:

Amelia: And then raised to the clouds, and descending on the mountain top again. So turns the great wheel of nature! In one immutable round of mutation! One unchanging circle of incessant change!

(35)

Dunlap has here recognized the romantic concern for cycles of history. In The Last of the Mohicans Cooper expresses this concern in three ways: by examining the cycles of buildings, trees, and peoples. At one point during the many chase and escape sequences, Leatherstocking seeks out an abandoned blockhouse he recalls from years before as a refuge from Le Renard Subtil, the malevolent Indian pursuing his party.
... the sturdy hunter moved boldly into
a dense thicket of young chestnuts,
shoving aside the branches of the exuberant
shoots which nearly covered the ground....
After penetrating through the brush ... he
entered an open space, that surrounded a
low, green hillock, which was crowned by
the decayed block-house in question. This
rude and neglected building was one of
those deserted works ... and was now
quietly crumbling in the solitude of
the forest, neglected, and nearly forgotten,
like the circumstances which had caused it
to be reared. Such memorials of the passage
and struggles of man are yet frequent
throughout the broad barrier of wilderness
which once separated the hostile provinces,
and form a species of ruins that are
intimately associated with the recollections
of colonial history, and which are in
appropriate keeping with the gloomy
character of the surrounding scenery.
The roof of bark had long since fallen,
and mingled with the soil; but the huge
logs of pine, which had been hastily thrown
together, still preserved their relative
positions, though one angle of the work
had given way under the pressure, and
threatened a speedy downfall to the
remainder of the rustic edifice.

(144-145)

Cooper's language is especially important here. The
age and decrepitude of the "decayed block-house" are
strongly contrasted with the "thicket of young
chestnuts" and "the branches of the exuberant shoots."
Leatherstocking's search is "to discover some object
he had formerly known" (144), some object "nearly
forgotten." The location of the "crumbling" building
is "gloomy," and the site is more a "memorial" to a
past time than a link to the present. The whole scene becomes a microcosmic course of empire.

Later in this same novel Cooper uses the trees of the New York forests to function in the same way as did the block-house. Speaking somewhat metaphorically and patronizingly, de Tocqueville had commented that there was nothing old in America except the trees. Cooper echoes de Tocqueville as he describes the growth along an irregular brook.

Everywhere along its banks were the mouldering relics of dead trees, in all the stages of decay, from those that groaned on their tottering trunks to such as had recently been robbed of those rugged coats that so mysteriously contain their principle of life. A few long, low, and moss-covered piles were scattered among them, like the memorials of a former and long-departed generation.

(395)

The idea of trees being America's antiquities is developed further in Cooper's next novel, The Prairie. Cooper's most poignant depiction of the course of empire in The Last of the Mohicans, however, is seen near the end of the novel. Uncas, Chingachgook's son and the last of the Mohicans, is dead. Tamenund, oldest of the chiefs, over 100, has seen the culmination of his people's powers and now has watched the passing
of the last Mohican chieftain. In one of the most powerful speeches in all Cooper, Tamenund addresses his people.

"It is enough," he said. "Go, children of the Lenape, the anger of the Manitou is not done. Why should Tamenund stay? The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the redmen has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans."

Tamenund has witnessed the passing of his people, but he also anticipates the "time of the redmen" coming again. Empires work in cycles, and that of the Indian is simply at low ebb.

In The Deerslayer Cooper adds another dimension to the course of empire theory. Infancy, prosperity, decay: such seems the cycle for buildings, trees, and peoples. But it is not quite that simple in Cooper. Trees may decay as decades pass, river gorges may alter as centuries unfold, but generally nature remains a constant while all about it peoples and civilizations are born, thrive, and disappear.
When the young Natty Bumppo, known as the Deerslayer, first views the virgin shores of what later will be called Lake George, he is relieved that white settlers have not yet named the lake and settled there. "'I'm glad it has no name,' resumed Deerslayer, 'or, at least, no pale-face name; for their christenings always foretell waste and destruction'" (33). He is totally at peace with "the solitudes, that spoke of scenes and forests untouched by the hands of man--the reign of nature" (34). But soon the "air of deep repose" (34) will be shattered. Indian attacks, unscrupulous trappers, renegade pirates, captures and escapes and more captures, scalpings, Deerslayer killing his first Indian, Chingachgook's bride, two sisters, Judith and Hetty, one beautiful yet unpure, the other simple-minded but close to God--all this will disturb and scar the untouched wilderness.

Fifteen years later Deerslayer and Chingachgook return to the lake. The land is found almost as it was when Deerslayer first viewed it and evidence of all the human activity, which once seemed so imperative, is rapidly disappearing. Deerslayer and Chingachgook are with the latter's son, Uncas, the last of the Mohicans.
... Chingachgook pointed out to his son the spot where the Hurons had first encamped, and the point whence he had succeeded in stealing his bride. Here they even landed; but all trace of the former visit had disappeared. Next they proceeded to the scene of the battle, and there they found a few of the signs that linger around such localities. Wild beasts had disinterred many of the bodies, and human bones were bleaching in the rains of summer.

The land is quickly reclaiming its original purity and obliterating the damaging presence of mankind. The remains of the houseboat where the Hutters had lived are still visible, "a picturesque ruin." It is now "unroofed," "and decay has eaten into the logs. All the fastenings are untouched, but the seasons have rioted in the place, as if in mockery at the attempt to exclude them" (571). A few more winters, one or two more storms, and the houseboat will be blotted "from the face of that magnificent solitude" (571).

The graves of the Hutters cannot be located and the boat that the Hutters used is "discovered stranded on the eastern shore" lying "on the sandy extremity of a long, low point ... which is itself fast disappearing before the action of the elements" (571). A ribbon once belonging to the flirtatious Judith is
found "fluttering from a log" and "the heart of Deerslayer beat[s] quick" (572) at this discovery. But it appears that no one has visited the lake during all these years. The Mutters "lived, erred, died, and are forgotten" (572). The lake and the surrounding shores have once more become "a spot sacred to nature" (572). Nature, changing but slightly, has remained; people pass and are no more.

In The Pioneers Cooper expresses his earliest awareness of the course of empire through the novel's chronological structure. The action of the novel is contained within the four distinctly defined seasons, and birth in spring is consciously followed by summer (growth), fall (maturity), and winter (death). Also in that novel the aged Chingachgook, converted to Christianity and drink and renamed John Mohegan, is seen in his winter. He finally and mercifully dies a noble and stoic death in the forest fire that rages across the mountains above Templeton, but his death represents nothing less than the culmination of an Indian empire.

Cooper only briefly touches upon the course of empire theme in The Pathfinder. Master Cap, Mabel Dunham's uncle, and Natty Bumppo are discussing the permanence of God and the dangers of man opposing
the Lord and his creation. "And yet God is unchanged—
his works are unchanged—his holy word is unchanged,"
says Cap. The Pathfinder agrees. "Ahs me!—.... The
glorious works of God are daily cut down and destroyed,
and the hand of man seems to be upraised in contempt
of his mighty will. They tell me there are fearful
signs of what we may all come to.... I mean the spots
marked by the vengeance of heaven.... They call them
prairies,... they are totally without trees. This is
an awful visitation to befall innocent earth" (I, 102-
103).

In The Prairie Cooper picks up the threads of
this theory. In some of his most eloquent passages,
Natty Bumppo expounds his theory of the prairies.
Once, it seems, the prairies flourished, were lands
of milk and honey, as it were: "the Blessed Land
was once fertile ... and groaning with its stores
of grain and fruits" (277). But God has judged
mankind for his pride. "And I have seen much of the
folly of man;... he would mount into the heavens,
with all his deformities about him, if he only knew
the road.... If his power is not equal to his will,
it is because the wisdom of the Lord hath set bounds
to his evil workings" (278). Cooper, through Natty
Bumppo, blames the ruin of the prairies in part upon
the hybris of man: "where are the multitudes that once peopled these prairies; the kings and the palaces; the riches and the mightinesses of this desert?... They are gone" (278-279).

But this Sodom and Gomorrah explanation accounts for only part of the transformation of the prairie. Cooper recognizes a second and more far-reaching cause for such change. It is the way of God. A people passes, sometimes in a generation, sometimes over many; likewise, nature changes, though more slowly, and parts of nature change so imperceptibly that the modifications cannot be noticed by man. In the following passage Cooper, writing at his finest, summarizes his theory of the course of empire.

It is the fate of all things to ripen, and then to decay. The tree blossoms, and bears its fruit, which falls, rots, withers, and even the seed is lost! Go, count the rings of the oak and of the sycamore; they lie in circles, one about another, until the eye is blinded in striving to make out their numbers; and yet a full change of the seasons comes round while the stem is winding one of these little lines about itself, like the buffalo changing his coat, or the buck his horns; and what does it all amount to? There does the noble tree fill its place in the forest, loftier, and grander, and richer, and more difficult to imitate, than any of your pitiful pillars, for a thousand years, until the time which the Lord
hath given it is full. Then come the winds, that you cannot see, to rive its bark; and the waters from the heavens, to soften its pores; and the rot, which all can feel and none can understand, to humble its pride and bring it to the ground. From that moment its beauty begins to perish. It lies another hundred years, a mouldering log, and then a mound of moss and "arth; a sad effigy of a human grave. This is one of your genuine monuments, though made by a very different power than such as belongs to your chiseling masonry! and after all, the cunningest scout of the whole Dahcotah nation might pass his life in searching for the spot where it fell, and be no wiser when his eyes grew dim, than when they were first opened.

The Prairie (279)

The Leatherstocking saga can be seen as the expression of Cooper's vision of the passing of empire. The passing of the Indian, his dispossession and ultimate annihilation, parallels the passing of Natty Bumppo, as he too is dispossessed, driven further and further to the west seeking lands untouched by frontier civilization. The Indian becomes a memory, a ruin, and then a relic; so too the white frontier scout moving inexorably before the onslaught of civilization, preparing the land for that civilization, but being sacrificed to that preparation. The course of empire in Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales becomes an elegy for the Indian and for Natty Bumppo, for the
land that was cleared and the animals killed; in short, for a whole mode of existence chronicled so carefully by Fenimore Cooper.
Cooper has used the tools and the vocabulary as outlined by various familiar aestheticians of the eighteenth century. What begins to set him apart from those American writers who had gone before is his application of those tools and that vocabulary specifically to the American land as he both observed it and recreated it. No one else preceding him had translated European modes to American matter. Cooper is further set apart, moreover, by his unusual yet, as it turned out later in the nineteenth century, extremely American vision of the sublimity of the land, a sublimity dependent upon both danger and beneficence.

Throughout the Leatherstocking Novels danger lurks continually. The kinds of adventure-romances Cooper writes, of course, are highly contingent on danger. Suspense, chase and escape, and mystery usually work best when peril is involved, and Cooper knows this maxim well.
In *The Pioneers*, for example, Judge Temple, his daughter Elizabeth, and their party are travelling "through a dreary and dark wood,... obscured and rendered gloomy by the deep forests" (243). It is a windless day, with the "dead stillness that often precedes a storm" in the air. Suddenly Oliver Edwards cries out, "in those appalling tones that carry alarm to the very soul, and which curdle the blood of those that hear them" (243). A tree falls, narrowly missing the scurrying party. Afterwards Judge Temple comments that the "sudden fallings of the trees ... are the most dangerous accidents in the forest, for they are not to be foreseen, being impelled by no winds, nor any extraneous or visible cause against which we can guard" (244). Cooper, in his description of the woods and the falling tree, has taken the vocabulary of the gothic and the sublime and integrated it into the suspense of a romance set in the American forests.

Such a gothic landscape is used often by Cooper, especially in *The Prairie*, his most gothic novel. The scene of Abiram White's hanging at the hands of his brother-in-law Ishmael Bush employs the language of a gothic novel. Cooper uses similar descriptions frequently in that novel. Bush, for example, is first led to the body of his dead son by flights of buzzards
and vultures over a dense, bushy thicket. The entire scene is filled with the chilling and the macabre. The landscape is "wild and striking.... The heavens are ... covered with dark, driving clouds, beneath which interminable flocks of aquatic birds are again on the wing.... The wind has risen, and is once more sweeping over the prairie in gusts ... in a terrific and yet grand disorder" while the birds of prey are "screaming in terror" (153).

In addition to the vultures and buzzards swooping low in anticipation of carrion and the wind wailing across the treeless plains and Ishmael Bush's dogs howling at the sky, it seems "as if the spirits of the air have also descended" (155). The danger Cooper presents in this landscape stems not only from the natural world but from the supernatural as well. Mrs. Radcliffe's gothic, terror-filled land has emerged through Cooper's transformation as one key part of the American landscape. The psychologically frightening is as powerful as the physically frightening.

Cooper's gothic landscape, infused with natural and supernatural threats, also presents danger in the form of the Indian. Like falling trees and wild beasts, the red man was a natural danger. But seen in certain
light this natural danger could become awesome and even supernaturally sublime. Nowhere in Cooper do his Indians become more horrid and terrifying than in The Last of the Mohicans. After Fort William Henry has been surrendered to the French, the redskins allied to the conquerors go berserk and proceed to massacre the civilian population of the fort. The carnage is unreal, and the red devils, for they are nothing short of satanic, become gothic monsters.

The flow of blood might be likened to the outbursting of a torrent; and, as the natives became heated and maddened by the sight, many among them even kneeled to the earth, and drank freely, exultingly, hellishly, of the crimson tide.

(208)

This "jubilee of the devils" (209) is echoed later in the novel when Magua, Le Renard Subtil, the most evil of the evil Indians, is seated in his lodge.

... the low flames that fluttered about the embers of the fire threw their wavering light on the person of the sullen recluse. At such moments it would not have been difficult to have fancied the dusky savage the Prince of Darkness, brooding on his own fancied wrongs, and plotting evil.

(341-342)
Cooper is creating in the American wilderness a whole spectrum of danger, real and unreal, physical and psychological, from falling trees to the Devil itself.

In *The Pathfinder* all of these forms of the gothic sublime appear. The threat of the savages is always present, and they again are represented as devilish fiends: "'It is the savages only that play each other such hellish tricks!' said Master Cap" (I, 34). Later in this novel the peril of the hellish savages is compounded by the peril of the natural world: "In the midst of the darkness of that gloomy night, and floating in an element so dangerous to man— ... 'that uproar ... sounds more like the outcries of devils than anything that can come from the throats of Christians and men!'" (I, 92-93), observes Master Cap.

Much that is gothically sublime is found in the following description of wild, storm-tossed nature from *The Pathfinder*:

> The gale was still blowing violently: many of the smaller trees bowed their tops, as if ready to descend to the earth while the rushing of the wind through the branches of the groves, resembled the roar of distant chariots. The air was filled with leaves, which, at that late season, were readily driven from their stems, and flew from island to island, like flights of birds. With
this exception, the spot seemed silent as the grave.... the savages still remained.... (II, 170-171)

The land in Cooper so often is not only dangerous with its rapids, waterfalls, falling branches, and storms, and is not only dangerous for the perils it hides in the shapes of Indians and wild animals and imagined devilish brutes, but is also threatening metaphorically. The descriptions Cooper uses evoke terror by their very language. The vocabulary of the gothic and all its associations is present; but the American landscape has become the central metaphor for this gothic sublimity, for nearly every item which Cooper uses to create psychological or gothic terror is taken from verifiable, real American wilderness. The trees are American trees, the rivers American rivers, but they are imbued with associations and arranged or juxtaposed by Cooper so as to draw from the reader emotions of terror and fear.

A second vision of the American land further sets Cooper apart from earlier American writers. Whereas on the one hand the American land is full of danger, real, psychological, or metaphorical, on the other hand it shone with the radiance of God's
constant presence. When man was sinful, the land reflected this sinfulness; God's judgment upon the prairies demonstrates such a reflection. The virgin forests in The Deerslayer and The Last of the Mohicans also reflect God's presence in the Edenic American landscape.

Although fraught with as many dangers and adventures as any other Leatherstocking novel, The Pathfinder frequently and abundantly illustrates Cooper's belief in the omnipresence of God within the American land. When asked what church he belongs to, Natty Bumppo unhesitatingly returns, "Look about you and judge for yourself. I'm in church now; I eat in church, drink in church, sleep in church. The 'arth is the temple of the Lord, and I wait on him hourly, daily, without ceasing, I humbly hope" (I, 198). Such a bald, honest assertion of the Pathfinder's religious affiliation mirrors a number of previous statements by Cooper or his hero regarding the divinity of the wilderness.

"That towns and settlements lead to sin, I will allow; but our lakes are bordered by the forests, and one is every day called upon to worship God, in such a temple." (I, 30)
"By living much alone with God in the wilderness...."
(I, 78)

"...a forest and noble trees, a fit temple of God."
(I, 121)

"I am but a poor hunter, I know; untaught and unlearned; but God is as near me, in this my home, as he is near the king in his royal palace."
(II, 31)

The important aestheticians of the eighteenth century all agreed that a vision of God and his wonderful creation led to feelings of the sublime. Cooper's God-filled, peaceful wilderness is designed to produce just such sublime feelings.

The sun was just casting its brightness into the open places of the glade, and the vault, over her [Mabel Dunham's] head, was impending in the soft sublimity of the blue void. Not a cloud was visible, and she secretly fancied the circumstance might be taken as a harbinger of peace and security.
(II, 81-82)

Not only is God present in this landscape, and not only does Cooper label the scene and its associations sublime, but the language he uses becomes metaphoric when the forests are likened to the arching vaults
of a European cathedral.

In this religiously sublime landscape Natty Bumppo is right at home. He is a child of nature, pure, upright, simple. Morality for him is black and white: women are to be protected and revered; white men act nobly as do the friendly Indian nations; enemy Indians are fair game for the American settlers and their allies; all Indians have their "gifts" and therefore can be excused for desiring scalps. His moral ethos is clear-cut and absolute. Cooper himself claims this: Leatherstocking is "a sort of type of what Adam might have been supposed to be before the fall" (I, 139). The Adamic Pathfinder in the Edenic forest! The American landscape emerges from such an analogy as the near-perfect embodiment of God's creation: "... the woods are the true temple, after all, for there the thoughts are free to mount higher even than the clouds.... I want no thunder and lightning to remind me of my God.... his voice is heard in the creaking of a dead branch, or in the song of a bird," exclaims the Pathfinder (I, 97-98).

The summation of the American land as the temple of God appears in The Pioneers in some of Cooper's finer sustained prose. Natty Bumppo, old, dispossessed, and somewhat bitter over the clearing of the forests
and the progression of the frontier westward, speaks
with Oliver Edwards, the young romantic hero, about
the beauty and the meaning of the land.

"I have travelled the woods for
fifty-three years, and have made them
my home for more than forty; and I
can say that I have met but one place
that was more to my liking; and that
was only to eye-sight, and not for
hunting or fishing."

"And where was that?" asked Edwards.

"Where! why up on the Cattskillss.
I used often to go up into the mountains
after wolves' skins and bears; once
they paid me to get them a stuffed
painter, and so I often went. There's
a place in them hills that I used to
climb to when I wanted to see the
carryings on of the world, that would
well pay any man for a barked shin or
a torn moccasin. You know the Cattskills,
lad; for you must have seen them on your
left, as you followed the river up from
York, looking as blue as a piece of clear
sky, and holding the clouds on their tops,
as the smoke curls over the head of an
Indian chief at a council fire. Well,
there's the High-peak and the Round-top,
which lay back like a father and mother
among their children, seeing they are
far above all the other hills. But the
place I mean is next to the river, where
one of the ridges juts out a little from
the rest, and where the rocks fall, for
the best part of a thousand feet, so much
up and down, that a man standing on their
edges is fool enough to think he can jump
from top to bottom."

"What see you when you get there?"
asked Edwards.

"Creation," said Natty. (297-298)
Cooper's contribution to and significance in American literature lies in his fusion of two visions. He has taken the aesthetics of the eighteenth century, the aesthetics of associationism and sublimity, coupled them with literary models stemming from Richardson's melodramas and Mrs. Radcliffe's gothic tales, and translated the blend into a literature of the American land. What emerges most powerfully from Cooper is a recognition that the land, the principal matter of the American experience before 1840, is both extremely dangerous and at the same time filled with the divine goodness and security of God. The American land seems to combine the harshness of the Old Testament and the malignant evil of Satan with the peace and gentleness of the New Testament and the kindness of Christ.

This duality is seen throughout the Leatherstocking Novels. Sometimes it is shown in two juxtaposed scenes, one peaceful, one threatening. Equally often the duality appears in one scene, the peaceful superimposed, as it were, on the threatening, or the threatening on the peaceful. In The Pioneers such a superimposing occurs as the seasons turn, winter to spring.

From this time to the close of April the weather continued to be a succession
of great and rapid changes. One day, the soft airs of spring ... in unison with an invigorating sun ...; on the next, the surly blasts from the north would sweep across the lake.... The snow, however, finally disappeared.... The lake had lost the beauty of a field of ice, but still a dark and gloomy covering concealed its waters. ... Large flocks of wild geese ... hovered ... around the hidden sheet of water,... filling the air with discordant screams.

(246)

Cooper works similar double exposures frequently in The Pathfinder. The peacefulness of vast, unbroken nature is tempered by the small but distinct signs of an earlier storm that still remain.

... the lake ... stretched away towards the north-east, in a boundless sheet, glittering beneath the rays of an afternoon's sun, and yet betraying the remains of that agitation which it had endured while tossed by the late tempest.... Far as the eye could reach, nothing but forest was visible, not even a solitary sign of civilization breaking in upon the uniform and grand magnificence of nature. (II, 30)

In this passage the threatening is but faintly limned on the peaceful. Cooper reverses his images in the following scene, creating a similar duality but from a different perspective. Again Cooper is describing
storms over Lake Ontario in *The Pathfinder*.

... they were about to experience one of the heavy autumnal gales of that region. Land was nowhere visible; and the horizon, on every side, exhibited that gloomy void, which lends to all views, on vast bodies of water, the sublimity of mystery. The swells ... were short and curling, ... while the element itself, instead of presenting that beautiful hue, which rivals the deep tint of the southern sky, looked green and angry.... (II, 3)

Sublime and peaceful nature could hide terrors other than those of storms and seasons; frequently within a serene setting animals, Indians, or enemy soldiers are found lurking. The juxtaposition of quiet, restful nature and sudden danger leads, of course, to the sublime. In *The Pioneers*, for example, on a quiet walk amid a lovely, wooded landscape, Elizabeth Temple and her companion are startled by "the fierce front and glaring eyes of a female panther, fixed on them in horrid malignity, and threatening to leap" (315). Fortunately Leatherstocking emerges from the forests and saves the two maidens.

Natty Bumppo always seems aware of the potential danger within the land as does Duncan, commander of the fort in *The Pathfinder*. 
One standing on the ramparts of the fort, and gazing on the waste of glittering water that bounded the view all along the northern horizon, and on the slumbering and seemingly boundless forest, that filled the other half of the panorama, would have fancied the spot the very abode of peacefulness and security; but Duncan of Lundie too well knew that the woods might at any moment give up their hundreds, bent on the destruction of the fort and all it contained; and that even the treacherous lake offered a highway of easy approach, by which his more civilized, and scarcely less wily foes, the French, could come upon him, at an unwelcome and unguarded moment.

(I, 157)

Later in this same novel Mabel Dunham has been warned of enemy Indians by Dew-of-June, a sympathetic Indian squaw. But Mabel finds the warning difficult to accept, for the quiet sublimity of the islands militates against any apparent danger. "The adjacent islands ... were as quiet as if no one had ever disturbed the sublime repose of nature" (II, 95). But the redskins are there, as the soon-to-be-scalped soldiers would posthumously attest, could they.

Another form of sublime association exists in Cooper, one that is critical to the American experience. To the aestheticians of the sublime, God is the ultimate sublime object. But how does one encounter this sublime
God? One way, according to the romantic imagination, is through nature. God's creation is the proof of God's existence. But added to this is the belief that God's presence or existence is specially manifest in certain parts of the Creation. Sublime natural wonders--volcanoes, great seas and mountains, waterfalls, and giant trees--become superior proof of God's being. The more natural wonders, the more evidence of God. America becomes a special place for such a romantic imagination, for it abounds in a wealth of natural marvels. The Great Lakes, the stretches of unbroken forests, the rugged New England coastline, the beauty of the Catskills, the immensity of the Great Plains, the raw spectacle of the Rocky Mountains--all are indications of America's special place in God's firmament. Certain other wonders assure America of this place: the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls. Nowhere in Europe do such wondrous sublimities exist in such abundance. America is truly blessed.

Natty Bumppo tries to sum up these feelings while talking to Master Cap in The Pathfinder. He speaks of "Old Niagara,... this noble stream tumbling down a mountain," and wishes they had time to walk the ten or fifteen miles along the coast of Lake Ontario
to the Falls which they can clearly hear "and gaze
on all that God has done there!" The Pathfinder then
muses about his first view of Niagara--"an awful
sight I witnessed"--and was surprised then, for
Chingachgook had emphasized the tremendous rumbling
and roar that would reverberate through the forests
as one approached the Falls. But they "were disappointed,
for natur' was not then speaking in thunder.... Thus it
is, in the forest, Master Cap; there being moments
when God seems to be walking abroad in power, and
then, again, there is a calm over all, as if his spirit
lay in quiet along the 'arth" (II, 52).

What the Leatherstocking describes here, the
thunder of Niagara one day and the quiet another,
God at his most powerful and God at his calmest, plus
nature at its most threatening and nature at its most
peaceful, seems the essence of the duality of the
American vision Cooper possesses. The poles of this
duality come together, however. Michael Wigglesworth
hinted at such a duality and ultimate unity in the
seventeenth century, in his poem "God's Controversy
with New-England." One hundred and fifty years later
Cooper will take these ideas and incorporate them
into an American fiction.
A waste and howling wilderness,
Where none inhabited
But hellish fiends, and brutish men
That Devils worshipped.

The dark and dismal western woods
(The Devils den whilere)

Here was the hiding place, which thou,
Jehovah, didst provide

The Lord had made (such was his grace)
For us a Covenant
Both with the men, and with the beasts,
That in this desert haunt.

Cooper adopts Wigglesworth's vision of a sublimely
dangerous and hostile land reconciled to the American
settler through a covenant with an equally sublime but
beneficent God. "Here has the Lord laid his hand,"
cries Natty Bumppo in The Last of the Mohicans, "in
the midst of the howling wilderness, for their good,
and raised a fountain of water from the bowels of the
'arth" (137). God speaks with man through the wilderness,
and the abundance of wilderness in the New World makes
the American closer to God than the European, and
perhaps even morally superior. This, anyway, was
the belief as America embarked on its policy of Manifest
Destiny.
The gothic, danger-filled landscape co-exists with the beneficent, God-filled landscape, and the two lead the American to a new promise, a new future; "with the power of the Lord so manifest in this howling wilderness" (The Last of the Mohicans, 217) he cannot fail. The following passage from The Pathfinder, depicting American nature untouched by man, nature both gothic and charmingly picturesque, embodies the vision that Cooper produced from the American land.

The Oswego, just at that place, was a deep, dark stream, of no great width, its still gloomy-looking current winding its way among overhanging trees, that, in particular spots, almost shut out the light of the heavens. Here and there some half-fallen giant of the forest lay nearly across its surface, rendering care necessary to avoid the limbs; and most of the distance, the lower branches and leaves of the trees of smaller growth were laved by its waters.... the earth fattened by the decayed vegetation of centuries, and black with loam, the stream that filled the banks nearly to overflowing, and the "fresh and boundless wood," being all ... visible to the eye.... In short, the entire scene was one of a rich and benevolent nature, before it has been subjected to the uses and desires of man; luxuriant, wild, full of promise....

(I, 42)

Though the land may be untouched by man, it is hardly untouched by the author. From real American
matter Cooper is recreating the American landscape, not mirroring it but making it anew. He is forging a land and a mythos that, like the American himself, is bigger than life, beyond the real but including the real, embodying the course of empire and the sublimity of both the gothic and the divine.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. All quotes from the Leatherstocking Tales will be from the following editions:
   The Prairie (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1950).
   Page references to these editions will follow all quotes from the Tales.


241
CHAPTER 5

Just as Cooper has viewed the American wilderness and orchestrated its many parts into a romantic symphony of sublime associations leading to both the gothic and the divine, so too has Thomas Cole worked the American landscape for similar romantic ends. For over two decades, from his first extant landscapes of 1825 until those of his last years before his death in 1848, Cole produced some of the most popular and probably the finest landscapes in America. Unlike Cooper, whose craftsmanship has always been subject to the harshest scorn of critics, Cole has not suffered from critical attack, except in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when nearly all grand manner romantic landscapes were in low repute or totally forgotten.

Cole was the acknowledged leader and originator of the Hudson River School that spanned over two
generations and fifty years of American painting (Plate 37) and included the New England coastal scenes of Fitz Hugh Lane, the Sierra Nevadas and Grand Tetons of Albert Bierstadt, and the South American rain forests of Cole's only pupil, Frederic Church. Cole and the other Hudson River painters broke from the topographical approach to the land that had characterized earlier American landscape painters, and viewed nature far more romantically. Cole and the later Hudson River School artists shared a love for nature and a set of aesthetic principles similar to those embraced by Fenimore Cooper. During the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century Cole and his followers arrived at a vision of nature and man's response to that nature which closely paralleled developments in American culture and westward expansion, and also mirrored specific movements in American literature.

Cole, like Cooper, combines realism with romanticism. Realism, to the early nineteenth-century American, was that which he actually "saw and heard and felt." The romanticism in Cole's paintings is reflected in the artist's conscious re-structuring of details from the natural world to achieve special effects in an attempt to dictate the mood and response
of the viewer. Cole's realism can be seen in the
care applied to the tiniest features of a scene,
even to individual leaves and ferns. The justification
for the seemingly paradoxical blend of romanticism
and realism in Cole's paintings, as in Cooper's novels,
probably stems from Coleridge's well-known guiding
theory, truth to nature. Coleridge stressed that
each detail within a whole scene must give pleasure,
but that the whole should offer more delight than
any specific detail. To achieve such a pleasurable
unity, the painter and the novelist frequently select
certain parts for emphasis and arrange the various
components of a landscape into an organic unity.

Cooper recognized the realism and the romanticism
of Cole's paintings. In his *Notions of the Americans*,
Cooper, writing of Cole, praises the artist and
concludes by observing that "his scenery is like
the scenery from which he drew"; Cooper thus
acknowledges the painter's truth to nature. Cooper
then continues by lauding Cole's romantic or stylized
structuring of his landscapes: "he has taste and
skill enough to reject what is disagreeable, and
to arrange the attractive parts of his pictures."\(^2\)
Cole was highly respected and often extolled by
Cooper and the other Knickerbocker writers, in great
part because his successful blend of realism and romanticism appealed to their sense that an "American aesthetic" was desirable.

Cole's union of the true to nature and the stylized enables him to do more than present portraits of the land. The objective study of nature alone might achieve such a portrait; but the stylized leads far beyond mere depiction of a recognizable scene. The rearrangement of specifics for the special effect of the whole allows Cole to make the finished landscape, the whole, more pleasurable. In addition, he is able to draw powerful emotional responses from the viewer through the associations conjured by specific parts of the scene. Third, Cole's structured landscapes lead directly to moral and religious positions. In Cole's paintings these three effects are inextricably bound up with the sublime. Nearly all his canvases lean heavily on sublimity, achieved through both an objective and a stylized presentation of American scenery. Like Cooper, Cole uses the sublime not merely as setting or for descriptive purposes, but as message, as a philosophical statement about the American land, its danger, its beneficence, its promise.
Throughout his career Cole depicts the sublimity of the American land and a concurrent moral message regarding God and the American experience. His canvases are frequently veritable catalogs of sublime elements, each taken from the lists supplied by the various eighteenth-century aestheticians of the sublime. Like Cooper, Cole knew well the potential of such devices. Also like Cooper, and perhaps even more consciously so, Cole strove for sublime effects, for he recognized the abundant sublimity of the American land. In his summary and influential "Essay on American Scenery" from 1836, Cole writes of "American scenery--... its beauty, its magnificence, its sublimity--..." and he further speaks of "the sublimity of lofty mountains" and "the stern sublimity of the wild" American land. When he first views Schroon Mountain while hiking with the painter Asher Durand, Cole observes, "Here we [feel] the sublimity of untamed wilderness, and the majesty of the untamed mountains."
Cole's life-long concern for the sublime in American scenery is echoed in William Cullen Bryant's *Funeral Oration* delivered after Cole's death. Bryant emphasizes the "wild" scenes that Cole painted, scenes nevertheless "unmistakably American."\(^5\)

Throughout his life Cole seeks to capture the grandeur, the awesomeness, the majesty of American wilderness. To do this, Cole employs most of the same elements of the sublime that Cooper does in the *Leatherstocking Tales*. Foremost among these elements is vastness. Present in nearly all his paintings, it is especially prominent and powerful in certain ones. In 1833 Cole painted the Schroon Mountain that he and Durand had visited earlier (Plate 39). The layout of the painting has the viewer standing near some blasted trees and elevated above a distant lake, with the mountain looming yet further into the picture. The scene opens diagonally to the right and disappears beyond the white haze of low-hanging clouds into the mountains beyond Schroon.

Such a technique to direct the viewer appears again in *Sunny Morning on the Hudson* (Plate 38). Once more the viewer is elevated and located near blasted trees, and once more the viewer is moved into the landscape through diagonals, first towards
the right, then deeper yet to the left. But this painting adds a dimension not found in Schroon Mountain, where the mountain itself firmly straddles the scene and blocks the viewer from progressing too deeply. In Sunny Morning the landscape opens up completely, bisected by a meandering river, until it disappears into the misty horizon.

This same sense of vastness is repeated in Catskill Creek (Plate 40), only here it is the sky which stretches into the ranged mountains faintly limned in purple tones against the horizon. The depth of the sky is accentuated by the thin cirrus clouds reflecting a setting sun, for the clouds lead the viewer from top center, then to the right, and then deeper toward the horizon in a gentle curve back toward the painting's center.

Cole returns to dramatic effects such as those used in these three paintings again and again. In The Oxbow (Plate 41), Monte Video (Plate 42), The Clove, Catskills (Plate 43), Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans" (Plate 44), and A Wild Scene (Plate 45), the artist manipulates similar stylized approaches to emphasize the vastness of the land. In each painting the viewer is placed on a heightened ledge, close to the familiar dead trees. These trees are more than
decorative; they offer the viewer a measurement, a perspective, a gauge to determine the size of other nearby objects and, by extension, the size of the entire scene. If one foreground tree's height can be estimated, then the viewer, faced with a prospect of countless tiny trees in the distance, can more fully appreciate the immensity of the land.

In each of these paintings the viewer, elevated as he is, can peer down onto a scene set between the immediate foreground and middle distance. The circle of Indians, the hunted deer, the seated woman, the painter with his tools overlooking the Oxbow—all fall under the scrutiny of the viewer. After Cole leads his viewer down into the painting and also out toward either side by his control of vantage, he then moves the viewer upward toward the horizon by means of diagonal perspectives. This down, up, and out effect, a time-honored landscape technique, underscores the vastness of the scene.

Cole seems fully aware that such vistas as these will likely awe his viewer with their sheer magnitude. But as he reaches for sublime effects he punctuates his vast landscapes with various natural objects calculated to induce an even greater sense of sublimity in his viewer. The twisted and broken tree, perhaps
grabbing tenuously at a rocky crag, is one of his favorite devices. Cole writes often of such trees. In his "Essay on American Scenery" he notes with wonder the "great variety" of trees in the American forests, from "the slender sapling" to "green umbrageous masses" to "the hoary patriarch of the wood" to "the mouldering dead." Cole attempts to explain his fascination with these various trees:

... wild and uncultivated, battling with the elements and with one another for the possession of a morsel of soil, or a favoring rock to which they may cling--they exhibit striking peculiarities, and sometimes grand originality.\(^6\)

A list of paintings in which Cole uses blasted, or dying, or grimacing trees for sublime effects would almost be a list of all his paintings. Blasted trees, seemingly broken and shattered by lightning and storms, dot Cole's landscapes. The trees in the foreground of The Oxbow and Schroon Mountain are typical, as are those in The Notch of the White Mountains (Crawford Notch) (Plate 46) and Landscape with Tree Trunks (Plate 47). These trees are almost identical to one another, and are as much the outgrowth of the artist's imagination as the product of the American forest. Such trees surely existed, but Cole
has selected particularly excessive specimens and placed them in strategic locations for maximum effect. Tornado in the Wilderness (Plate 48) brings the viewer especially close to one of Cole's created trees and the effect, much like that of vastness in Sunny Morning on the Hudson, is designed to overwhelm.

Other trees perfectly match Cole’s description in an undated journal entry:

On the mountain summit, exposed to the blasts, trees grasp the crags with their gnarled roots, and struggle with the elements with wild contortions.?

[see Plate 74]

The trees in The Oxbow and Gelyna (Plate 49) appear to be growing directly from bare rock. Those in Sunny Morning on the Hudson, Catskill Mountain House (Plates 50 and 51), and In the Catskills (Plate 52) cling with similar tenacity to the meanest of soils, ready to be uprooted and piled by the next storm.

Many of these same trees also describe the contortions and twistings Cole was so fascinated with. Sunny Morning on the Hudson, Catskill Mountain House, The Clove, Catskills, Peace at Sunset (Plate 53), In the Catskills, The Notch of the White Mountains (Crawford Notch), and Landscape with Tree Trunks
all exhibit excessively wrenched and almost anthropomorphic trees. Three paintings in particular display Cole's highly theatrical concern for the unreal, frightening trees.

In *The Mountain Ford* (Plate 54), painted but two years before Cole's death, the central figure, a scarlet clad horseman on a brilliant white steed, is moving toward a sunny valley from a dark and threatening forest. Numerous gothic trees abound, but one is particularly threatening. A monstrous tree is at right, fully four feet in diameter if we can estimate its girth from the rider nearby. The tree claws and grabs for support at the rocky bank of the mountain stream, though its roots are exposed in gnarled contortions for at least ten feet above ground. Various branches are crudely snapped off, as if a marauding giant had needed a ready club. The large branch growing upward diagonally at left seems to be reaching with spidery tendrils for the escaping man. The branches and roots become arms and legs, and the broken stump of a branch on the central trunk becomes a nose, for a glowering eye is directly to its right. This fantastic tree seems a symbol for the dark, gothic forest, and its appearance certainly is designed to terrify.
A second painting, **Kaaterskill Falls** (Plate 55), has similar distorted, theatrical trees. The wildness of the falls is reflected in the wild, grotesque shapes of the trees, trees surely more from Cole's imagination than from the New York forests. These twisted trees curl about rocky ledges, one, at lower right, even encircling another in its odd growth. The scene is a fantasy, a gothic, overwhelming creation geared to make the viewer feel the sublimity of Cole's landscape.

**Landscape with Dead Trees** (Plate 56), one of Cole's earliest paintings, exhibits the artist's seemingly omnipresent interest in powerful tree forms. Scenes such as this one are frequent in Massachusetts and New York; Cole is not, as he is in The Mountain Ford, creating a landscape. But he has taken this stand of stripped dead trees and endowed it with something eerie and unsettling. He wrote in his journal ten years later about this or a similar view:

"These dead trees are a striking feature in the scenery of this lake.... Their pale forms rise from the margin of the deep, stretching out their contorted branches, and looking like so many genii set to protect their sacred waters." The trees at left, which Cole also referred to as "spectres on the shore," are especially tormented. They reach and twist and writhe; if they
are not frightening, then something immediately beyond them must be, for the two deer are fleeing, wide-eyed and afraid.

These three paintings, and the many others with similar trees, are designed by Cole to extract strong emotional response from his viewers. The blasted and broken trees are America's ruins, the giant ones America's antiquities, as de Tocqueville so graciously put it. Others snarl and snap and contort. All point to the sublime.

Though stylized trees are among Cole's favorite and most frequent tools for constructing sublime scenes, he turns, as does Cooper turn, to numerous others. Great rocks function in Cole's paintings much as do his tortured trees. Nearly all of his American scenes exhibit bold rock formations, and often these formations are highly exaggerated and irregular. The foreground of Sunny Morning on the Hudson, one of Cole's most powerful canvases, is dominated by one heavy, large, squat rock pile, strangely larger at its top than at its base. The starkness and strangeness of this rock, coupled with the two or three wildly gesturing trees beside it and the even odder blasted branches and foliage apparently growing from the rock's top surface, add
to the desolation of the foreground ledge.

In *The Clove, Catskills*, as in *Sunny Morning on the Hudson*, Cole again juxtaposes his favorite contorted trees with unnatural rock formations. The small waterfall at left emerges from the crevices of a large, top-heavy, rocky face. Other rock shelves seem to vie with the trees for space, as if they were locked in struggle. Both *Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans"* and *A Wild Scene* present extremely stylized rock formations designed to overwhelm the viewer. In the latter painting the rocks at right seem to be trying to lift the great tree above them from the ground; the tree, in return, seems bent on grabbing and resisting with all its exposed, gnarled roots. The entire foreground of this painting is littered with huge stones that are as large as the human figures; nothing is small. But these large rocks are nevertheless recognizable and "true to nature." It is the great tilted mountain dominating the painting's background which awes the viewer and leads to feelings for the sublime. This is no ordinary mountain, and Cole surely wants the viewer to feel no ordinary emotion when struck by it.

In Cole's *Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans,"* however, the most sublime of Cole's great rocks appear.
This painting has the prescribed blasted trees and the rolling diagonal perspective into the mists of mountains stretching to the distance, but it is the giant rocks that vie with the circle of Indian warriors for the viewer's attention. The Mohicans are gathered on a bare, rocky ledge overhanging a sheer drop to the valley floor below. A steep cliff rises at the right, almost vertical, and yet still able to support various trees which have found sufficient nourishment and support. Large rocks, seemingly dropped by titans as they passed, are sprinkled in the foreground. A huge rock bridge ascends at left, connecting the ledge to the hills just beyond the picture. Finally, a solitary rock, stolid and dominant, balances precariously at the edge of the shelf where the Indians meet, dwarfing the tribesmen and awing the viewer. The entire scene, definitely staged by Cole's imagination, is designed to overpower the viewer with feelings for the sublime.

Cole also is aware of the effect of waterfalls and moving water, though his use of these devices never approaches Cooper's use of highly dramatic rapids and falls. Cooper's river could function both as sublime setting and as a means to further the
actions within his novels. Cole does not have this second option; his portrayals of the land must combine setting with meaning whereas Cooper’s could do either or both. For Cooper, a waterfall or a set of rapids could function more directly in his novel than could a blasted tree or a huge rock; therefore, he developed the sublimity of falls and rapids to a greater degree. But Cole, too, turns to such obviously dramatic devices.

Small falls appear frequently, as in The Clove, Catskills and Gelyna, but great ones less often. One great waterfall appears in A Wild Scene, set near the foot of the looming, tilted mountain. The power of the falls can be judged by the spray rising almost two-thirds of the height of the falls themselves. But the falls are set deep in the painting, overshadowed by the mountain above and the active foreground, and work as only one of many sublime parts to this canvas.

Cole’s two paintings of Kaaterskill Falls (Plates 55 and 57), however, painted one year apart in 1826 and 1827, focus primarily on the falls. Each painting leans heavily on theatricality. The earlier effort achieves much of its effect from the perspective. Cole has positioned himself and his viewer behind the fall and in a cave or hollow, looking out at the
wilderness and the stormy sky through the small waterfall at left. The second depiction of Kaaterskill Falls is even more theatrical, again due in large measure to the vantage point. The viewer, as in so many of Cole's landscapes, has an elevated position and looks down on tangled underbrush, idealized trees, and the rushing stream moving away from the foot of the falls at lower left. But from this sunken foreground Cole quickly directs the eye up almost vertical cliffs pockmarked by caves, past occasional trees and a lone figure, to the falls themselves, cascading in two parts from the thick woods above toward the viewer below.

Much of the effect Cole reaches for is achieved by the unnatural vantage point of the viewer. In upstate New York one would probably find it most difficult to view Kaaterskill Falls from the point Cole uses. Likewise, the Oxbow is seen from a perfect, elevated spot, as are the sunny morning on the Hudson, the various wild scenes and cloves, and most of Cole's other sublime landscapes. By manipulating not only the elements within the painting, but the angle and place from where the scene is beheld, Cole can control to a great extent the viewer's response to the landscape.
Cole calls upon a number of other means to achieve sublime effects. Darkness and storms work in this way for him, but some of the devices to which Cooper could turn frequently cannot be used by Cole because of the differences in their media. Quiet broken by sudden noise is easy enough to convey in words, but more complicated to convey in paint. Movement also must be handled differently by the painter than by the novelist.

Darkness, immensity, movement, and storm contribute to the sublimity of *Tornado in the Wilderness*. Aside from the dramatic side-lighting presumably stemming from the open sky at upper right, the entire painting is in darkness. Wind-blown trees disappear into murky, smoky clouds. Confused and tangled underbrush becomes inseparable from the gloomy shadows of the horizon. The blackened sky is a swirl of obscure movement. The trees reach and bend and pull as the tornado whips through the wilderness. The trees, the darkness, the tortured movement all heighten the sublime effect but it is proximity that fully completes this effect. Cole brings the viewer almost into the tornado, placing him within feet of the wrecked trees in the foreground. The viewer does not merely observe from a distant hill, but witnesses the action from
within the chaos.

This involvement, something that most likely could not occur in the natural world, caps the emotional effectiveness of this scene and works in a way similar to the forest fire in Cooper's *The Pioneers*. In that scene Cooper attempts to have the reader share the sublimity felt by Elizabeth Temple as she is caught in the fire on the mountain and watches with a horror the immolation of John Mohegan. However, it is probably easier to sense and relate to the drama of Cole's tornado, close as the viewer may be to the action, than to empathize with Elizabeth, for, during the raging blaze, it is hard to conceive of the young woman contemplating the aesthetics of sublimity.

Cole's *Gelynna* is quite similar to *Tornado in the Wilderness*. Though Cole backs the viewer far from the details of the scene, the immensity not of details but of the panorama itself leads to the sublime. The darkened chasm at right and the equally gloomy cliff at left lend an ominous air to the scene, as does the storm moving left behind the cliff. The painting is filled with movement: the storm drives to the left, the figure reaches, supplicating upwards toward the right, the cliffs and the small waterfall accent...
the verticals of the scene, the landscape opens diagonally to the right, and the trees wave in every possible direction. Similar movement of figures, storms, falls, verticals, and diagonals characterizes A Wild Scene. Sunny Morning on the Hudson has far less movement, but the angular trees stretching in all directions are echoed by the misty puffs of clouds rising and dissipating from the valley floor.

Cole could also produce the sublime by the opposite effects. Cooper can tell a reader that quiet reigned over a scene; Cole must paint that quiet. This he does in Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans." The rocks and mountains stabilize the scene. The few dead trees are not bending and groping but stand or lie quiet, at rest, while the live trees bask in the sun. The sky is empty, a peaceful blue. The Indians too are still. There is action within the circle, but the figures are so tiny that the kneeling maiden, Alice, and the gesturing soldier, Duncan, are barely visible. The delicately balanced rock may indicate a future danger, but the scene at present uplifts the viewer in its quiet peacefulness.

Cole's sublime landscapes only infrequently rely solely on quiet or, conversely, grand effects for their effectiveness; generally the quiet, for
example, is strongly contrasted with noise or movement for the desired effect. Indeed, and such is also the case for Cooper, though perhaps with less success, nearly all of the tools Cole employs to conjure up associations leading to the sublime achieve that goal because of the painter's powerful use of contrasts. Conflicts of emotion, fear and release, hope and threat, often overwhelm the viewer, as do other contrasts, and such overwhelming could frequently produce sublime responses. Cole acknowledges the effectiveness of such contrasts in a letter to his patron, Robert Gilmor of Baltimore, dated 1828. Writing about The Expulsion from the Garden (Plate 58; see also Moses on the Mount, Plate 59), Cole explains, "I have introduced the more terrible objects of nature, and have endeavoured to heighten the effect by giving a glimpse of the Garden of Eden in its tranquillity." 10

One of Cole's favorite methods involves isolating a stark and dramatic tree against an open background. He returns to this highly staged ploy in many of his paintings; we see it in The Clove, Catskills and in A Wild Scene, where the unusually straight tree at left rises majestically from a stony ledge, ascending nearly twenty-five feet before flaring out into suddenly horizontal planes of leaves and branches.
Only a single twisting branch rivals the vertical trunk's growth, and it seems more to emphasize with its own diagonals the hard, linear vertical and horizontal movement of the tree than to detract from it. This tree's strong position in the painting is further accented by its silhouette against the paler tones of the sky.

Two similar theatrical trees bracket the landscape in Cole's *Peace at Sunset*. Each of these dead, distorted relics of trees guides the viewer visually into the scene through its subtle leanings away from the painting's perimeter. And each is alone in the picture, brought into relief at the left by the extreme side-lighting and at the right by the severe silhouetting against the lighter hues of the mountains and sky beyond. The solitary bird perched at the tip of the silhouetted tree adds to the impact of the scene.

The picture depends on still other dramatic contrasts. The two trees are antithetical to the lush, sunlit tree stage center; their deathly starkness contrasts with the verdant tree even to the point where the latter has foliage growing up its trunk, and vines, flowers, and ferns surrounding it. Further contrast
finds the ominous thunderhead at left blown eastward as the evening sky opens and clears.

Cole employs the highlighted, lone, gothic tree on numerous other canvases. Schroon Mountain, Catskill Mountain House, and The Oxbow all depict such staged trees, but seldom does Cole reach the contrasts that he does in Sunny Morning on the Hudson. The two trees are forcefully spotlighted by the rising sun at left and both are set against the dark and gloomy round-top mountain behind. But the contrast of tree with background only begins to explain the powerful effect in this painting. The two trees, spindly, winding, moving, directly offset the stolid, unyielding, rounded rock formation to their right. Furthermore, these two trees are set off against one another. The three-pronged birch weaves sinuously upward and to the right; the shattered pine with its knobbed joints angulates to the left. The mottled, ribbed, and broken bark of the pine is accented by the silvery smoothness of the white birch. The birch, young and wispy, bears leaves and lives; the pine has died.

The contrast of storm and quiet also is designed to lead Cole's viewer to associations producing the
The hard rain clouds of *The Oxbow* that pour down upon the recoiling, gothic trees at left oppose the calm of the Connecticut River valley below and the appropriate open sky extending deep into the painting to the right. A nearly identical effect is achieved in *Landscape with Tree Trunks*. Once more the condition of Cole's hideously smashed tree is reflected in the turbulent storm clouds above, while the peaceful rook and the rolling hills beyond are overspread by clear, sunny skies. Cole admits the usefulness of such contrasts by picturing them frequently. The black, smoky sky of *The Clove, Catskills* opens, as do the mountain ridges, into an open valley beneath blue sky. The beetling cliffs of *Gelyna* are reflected in the ominous, black skies, but the bright skies radiate upon a peaceful, idyllic lake surrounded by gently rolling hills.

What Cole is doing, in effect, is using chiaroscuro to promote the sublime. Cole had discovered early in his career that the interplay of dark and light tones mixed with subtle shadings could go far toward representing the natural world and toward controlling or directing the viewer's response to that natural world. The contrast of Cole's trees, either with their background or with one another, is achieved
through the control of chiaroscuro; this is equally true for the great storms competing for open skies in his paintings.

In addition to the sublime effects created by contrasted shading and silhouetted, solitary trees and rocks, Cole often emphasizes the immensity of his landscapes by placing a recognizable and measurable object in a convenient location within the painting. The tiny painter nearly hidden at bottom center in *The Oxbow* is dwarfed first by the great tree at left and then even more so by the immense valley below and the amazing arc of the Connecticut River.

The two men in *Gelyna* and the even smaller figure standing midway up Cole's 1827 *Kaaterskill Falls* function much as do the solitary gazer in the foreground of *In The Catskills* and the sharply detailed rider appearing to rein in his horse at the prospect of the high mountain wall facing him in *The Notch of the White Mountains* (Crawford Notch). Each of these figures, by his diminutive size, reinforces the vastness of the landscape. Each, in addition, appears in a state of surprise or bewilderment, awe or fright, the very feelings Cole intends the viewer outside the painting to feel. Cole's tiny people, carefully posed, work in much the same way that Cooper's characters
do when the reader is told that they feel certain emotions. The implication is that the reader should feel that way also.

Buildings can also reiterate the immensity of a Cole landscape. Cole produced two paintings of a fashionable upstate New York spa. In each Catskill Mountain House the main building, in truth quite large, is diminished within its natural setting. Placed high on a rocky ledge overlooking the Hudson River valley, the building in each painting is small, and this smallness reinforces the grandeur of the wilderness surrounding the resort.

The gracious summer mansion of Daniel Wadsworth as it appears in Monte Video is almost lost in the rolling expanse of lawn, field, and wooded hillside. Rather than belittle Wadsworth's stately home, this diminution does the opposite by emphasizing the beauty of the grounds and the extent of the natural setting. A similar enhancement occurs in Cole's Mountain Landscape with Waterfall (Plate 60). The various and scattered figures—the lad with gun or fishing pole strolling towards the log cabin; the man in a tri-cornered hat with long-barreled rifle standing at the edge of a sheer cliff at left; the couple, he in suspenders, she with bonnet, shawl, and full-length skirt, on the
wooden bridge spanning the falls; the almost indistinct people by the cabin—all stress the tremendous scope of the painter's landscape.

Cole attempts to achieve strong emotional response from his viewer in yet another way involving sharp contrast. Frequently Cole would produce sets of paintings of the same scene from different perspectives or at different times. Two such sets, though not of American scenes, illustrate the effect Cole is searching for. In The Past (Plate 61) Cole presents a medieval turreted castle before which gloriously robed knights joust. The scene is sunny, gay, cheerful. The companion piece, The Present (Plate 62), has the same perspective, the same elevated vantage with the castle rising beyond. But now the turret is crumbling, the stones decaying. The jousting knights and the brightly clad court have vanished. Scattered cows laze in the long afternoon shadows. Only a wondering shepherd views the desolate ruins, and he is dressed identically to the youth who is viewing the tournament from the branches of the tree at left in The Past.

The first painting, The Past, has definite disturbing undertones, something present in many of Cole's canvases, especially his Course of Empire.
sequence. Amid the sunny scene one of the knights is about to be mortally wounded. The explicit, impending destruction of one knight, plus the implicit destruction of a whole society, links The Past with The Present while still stressing the contrasts between the two scenes.

One other set of two paintings demonstrates Cole's conscious use of contrasting, staged scenes, The Departure and The Return (Plates 63 and 64). Again the scene is not American, though the natural objects appear taken directly from Cole's Catskill Mountain scenes. It is as if the artist has brought imaginary furnishings from highly stylized medieval romances and deposited them in the American wilderness.

The scene in each painting is the same, for the statue of the Madonna and Child appears at left in both, and a large, squat tree controls the central ground. But the sunny cheer and optimism in The Departure is replaced by gloom, long shadows, the setting sun, and a spiky gothic cathedral in The Return. The knight is blessed by a priest upon leaving; his body, borne on a litter, is met by the same wizened priest at the return. Neither painting alone is sublime, but rather is picturesque; but together, when the message is understood that all
things must pass, and when the implicit undertones of the first painting are made explicit in the second, the viewer may be awed and struck by the import of the two paintings.

In all of the paintings so far discussed, Cole seems concerned with depicting specific objects, such as trees, rocks, and storms, and certain views, including ranges of hills, diagonally opening valleys, and mountain clefts, that will produce associations in his viewer leading to the sublime. Cole's artistry works within a number of carefully considered technical devices to achieve this sublimity, and each, though beginning in recognizable American wilderness, quickly becomes stylized, dramatic, imaginative. Cole takes recognizable scenes present in the American land, blends, mixes according to aesthetic recipes handed down from the eighteenth century, and the result is a sublimely moving landscape.
"I took a walk last evening" wrote Cole in his journal on April 1, 1836, "up the valley of the Catskill, once my favorite walk. It is still lovely. Men cannot remove its craggy hills, nor well destroy its rock-rooted trees. The rapid stream will also have its course." Cole's melancholic concern with man's scarring impact on the natural world follows him throughout his life and emerges in many of his most celebrated paintings. Like Cooper, he does not limit this concern to simple environmental statements about the progress of civilization and the clearing of the wilderness for new towns and farms. Instead, he moves toward a more complex philosophical position regarding the permanence of the natural world, in spite of mankind, and the transitory ways of peoples and civilizations.

In The Departure and The Return Cole juxtaposes specific and permanent signs of the natural world with the impermanence of the crusading party and the
medieval buildings. Similar juxtaposition is seen in *The Past* and *The Present* where the buildings have crumbled, the fields become overgrown, and virtually all reminder of a colorful medieval festival has disappeared. In each of these sets of paintings Cole is developing and refining ideas about the passing of man and the permanence of nature that had intrigued him since his earliest landscapes of the 1820's. While in Europe in 1842 Cole reflected on such thoughts:

> There is a sad pleasure in wandering among the ruins of these cities and palaces. We look at arches and columns in decay, and feel the perishable nature of human art: at the same glance, we take in the blue sea rolling its billows to the shore with the freshness, strength and beauty of the days, when the proud Caesars gazed upon it. \(^{13}\)

Cole first broaches his interest in the fleeting nature of human existence when in 1827 he undertakes a canvas based on a tremendously successful Cooper novel. Cole's *Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans"* might not be meaningful without prior familiarity with Cooper; there is no definite external evidence that the Mohicans have seen their last chieftain pass and with him their race itself. But there is
nevertheless something sad within the painting. The group of tribesmen is gathered solemnly, overlooking a breath-taking panorama but turned away from the view. The natural stone bridge, the balancing rock, the ranges of mountains fading into the haze of the horizon—all this is set against the problems the Indians and the white travellers struggle with. The tribe must decide about transitory matters, but the natural world will remain. In this painting that world is still and untroubled; nothing seems to stir. The natural world appears as unmoved by the Indians’ plight as it will be by the passing of the civilization in Cole’s extremely popular five-canvas Course of Empire series painted between 1833 and 1836.

In this five-part sequence Cole amplifies one kind of sublimity we have already examined and unfolds a second. In each painting he is still concerned with the effects of wild nature on the viewer. Roiling skies, writhing, blasted, or giant trees, huge expanses and tiny figures, dramatic mountain forms all contribute to associations leading to the sublime.

The first painting in this series, The Savage State (Plate 65), exhibits all these relatively standard devices for the sublime. Shortly before embarking on this first canvas for the Course of Empire
Cole acknowledged his intention of producing a purely sublime scene. He wrote to Gilmor in Baltimore on January 29, 1832: "The first picture must be a savage wilderness—the sun rising from the ocean & the stormy clouds of the night retiring tumultuously over the mountains—" and then to J. L. Morton, Secretary of the National Academy of Design, two days later: "... when you see it, I think you will give me credit for not having forgotten those sublime scenes of the wilderness in which you know I so much delight...."¹⁴

But a second sublimity is at work in this series.

The rise and fall of empire is such a massive occurrence that its portrayal might easily overwhelm the viewer. The immensity of the scenes painted combines with the immensity of the philosophical conception to lead to sublime thoughts.

The first painting in the sequence, The Savage State, focuses on the dawn of empire. The sun is rising at left, the heavy clouds of night pass, exposing primitive man canoeing, hunting deer, emerging from conical huts to greet the new day. The second painting, The Arcadian (Plate 66), places the viewer in the same physical location as in the first, but civilization has progressed. The fleeing deer have been replaced by domestic horses and sheep. A temple of the simplest
vertical and horizontal lines sits on a bluff overhanging the inlet. An old man sits at left, doodling the most basic geometric patterns in the dirt. Religion, simple mathematics, and an agrarian economy have been born. It is mid-morning.

The third scene, The Consummation of Empire (Plate 67), occurs at mid-day under a brilliant sun. The harbor is packed with vessels; commerce thrives. The empire is a wonder of architectural forms. Glorious classical structures abound; statuary is everywhere. The togaed citizens have obviously prospered, for the white-washed scene glows with comfort, beauty, and luxury. Still the beetling mountain cliff dominates the inlet's entrance. But this sunny triumph of civilization is short-lived.

It is late afternoon in Destruction (Plate 68), the fourth canvas, and everywhere there are breakdown and havoc. The lagoon is filled with whitecaps. Ships swamp, statues topple, buildings crumple; women are raped, men shot by longbows; fires break out as the skies swirl and rage. Yet the mountain cliff remains.

The final painting, Desolation (Plate 69), shows quiet once more. The remains of the empire are still to be seen, but vines are rapidly re-asserting
nature's dominance. A solitary sea-bird nests atop the Corinthian pillar in the foreground, oblivious to the architectural order that supports its home. There are no people; only the mountain cliff by the harbor's entrance and the harbor itself remain to testify to what has passed. Now it is twilight under a rising moon.

Fenimore Cooper had investigated the problem of the passage of empire in a number of places throughout the Leatherstocking Tales, but he gives Cole direct credit and praise when he deals with this subject in The Crater (1847). In that novel a volcanic island rises in the Pacific, a utopian society is formed but soon is divided by religious and economic differences, and finally the whole civilization is destroyed in a renewed eruption of the mountain. The volcano itself parallels the mountain in each Course of Empire painting:

But in the peak itself it was not possible to be mistaken: there it was in its familiar outline, just as it had stood in its more elevated position, when it crowned its charming mountain, and overlooked the whole of that enchanting plain which had so lately stretched beneath. It might be said to resemble, in this respect, that sublime rock, which is recognized as a part of the "everlasting hills," in Cole's series of noble landscapes
that is called "The March [sic] of Empire"; ever the same amid the changes of time, and civilization, and decay. 15

In a long memorial letter about Cole sent to his biographer, Louis Legrand Noble, dated January 6, 1849, Cooper praises Cole and especially The Course of Empire. "As an artist, I consider Mr. Cole one of the very first geniuses of the age.... The March [sic] of Empire, his best work I think, ought to make the reputation of any man." Later in the same letter Cooper calls this series "one of the noblest works of art that has ever been wrought." Cooper further reflects on these paintings and recognizes the divine sublimity of the natural setting: "There is a sublimity about the rock on the mountain top, seen in its different aspects, but always the same, a monument of its divine origin, amid all the changes of the scene." 16

In this same important letter, Cooper explains much about not only Cole's aesthetics but his own as well. Cooper theorizes that great art, or at least attempts at great art, involve the artist in a conscious restructuring of details to achieve predetermined effects.

Nature should be the substratum of all that is poetical. But the superstructure ought to be no servile copy. The poet
and the painter are permitted to
give the beau idéal of this nature,
and he who makes it the most
attractive, while he maintains
the best likeness, is the highest
artist. Such, in my judgment, was
Cole's great merit. 17

This combination of the true to nature and the stylized
leads to the aesthetic philosophy Cole is professing
not only in his cycle paintings of the passing of
peoples and cultures but also in his better landscapes.

The philosophy that Cole puts forth in his Course
of Empire sequence also can be discovered in landscape
terms. The mutability of all things, the process of
growth and decay, the movement from dawn through noon
to dusk, and the potential repetition of the entire
cycle are all echoed in his purely landscape paintings.

In The Clove, Catskills, one of Cole's finer
efforts, there are no humans or results of human
endeavor, but there is much life, and the message
of transience permeates the canvas. The tree in
the foreground is dead, though a few leaves cling
tenuously to its upper branches, indicating the death
is recent. Other dead trees stand solemnly in the
forest, but they are contrasted with the blanket of
living trees. Human society is not passing here,
but these trees, anthropomorphized in their stretching,
reaching, clawing forms, become the equivalent of living figures. The mutability that affects man affects these trees as well.

In this painting the brilliant, blaring colors of autumn sweep across the New York countryside, but the colorful leaves anticipate winter, the season of death. The landscape, like the empire, undergoes change and flux. The storms move in and pass as the skies clear; the trickling waterfall flows steadily along, slowly wearing away the rocks; leaves bud, bloom, color, and fall; the cycles are continually repeated.

Change and flux. Growth and decay. It is not simply the sins of mankind that cause the downfall of empire; rather, it is the way of God. Recognition of this leads the mind to awesome thoughts and to the sublime. Cole places little moral judgment on the civilization depicted in the Course of Empire, or in The Past and The Present, or in The Departure and The Return. But surely his paintings are meant as warnings to the American people, flush with the optimism of Jacksonian democracy and westward expansion. The American, Cole is suggesting, must be aware that those who live in the Edenic Paradise may be expelled from the Garden, or that those who bask and revel in
the beauty of the land and the progress of the republic may be destined, like those from ancient Greece and Rome (viz. Piranesi's engravings of Roman ruins) and medieval Europe, to tread the paths of the people in the Course of Empire. But Cole also believes that acceptance of the mutability of all things leads the individual to the knowledge of the immanence of God. Our world is the product of God's craft, and our passage through this world is directed by this God.

In his four-part allegorical series Voyage of Life (Plates 70–73), completed in 1840, Cole in no uncertain terms exhibits his belief that we are all wholly in the hands of the Creator. As the person passes through four stages of life, Childhood, Youth, Manhood, and Old Age, he also passes through a frequently threatening landscape filled with overhanging cliffs, tortured trees, thundering rapids, blackening storms, and dangerous chasms. But throughout, the solitary traveler views lush gardens, pastoral hills and meadows, sunny skies. Both worlds belong to the sojourner who, in his isolation, is watched and; perhaps, protected by a guiding angel. Visions of the City of God appear in Youth; visions of Hell in Manhood. But finally the angel takes the old man to heaven after a bruising, menacing, lonely journey. God is immanent throughout
the sequence; God is the constant. Nature ebbs, flows, ebbs again, for even mountains wear away. Empires pass, though slowly; the individual, faster. Conception of the whole fills the mind to overflowing, even to the sublime. Writing of Mount Washington, Cole anticipated all this in an 1828 poem:

Vast monument of power that God hath reared
Upon the lowly earth to conquer time
And measure our eternity—
Two visions of the American land emerge from the paintings of Thomas Cole. First, the land is filled with natural forms that fulfill the prescriptions for the sublime as outlined by eighteenth-century aestheticians. The land overwhelms by its sheer size; it evokes terror and wonder by its stretches of darkened forest, its huge mountain cliffs, its freedom from the ravages of man and progress. Terror and wonder are further underscored by the associations evoked from the excessively imaginative tree and rock forms that Cole loves to paint. In addition, rolling clouds and driving storms, because not directly threatening to the viewer, also conjure sublime feelings.

Cole recognizes that one link between the American wilderness and the sublime stems from the danger that abounds in that wilderness. This danger may grow from either of two sources. On the one hand, the sublime is called forth by the purely physical danger of the natural world. The storm in *The Oxbow* and the
whirlwind in *Tornado in the Wilderness* illustrate such danger.

But a sense of danger may also develop from the psychological implications of the physical natural world. The fleeing deer sense this unseen danger in *Landscape with Dead Trees* and the viewer may well experience an uneasiness at the sight of the strange and eerie trees in this landscape. The rider pulling his horse up short in *The Notch of the White Mountains* (Crawford Notch) also exhibits a fear that is as much a result of the psychological as of the physical. The great barrier of sheer mountain that confronts him, plus the impending storm, may be less physically threatening, in fact, than psychologically foreboding. The presence of danger is further echoed by the wildly gesturing and recoiling trees at right. What is not an inherently dangerous land becomes potentially dangerous through the arrangement of parts. What is at one moment peaceful and beautiful becomes at the next menacing and sublime.

The land further leads to sublime sentiments by reminding the viewer of his own transitory existence. The specific passing of empire series, of course, fulfills this function, but landscapes without any signs of humans and civilizations do so too, though
more subtly. The dying or dead tree balanced by budding saplings, the wearing down of rocks and mountains by storm and wind, the cycle of seasons all hint strongly at the viewer's own mutability, and such impermanence is often a threat. Cole turns to this precise theme in his 1833 poem "Lines Written After a Walk on [a] Beautiful Morning in November."

And quiet sleeping as though never storm
Had tortured them--Alas! too soon must come
The conflict of the winds, that from the womb,
Of the vast circumambient shall be born
Giants--He of the south who howls in scorn,
And heaves the deluge on the shrinking land--
And he who from the north puts forth his hand,
And shakes down heaven in the chilling drift,
And wields the viewless ice-bolt keen and swift--
E'en now upon the far horizons verge
A gloom uplifts; it is the foremost surge,
Of winter's darksome sea--

So quickly fly
All beauteous things, we gaze and love--they die.

One's mutability, however, leads to sublimity in a second way. Not only does impermanence possibly overwhelm a person by its threatening nature, but it can also lead one to the contemplation of God and the mysterious workings of his universe. In his poem "To the Moon," written in 1825, Cole first broods over the
Thou hast thy hills rejoicing in the day
Thy rivers roll their ever changeful way.
High to the sun thy threat'ning rocks arise:
And vallies dim my eager fancy spies:
Thy woods are dark—and shall I venture more,
And dare thy hidden secrets to explore....

But after voicing such fears and doubts, Cole begins
to appreciate the uplifting message of the same hills,
rivers, valleys, and woods.

And ye deep woods rise to this silver light,
Heave your broad bosoms toss your branches
bright.
And ye blue mountains climbing to the sky
Thou ocean wide: ye beam'ing clouds on high;
The Moon's fair light in bright reflections
raise
And greet the heav'ns with your grateful
praise,
Thou light of heaven; who of thee can sing....

Cole as poet as well as painter has perceived
the presence of God in the land. His painting *Catskill
Creek* illustrates the benevolence of the natural world,
the glassy stream and the fiery autumn hues of the
turning trees inform us that some gentle hand is at
work in this land. The softly toned purple mountains
echo this and the sky shouts out the message that a
divine peace encompasses the scene. This painting
presents an Edenic, pristine America.

Cole records his own wandering through such a God filled landscape in a journal entry dated October 9, 1838.

We ascended, next day, and traversed some beautiful realms of moss, where the sun, shining in gleams through the tall, dark spruce forest, upon the green velvety carpet, was extremely fine. It reminded me of the interior of some vast Gothic pile, where the sun comes through narrow windows in slender streams, and lights whatever it strikes with a refulgence almost supernatural amid the gloomy shadows around.21

Divinely uplifting views abound in Cole's landscapes and frequently the artist will augment the purity of the scene by adding small figures, almost all of whom are innocents. Where Cooper's land can accommodate evil, as seen in a figure like Magua in The Last of the Mohicans, Cole's land seems incapable of such total malevolence. Cole's Mohicans are seen as noble savages; the primitive men in A Wild Scene are unsullied creatures of nature. The figures in Mountain Landscape with Waterfall are gentle, rustic types. The horseman in The Notch of the White Mountains (Crawford Notch) presents no danger to the natural world. These Edenic figures emphasize the close ties
between God, man, and the American land.

Generally, however, Cole sees nature as divinely benevolent as well as physically and psychologically threatening all at the same time. The dead and blasted trees in the foreground of Schroon Mountain are juxtaposed with the carpet of living, gloriously-hued trees extending to the horizon. The twisted trees, writhing and almost suffering around the perimeter of the pond in In The Catskills exist, but do not prevent the buckskin, Natty-Bumppo-like figure from gazing at the inspiring panorama stretching outward and upward before him.

The overpowering craggy cliffs and the blackening storm at left in Gelyna constitute only half of the message of the American wilderness. Wooded hills and clear skies dominate the right background of the painting.

For storms bring beauty in their train;
The hills that roar'd beneath the blast
The woods that welter'd in the rain
Rejoice when'er the tempest's past.

Cole's paintings, like the rider in The Mountain Ford, move often from the sublimity of the gothic to the sublimity of the divine.
Cole's portrayal of the wonderful sublimity of the wilderness represents only one part of his double vision of the American land. Sublime natural views, from single blasted trees to panoramas of whole valleys and mountain ranges, serve as evidence of the powerful presence of God in America. America is often the "howling wilderness" Michael Wigglesworth wrote about, and Cole painted this wilderness often. Present in this "howling wilderness," however, is God. The American land, in Cole's paintings as in Cooper's novels, achieves its special quality because of this divine immanence.

The artist as well as the viewer stands almost within the howling wilderness in Cole's paintings. The viewer shares Cole's vantage in Sunny Morning on the Hudson, can experience with him the wind-swept, open ledge and the gothic, desolate trees and rocks. But the viewer can also share in this painting the seemingly limitless prospect that is America stretching to and beyond the Hudson, and perhaps can cry along with Cole that


Such views sublime of the great universe
And of its God as mortals seldom gain—
When Natty Bumppo stands on that rocky Catskill outcrop and exults in seeing Creation, he exults in what Cole and the viewer see as well.

The American vision encompasses the duality of the gothic sublime and the theistic sublime. The land is dangerous yet always filled with God, a powerful God and a gentle God. The threatening storms of *The Oxbow* and *The Clove*, Catskills give way to vast, sunny panoramas of America. The broken, mutated trees are in the foreground; as we move into the distance, as we move into America, the trees grow rich and straight and full. The craggy, harsh mountains are left behind as we arrive at fertile valleys and rolling hills. This seems to be Cole's vision of America, a land of dualities, of the gothic and the divine, but, as in *Peace at Sunset*, a land opening up toward the horizon, toward promise within the howling wilderness.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 5


8. Noble, p. 149.


10. Noble, p. 64.


17. The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper, V, 398.


CONCLUSION

Fenimore Cooper and Thomas Cole were the principal figures, the pathfinders, so to speak, in the main currents of American fiction and landscape painting from the 1820's to the 1840's. Recognition of this, essential to a study of American culture and art during these decades, also leads to numerous unanswered and perhaps unanswerable questions. How do we account for the great popularity and success of Cooper and Cole? This is probably the key question, and one that triggers others: Why does the wilderness figure so prominently in both Cooper's and Cole's creations? Why is the sublime so important or useful to each? And, of major significance, are wilderness and sublimity the links between Cooper's novels and Cole's paintings and their tremendous public acceptance? In short, what did Cooper and Cole mean to the American imagination during the thirty or forty years before the Civil War?

292
Cooper and Cole, of course, were two of the first artists to appear in the young republic and as such could shape some of the foremost postures and problems that faced the American creative spirit. Each saw himself "both as a creator and a critic of culture." The stylized and prescribed landscapes each creates added new dimensions to the American consciousness, including an awareness of artistic possibility and an altered appreciation of or attitude towards the land itself. But each is highly critical of much that is America. The proliferation of stumps throughout *The Pioneers* and the waste of resources in all of the *Leatherstocking Tales* parallel Cole's frequent warnings regarding the passing of empire and the destruction of society.

But each man reflects and helps shape the positive, optimistic, and hopeful tone of mid-century America as well. None of this shaping and criticizing, however, would have meant anything had one additional ingredient not been present. Both Cole and Cooper were talented artists, and this fact alone must distinguish them from most earlier painters and novelists in America and also account for much of their popular success.
The great success of these two also stems from their own avowed break with European fashion and influence. Their independence is far more deeply rooted in protest than in fact, for England and the Continent dictated much to both Cole's paintings and Cooper's novels; yet American culture, so long dependent on Europe, could, for the first time at least, claim some freedom from overseas movements. This freedom is more a romanticizing of the New World and all its potential than a reflection of the actualities of American literature and painting. Yet this romantic notion was widely held and helped spark the emergence of an American art. Goethe, in a poem "To America," emphasizes the prospects and possibilities for an American art.

America, you're better off than
Our continent, the old.
You have no castles which are fallen
No basalt to behold.
You're not disturbed within your inmost being
Right up till today's daily life
By useless remembering
And unrewarding strife.

Use well the present and good luck to you
And when your children begin writing poetry
Let them guard well in all they do
Against knight- robber- and ghost-story.
Cooper and Cole, the "children" Goethe writes of, establish a beginning in fiction and landscape. In a letter one year before his death, Cooper comments on the state of American literature in 1850. It "is far from being contemptible.... Bryant, Irving, Paulding, Halleck,... Longfellow,... Simms, Bancroft, Prescott ... cannot be put down. We have got a foothold, and by God's blessing we will maintain it.... half a century in one direction is antiquity in America...."3 Likewise, Cole is at the threshold of American landscape painting, and his influence is directly felt for half a century more in the United States.

What Cole and Cooper open up to American artists, and Americans in general, are the possibilities of using and recognizing both the wilderness and the sublime. The land in its sublimity becomes material for painting and fiction, material that had not been used widely or successfully in American artistic circles prior to these two men. Before Cole and Cooper, the land is unimportant artistically, but in their hands American wilderness becomes suitable for any art and even, to apply Burke's dictates on the sublime, possesses many of the same qualities of the most sublime of all art objects, the Gothic cathedral. Rheims or Amiens are sublime for they exhibit "magnitude,
apparent disorder, magnificent profusion of detail, the expression of immense energy, the suggestion of infinity ..., [and] the awful gloom of the interior ...." Yet these are the very features of the American wilderness. The American land, unimportant before Cooper or Cole, suddenly is seen as valid material for the artist.

Further, in Cooper's novels and Cole's landscapes the sublime orders a wild, often untracked, and seemingly limitless land in both comprehensive and comprehensible ways. Its dictates offer a way to cope artistically with the immensity of the land. In addition, the sublime enables Cole and Cooper to appeal to the American's desire to see a transformed and stylized, almost idealized, land, even if that land does not and may never have existed.

Reuben Post Halleck wrote almost seventy years ago that the Leatherstocking Tales are "the prose Iliad and Odyssey of the eighteenth-century pioneer," and that "the fall of Ilium" is simply replaced by "the conquest of the wilderness," and the perilous voyages of Odysseus by the "wanderings of Leatherstocking in the forest." Halleck certainly is overestimating Cooper's merit as an epic poet, but he is recognizing that Cooper's wilderness becomes
a mythic landscape and his characters mythic figures. Such myth-making transforms the American land into something much larger and much more significant than had been previously envisioned by either American writers or the American public. Cole's landscapes also achieve epic proportions in their vastness, energy, and emotional potential, and even if his land is as much a product of his imagination as it is verifiable wilderness, the ordering and mythologizing of that land elevated the American's environment to artistic levels.

The success achieved by Cooper and Cole transforming the American wilderness may be explained in ways other than that of the appeal of the mythic landscape to a nation with few great heroes and virtually no legendary past. The throbbing, expanding, industrializing country that was America in the second quarter of the nineteenth century might well have viewed the Edenic, pristine scenes of Cole's paintings and Cooper's novels as pathways into a simpler and hence more comprehensible time. Nostalgia for the uncluttered past was nostalgia for a more meaningful day. In a country with few cultural associations from the past, Cole and Cooper create a full blown history for the American people to dream about and wistfully romanticize. That such
a day may not have existed hardly mattered.

The success that Fenimore Cooper and Thomas Cole achieved, however, goes beyond appealing to nostalgia, beyond creating a stylized, mythologized land, beyond claiming freedom from European forces. Their respective triumphs stem from their recognition of what is legitimate and pervasive American experience. America, from its inception and through the lifetimes of Cooper and Cole, was fragmented along political, geographic, and economic lines. Schisms created during colonial times had not healed more than half a century later, and in spite of the motto E Pluribus Unam, a unified nation was as much a fabrication as a reality. What did belong to the United States as a whole even more than the revolutionary experience, however, was the frontier, the wilderness, the sense of specialness embodying itself in Manifest Destiny and the concurrent thrust westward. The frontier was common ground for all Americans.

In addition, America was a religious nation in the 1820's, '30's, and '40's. The sublime in nature led directly to moral and religious thoughts and on to the proof of God's presence in the American continent. The American could point proudly to sublime nature as portrayed in Cooper's novels and Cole's landscapes.
and know that this sublime land formed a covenant between God and a special people. Each American could share this divine and moral distinction with every other American, for it was rooted in national experience. Natty Bumppo incorporates each American's special attitude toward this divine land. As the Deerslayer, he "sees God in the forest; hears Him in the winds; bows to Him in the firmament that o'ercanopies all; ... finds the impress of the Deity in all the works of nature...."7

Cooper and Cole picture this sublime wilderness. Though the land is at times terrifying and filled with horrors both known and unknown, it also represents to the American the promise of the future. The American pioneer striding westward knew well both the dangers of the howling wilderness and the hope equally present in that land. Even the American who never left the Eastern seaboard shared the special experience of Manifest Destiny. When Natty Bumppo, the perfect frontiersman, at the close of The Pioneers, leaves the frontier settlement of Templeton and embarks hopefully westward, "far towards the setting sun," he is simply "the foremost in that band of pioneers who are opening the way for the march of the nation across the continent."8 James Fenimore Cooper and
Thomas Cole each capture what is essentially the American experience, the sublime wilderness with its dangers, its powers, and its ultimate promise to the American nation.
NOTES TO CONCLUSION


Plate 2


Plate 1

Archibald Robertson: Medal to commemorate the opening of the Erie Canal, 1825.
Plate 3. Benjamin West: The Death of General Wolfe, 1770; 59 1/2 x 84; The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
Plate 5. John Singleton Copley: *Watson and the Shark*, 1778; 72 x 90 1/8); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. (Detail)
Plate 7. John Vanderlyn: Marius Amidst the Ruins of Carthage, 1807; 87 x 68 1/2; M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, California.
Plate 9. Samuel F. B. Morse: The Dying Hercules, 1812; marble; Yale University Art Gallery.
Plate 10. Claude Lorrain, Temple of Apollo, (1600-1682)
Plate 14. George Beck, Baltimore from Howard's Park, 1796; Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.
Plate 16. William Groombridge, View of Maidstone, Kent, c. 1795.
Plate 17. Francis Guy, Perry Hall near Baltimore, Gough-Carroll Estate, c. 1795.
Plate 18. Francis Guy, Pennington Mills, View Downstream, 1804. The Peabody Institute, Baltimore.
Plate 23. William Guy Wall, View of Cohoes, New York; 20 x 29\(\frac{1}{2}\); (1792-1864) Oil on panel; Private Collection.
Plate 25. John Trumbull, View of Niagara; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn.
Plate 31. Thomas Doughty, View of Highlands from Newburgh, New York; 20½ x 26½; Private Collection, undated.
Plate 32. Thomas Doughty, Autumn on the Hudson, 1850; 34 3/8 x 48 1/2; Oil on canvas; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
Plate 33. Thomas Doughty, *In The Catskills*, 1836; 30\(\frac{1}{4}\) x 42\(\frac{1}{4}\); Oil on canvas; Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts.
Plate 34. Thomas Doughty, River Scene.
Plate 35. Hercules Pietersz Seghers (c. 1590-1640), Landscape; Oil on panel; 21\(\frac{1}{2}\) x 39\(\frac{3}{4}\); The Uffizi, Florence.
Plate 38. Thomas Cole, Sunny Morning on the Hudson, 1827; Oil on panel; 18 3/4 x 25 1/2; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Plate 39.  Thomas Cole, Schroon Mountain, 1838; Oil on canvas; 39 3/8 x 63; The Cleveland Museum of Art.
Plate 40. Thomas Cole, Catskill Creek; Oil on Canvas; 26 x 36; New York Historical Society, New York.
Plate 41.  Thomas Cole, The Oxbow, 1836; Oil on canvas; 51\(\frac{1}{2}\) x 76; The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Plate 42. Thomas Cole, Monte Video, Summer Home of Daniel Wadsworth, Avon, Conn., 1828; Oil on wood; 19 3/4 x 26; The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn.
Plate 43. Thomas Cole, The Clove, Catskills, 1827; Oil on canvas; 25 x 33; New Britain, Conn., Museum of American Art.
Plate 44. Thomas Cole, Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans," 1827; Oil on canvas; 25 x 35". New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown.
Plate 45. Thomas Cole, A Wild Scene, 1831-32; Oil on canvas; 50½ x 76; The Baltimore Museum of Art.
Plate 46. Thomas Cole, The Notch of the White Mountains (Crawford Notch), 1839; Oil on canvas; 40 x 61\frac{1}{2}; National Gallery of Art.
Plate 47. Thomas Cole, Landscape with Tree Trunks, 1827.
Plate 48. Thomas Cole, Tornado in the Wilderness, 1835; Oil on canvas; 46 3/8 x 64 5/8; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
Plate 49. Thomas Cole, Gelyna, 1826; oil on panel; 24 x 34 1/2; Fort Ticonderoga, New York.
Plate 50. Thomas Cole, Catskill Mountain House, 1828; oil on canvas; 14 1/2 x 23 1/4. Private collection.
Plate 51.  Thomas Cole, Catskill Mountain House, 1843-1844; oil on canvas; 29 x 36; Collection of Mr. Calvin and Mrs. C. W. Stillman.
Plate 52. Thomas Cole, *In the Catskills*, 1827; oil on wood panel; 18 5/8 x 25 1/2; Arnot Art Gallery, Elmira, N.Y.
Plate 54. Thomas Cole, The Mountain Ford, 1846; oil on canvas; 28½ x 40; The metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Plate 55. Thomas Cole, *Kaaterskill Falls*, 1827; oil on canvas; 43 x 36; Collection of Mr. Lee B. Anderson.
Plate 56. Thomas Cole, Landscape with Dead Trees, 1825; oil on canvas; 27 x 34; Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.
Plate 57. Thomas Cole, Kaaterskill Falls, 1826; oil on canvas; 25 x 36; The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.
Plate 58. Thomas Cole, Expulsion from the Garden of Eden, 1827-1828; oil on canvas; 39 x 54; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Plate 59. Thomas Cole, Moses on the Mount, c. 1828; oil on canvas; 46 x 59; Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vt.
Plate 60. Thomas Cole, Mountain Landscape with Waterfall, 1847; oil on canvas; 51 x 39; Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, R. I.
Plate 61. Thomas Cole, The Past, 1838; oil on canvas; 40 x 61; Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts.
Plate 62. Thomas Cole, *The Present*, 1838; oil on canvas; 40 x 61; Amherst College, Amherst Massachusetts.
Plate 64. Thomas Cole, The Return, 1837.
Plate 70. Thomas Cole, Voyage of Life: Childhood, 1839; oil on canvas; 52 x 78; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N. Y.
Plate 71. Thomas Cole, *Voyage of Life: Youth*, 1840; oil on canvas; 52½ x 78½; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N. Y.
Plate 72. Thomas Cole, *Voyage of Life: Manhood*, 1840; oil on canvas; 52 x 78; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N. Y.
Plate 73. Thomas Cole, *Voyage of Life: Old Age*, 1840; oil on canvas; 51 3/4 x 78 1/4; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N. Y.
Plate 74. Thomas Cole, Study for Trees, Detroit Institute of Arts.
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