

## Reflections of Environmental Anxiety in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*

James Cooper<sup>1</sup> envisioned *The Pioneers* (1823)<sup>2</sup> as a dynamic multi-vocal novel that frames a discussion about land use and property rights through the use of dominant and subordinate figure pairs. The dominant pair is Judge Marmaduke Temple and his cousin Richard (Dickson) Jones, while one of the subordinate pairs is Nathaniel (Leatherstocking) Bumppo, or Leatherstocking<sup>3</sup>, as he is frequently called, and Chingachgook, also called John Mohican or Indian John. Leatherstocking is a frontiersman who lives in the wilderness of New York State, on the margin of a settlement founded by a wealthy land speculator, Judge Marmaduke Temple. By the end of the novel, it becomes clear that much of the emotional weight of the complex debate about the natural environment resides with Temple and Leatherstocking.

Leland S. Person considers *The Pioneers* America's first environmental novel, which he claims anticipated Thoreau's *Walden* in many ways (Person 2007: 9). Hugh C. MacDougall regards Cooper as a "Prophet of the Environmental Movement" (MacDougall 1999: 1). E. Arthur Robinson posits that *The Pioneers*, broadly speaking, is a "discussion about man's wisdom or lack of it" in the use of America's natural resources (Robinson 1967: 565). However, reducing Cooper's work to a single mythic theme such as nature vs. society robs its power within its cultural framework. Cooperian Allan M. Axelrad once commented that to take

---

\* E-mail: barbara.rumbinas@uj.edu.pl. The author would like to express my sincere thanks to Hab. Dr Zygmunt Mazur who reviewed this paper.

<sup>1</sup> Fenimore was not added to the author's name until 1826.

<sup>2</sup> Cooper, James Fenimore, *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale*, ed. James Franklin Beard, Lance Schachterle and Jr., Kenneth M. Andersen. Cooper Edition. Albany, NY: University of New York Press, 1823/1980. Print. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent page references are to this edition.

<sup>3</sup> Although Cooper uses both names, Natty and Leatherstocking in the novel, roughly corresponding to a white/red-men dichotomy of way of thinking, for the sake of continuity and to illuminate confusion while reading this short piece, I have elected to use only name of Leatherstocking throughout, even where Cooper may have used Natty.

the position that any character of Cooper's speaks with only one voice about any issue is to stand on a very slippery slope (Axelrad 2011). An analysis of several scenes in the novel demonstrates that Leatherstocking's eloquent speeches about the judicious use of America's natural bounty reflect the growing anxiety that some Americans shared about the rapid depletion of her resources.

*The Pioneers* opens with a pastoral and idyllic scene, imbued with nostalgia that is representative of Cooper's vision for the continuing prosperity of America. Judge Temple boasts about what he had accomplished within a brief span of forty years. Interestingly, many of his accomplishments mirror those of James Cooper's father, Judge William Cooper, as he describes them in *A Guide in the Wilderness* (1810). Judge Temple proudly explains the progress that has been made to his daughter, in a region that has changed from a heavily wooded unoccupied place to one that is filled with industrious and prosperous villages carved out of their wilderness beginnings:

... Beautiful and thriving villages are found interspersed along the margins of the small lakes, or situated at those points of the streams which are favourable to manufacturing; and neat and comfortable farms, with every indication of wealth about them, are scattered profusely through the vales, and even to the mountain tops. Roads diverge in every direction, from the even and graceful bottoms of the valleys, to the most rugged and intricate passes of the hills (Cooper 1980: 15).

Yet, while Temple celebrates the forty year march of civilization into the wilderness, Leatherstocking laments the increase in the number of people and the loss of his unrestricted movement through the wilderness. He hints at anxiety over the possibility of new fees being levied:

Ah! times is (sic) dreadfully altered since then. Why, doctor, there was nothing but a foot path, or at the most a track for packhorses, along the Mohawk, from the Jarman Flats up to the forts. Now, they say, they talk of running one of them wide roads with gates on it along the river; first making a road, and then fencing it up! I hunted one season back of the Kaatskills (sic), nigh-hand to the settlements, and the dogs often lost the scent, when they came to them (sic) highways, there was so much travel on them... (Cooper 1980: 155).

Men like Temple have become the beneficiaries of the Revolution, transitioning from "progressive middle class revolutionary to progressive entrepreneur[s]" (Dekker 1987: 41), while the lingering presence of characters like Leatherstocking and Chingachgook serves as a bitter reminder to Post-Revolutionary America of the blood-soaked and contested patent<sup>4</sup> upon which Temple and, by

---

<sup>4</sup> Cooper includes a precise definition of this word, lest the reader miss the point: This term, "Patent" which we have already used, and which we may have further occasion to use, meant the district of country that had been originally granted to old Major Effingham by the "king's letters patent," and which had now become, by purchase under the act of confiscation, the property of Marmaduke Temple. It was a term in common use throughout the new parts of the State; and was usually annexed to the landlord's name, as "Temple's or Effingham's Patent" (Cooper 1980: 97).

extension, the nation assert their right to own and develop the wilderness. Leatherstocking suggests however, that another relationship with Nature is possible, one now filled with nostalgia for the vanishing Native American way of life:

It's my opinion that, had they [the Delaware Indians] been left to themselves, there would be no such doings now about the head-waters of the two rivers, and that these hills mought (sic) have been kept as good hunting-ground by their right owner<sup>5</sup> (Cooper 1980: 156).

Leatherstocking's concern for the loss of hunting grounds was well founded; land was being deforested at an alarming rate as settlers brought civilization westward. Environmental historians point out that, even in the earliest of colonial settlement, deforestation was a serious problem, with many early settlements reporting firewood shortages within the first ten to fifteen years (Willis 2011: 5). Yet, the European agrarian model of settlement made the clearing of the forest necessary in order for the settlers to survive. As more and more settlers arrived seeking land, the allure of felling and burning trees for ready cash was a great enticement for poor settlers to move to the frontier areas. We can better appreciate the incentive for this from the example provided by Alan Taylor:

An acre of hardwood land ordinarily yielded 60 to 100 bushels of ashes; in 1790 a bushel was worth 6 pence at William Cooper's store in Cooperstown. Therefore, a settler could earn at least £1.6.0 and as much as £2.10.0 (\$3.25 to \$6.25) from potash – a considerable subsidy toward the \$7.50 cost to have an acre cleared by hired labor. A settler's son recalled that “ashes were silver and gold to the young or poor farmer” (Taylor 1995: 280).

According to Trench Coxe, between October 1791 and September 1792 New York State was ranked number one in the nation in the production of potash, producing in excess of four thousand seven hundred tons of potash and its derivative, pearl ash (Coxe 1794: 413). By 1800, New York State provided approximately one half of all America's export of potash to Britain (Taylor 1995: 282). Poor settlers recognized that the hardships of frontier life were the necessary price for the chance at a better future. Their financial future rested upon how many acres of forest they could clear and improve. Land speculators, such as Judge Marmaduke Temple, were able to profit from the hard work necessary to transform forest land into fields for agriculture. They provided easy, no cash-down mortgages and often owned the stores that provided the equipment neces-

---

<sup>5</sup> Regrettably, the relationship between property ownership and games laws are beyond the scope of this paper; although they are connected tangentially, exploration of these issues in relationship to environmental conservation would lead us too far afield. For an excellent analysis of these issues, see: Charles Swann, “Guns Mean Democracy: The Pioneers and the Game Laws”, in: Robert Clark, ed., *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical essays*, London 1985; Richard Godden, *Pioneer Properties, or 'What's in a Hut?'*, [in:] Robert Clark, ed., *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, London 1985; Thomas Brook, *The Pioneers, or the Sources of American Legal History: A Critical Tale*, „American Quarterly”, vol. 36, No. 1 (Spring 1984), pp. 86–111.

sary, while they usually sold on good credit terms and provided a market for the potash that the settlers produced. Each step involved in clearing of the virgin woods and in the development of the agricultural land was a revenue stream for the land speculator.

After only forty years of unregulated land development, from which he had gleaned ample reward, Judge Temple voices concern about conserving the natural resources around Templeton, saying that he feels he needs to protect them from “the extravagance of the people themselves” (Cooper 1980: 221). He has joined with “judicious men” to pass new laws because “a vigilant magistrate can prevent much of the evil that has hitherto prevailed, and which is already rendering the game scarce” (Cooper 1980: 160). However, Leatherstocking is clear about who is responsible for the game being scarce, “I never know’d preaching come into a settlement but it made game scarce” (Cooper 1980: 135–136). By the time the settlement is large enough to support a preacher, the loss of habitat has made “the game ... hard to find, indeed, Judge, with your clearings and betterments” (Cooper 1980: 22). Records indicate that Leatherstocking is correct, by “1800 the deer, elk, bear, and lynx” had all vanished from New England (Willis 2011: 5).

Crèvecoeur shared both Cooper’s and Temple’s view of the benefit and necessity of taming the frontier for agricultural use in order to promote a stable American government. As early as 1770, he recorded that the wanton depletion of the forest produced a negative impact on the environment; droughts were intensifying, rivers and streams were drying up, the water table was dropping (Crèvecoeur 1925: 106–107). He also recorded that there were years with no spring; “Our ancient woods kept the earth moist and damp, and the sun could evaporate none of the waters contained under their shades. Who knows how far these effects may extend?” (Crèvecoeur 1925: 107). However according to Willis, many welcomed the environmental changes, suggesting that “the winters seemed shorter and milder; the place seemed more capable of sustaining ‘civilized’ life” (Willis 2011: 6). For some like John James Audubon, the rapid changes appeared unreal. He recorded while traveling through the Ohio Valley that people were:

forcing commerce to take root and to prosper at every spot; when I see the surplus population of Europe coming to assist in the destruction of the forest, and transplanting civilization into its darkest recesses;—when I remember that these extraordinary changes have all taken place in the short period of twenty years, I pause, wonder, and, although I know all to be fact, can scarcely believe its reality (Audubon 1831: 32).

Temple appears somewhat conflicted about the vanishing wilderness because he too can remember when the game was plentiful and the air fresh. He speaks with noticeable fondness about his first ‘vision’ of the settlement area from the summit of Mount Vision; “The water was covered by myriads of the wild-fowl ... I saw a bear, with her cubs... I had met many deer gliding through the woods”

(Cooper 1980: 235). In those days we learn that Temple was not the wealthy man he is today. He was taking great personal financial risk to establish a settlement so far from 'civilization' and endured many personal and financial hardships which "put me back dreadfully" that year (Cooper 1980: 235). However, with the passage of time and the increase in his wealth, Temple has become more utilitarian in his regard for Nature and the resources which abound from it. Temple the entrepreneur has evolved into Judge Temple, a representative of the natural aristocracy who can see the need for conservation, but only in so far as it provides him with future profits. Rans has argued that although Temple is sympathetic and supportive of conservation efforts, he takes no meaningful action to quell the destructive forces represented by his cousin Richard (Dickson) Jones (1991: 78).

In the novel, Jones represents rapacious exploitation of Nature. When he receives word that massive flocks of passenger pigeons are about to arrive at the village, he bursts forth in exuberance to summon Judge Temple's daughter, Elizabeth, to accompany "the gentlemen... each equipt (sic) in the garb of a sportsman" to the hunt (Cooper 1980: 243). However, the term 'hunting' is a misnomer for the slaughter that unfolds before for the readers' eyes. As the Spring sky is darkened by tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands of blue-grey pigeons, Temple and the village men and boys begin firing scatter guns into the flock, "None pretended to collect the game, which lay scattered over the fields in such profusion, as to cover the very ground with fluttering victims" (Cooper 1980: 246).

Sadly, Cooper's portrayal is historically accurate about the manner in which the passenger pigeon became extinct in America. Clive Ponting reports that in 1854, in Wayne County, New York, a local resident wrote, "There would be days and days when the air was alive with them, hardly a break occurring in the flocks for half a day at a time. Flocks stretched as far as a person could see, one tier above another" (Ponting 2011: 144). At first, the European settlers simply enjoyed the tender birds as a delicacy. However, by the 1860s, the wanton wholesale destruction of the passenger pigeon was underway. Leatherstocking speaks the very thoughts the birds would like to say as they looked at him: "with eyes on me, as if they only wanted tongues to say their thoughts" (Cooper 1980: 248). He instructs Temple in the correct manner of harvesting Nature's bounty, saying that "it's much better to kill only such as you want... rather than "to be firing into God's creators (sic) in this wicked manner" (ibidem). Yet, nineteenth century America didn't listen any more than the residents of Templeton. On one single day, July 23, 1860, over two hundred thirty five thousand passenger pigeons were killed and shipped to the eastern markets for food (Ponting 2011: 145). As the birds begin to thin and scatter, Judge Temple finally agrees the "carnage must of necessity end, *for the present...*" (Cooper 1980 250; italics added for emphasis). Temple only suspends the slaughter, delaying it until another day when he and Jones could once again decimate Nature and destroy her finest bounty. In America, as in Templeton, the carnage ended only when the birds

disappeared; billions of passenger pigeons were driven to extinction in only 50 years (Ponting 2011: 145). While Jones proclaimed “Victory!” in what he called a “princely sport,” Leatherstocking silently watched from the margins (Cooper 1980: 250). He spoke to everyone and no one, because the crowd was too busy killing the birds to hear his bitter prediction:

“This comes of settling a country!” he said. “Here have I known the pigeon to fly for forty long years, and, till you made your clearings, there was nobody to skeart (sic) or to hurt them, I loved to see them come into the woods, for they were company to a body, hurting nothing —being, as it was, as harmless as a garter-snake. But now it gives me sore thoughts when I hear the frighty (sic) things whizzing through the air, for I know it’s only a motion to bring out all the brats of the village. Well, the Lord won’t see the waste of his creatures for nothing, and right will be done to the pigeons, as well as others, by and by” (Cooper 1980: 246).

Spring is normally the Earth’s time of regeneration and rebirth, however, in *The Pioneers* it becomes a time of willful destruction. No sooner has the village enjoyed the senseless slaughter of thousands of pigeons, when Richard Jones, who is now the sheriff, announces that the ice has gone out on Lake Glimmerglass and it is time to go fishing, “not nibble, nibble, nibble, as ‘Duke’ does,” but real fishing where you “haul them in by [the] thousands” (Cooper 1980: 252). Judge Temple admits to knowing about past overfishing and reminds Jones that, in other years, enough fish were left to rot as would “feed a dozen famishing families” in Templeton (ibidem). However, Temple’s knowledge of Jones’ prior behavior does not stop him from participating in the evening’s diversion, nor does the apparent violation of the fishery law (Swann 1985: 103–105), which he recently “procured” (Cooper 1980: 251). With the buds on the oak trees just beginning to swell, and the stars twinkling through openings in the clouds, Jones draws out the seine. Once the seine, which is some hundreds of feet long, is closed, the boat drags its abundance to shore. “Pull heartily, boys, . . . [cries] . . . Marmaduke [Temple] *yielding to the excitement of the moment*, and laying his hands to the net, with no trifling addition to the force” (Cooper 1980: 259; italics added for emphasis).

Although Judge Temple is filled with remorse at the sheer size of the haul – a “whole shoal of victims”, which has been thrown into “immense piles”; nonetheless, he is unwilling or unable to stop Jones from making another unnecessary haul (Cooper 1980: 259–260). Trying to assuage his conscience, he urges Leatherstocking and the Mohegan to fill their canoe with some of the “multitudes of victims [which] lie here, that will be lost as food, for the want of mouths to consume them” (265). Leatherstocking firmly declines and proceeds to give Judge Temple another lecture about right living in the environment:

*I eat of no man’s wasty (sic) ways. I strike my spear into the eels or the trout, when I crave the creatur’ (sic); but I wouldn’t be helping to such a sinful kind of fishing for the best rifle that was ever brought out from the old countries. If they had fur, like the beaver, or*

you could tan their hides, like a buck, something might be said in favor of taking them by the thousand with your nets; but as God made them for man's food, and for no other disarnable (sic) reason, *I call it sinful and wasty (sic) to catch more than can be eat*" (sic) (Cooper 1980: 265–266; italics added for emphasis).

Embedded in Leatherstocking's soliloquy in defense of the right usage of nature, meant to admonish Temple for his utilitarian exploitation, is an ironic conditional "If they had fur . . . something might be said in favor of taking them by the thousand . . ." (Cooper 1980: 266). Cooper artfully undercuts Leatherstocking's conservationist preaching by revealing that there are conditions under which this type of behavior could be acceptable. The revelation, probably done without Leatherstocking being fully cognizant of what he has just said, suggests recognition of the market forces which are driving the mass slaughter of fur bearing animals in America.

When Temple explains to his daughter that some of the fish are already becoming extinct, and then responds to Leatherstocking, saying, "Your reasoning is mine", he is transparently attempting to share authority with Leatherstocking to speak for natural conservation and is immediately rebuffed (Cooper 1980: 266). Shaking his head, Leatherstocking tells the Judge,

No, no; *we are not much of one mind, Judge*, or you'd never turn good hunting-grounds into stumpy pastures. And you fish and hunt out of rule; but, to me, the flesh is sweeter where the creatur' (sic) has some chance for its life; for that reason, I always use a single ball, even if it be at a bird or a squirrel. Besides, *it saves lead*; for, when a body knows how to shoot, one piece of lead is enough for all, except hard-lived animals (Cooper 1980: 266; italics added for emphasis).

Again, Cooper acknowledges the concomitant economic and ecological considerations embedded in Leatherstocking's preaching.

Throughout the novel, Leatherstocking gives moral and ethical instruction to Judge Temple for the right way of approaching the natural environment. However, the moral imperative that Leatherstocking tries to bestow upon Temple is lost. Temple values nature for the profit it provides and conserves resources only to ensure future profits for his daughter, who will inherit his estate. Although he speaks of conservation, he revels in "the extravagance[s]" of the settlers who slaughter and catch far more than they could ever use (Cooper 1980: 221). He is unable or unwilling to control the behavior those under his care on the frontier, even those, like his cousin, who are in his employ, all the while blaming the settlers' for their "extravagance[s]". In disgust, Leatherstocking tells Judge Temple, "I don't relish to see these wasty (sic) ways that you are all practysin (sic)" (Cooper 1980: 248).

Yet, the moral high ground that Leatherstocking claims is the "slippery slope" that Axelrad had cautioned against, for Leatherstocking is not without sin in his use, or rather misuse, of the game from the forest. Leatherstocking brags that, in his day, "I have shot thirteen deer without counting the fa'ns [fawns] standing in

the door of my own hut” and that he has “killed two hundred beaver in a season, and that without counting the other game” (Cooper 1980: 22, 134). Ironically, part of his authority to speak for Nature comes from his facility with a rifle and from his association with Native American Indians, such as his long-time friend Chingachgook, upon whom he always calls to attest to the validity of his prior deeds. He has been living in the area longer than anyone, including Judge Temple. He has become a local legend of sorts, who has age and experience enough to be an authority on ‘the old days’ for the newcomers. The members of settlement are always changing as the scene with Judge Temple and Jotham, who had just sold a piece of land that he had recently purchased from Temple, illustrates (Cooper 1980: 158). Few in Templeton have stayed there long enough to offer any perspective on Leatherstocking’s view of Nature, except Major Hartmann. The narrator tells us while “fixing his black eyes, with *a look of peculiar meaning* on the hunter” Hartmann comments in his Dutch accent, “put (sic) you [Leatherstocking] didn’t use to be so prutent (sic) as to look aheth (sic) mit (sic) so much care” (Cooper 1980: 161; italics added for emphasis). Cooper’s inclusion of Hartmann’s comment is meant to remind both Leatherstocking and America that there was a time when it appeared that natural resources would be infinitely abundant. However, Leatherstocking’s changed attitude suggests that “Maybe there wasn’t so much ‘casion (sic)” (Cooper 1980: 161). When Hartmann makes his comment, Leatherstocking appears ashamed that he was just as guilty in the past of wasting nature’s bounty as Judge Temple is now. Leatherstocking uses wisdom drawn from his excesses to educate and to warn future generations of the consequences he knows firsthand, in an attempt to change settlers relationship with the land.

By the end of the novel, the analysis demonstrates that both Leatherstocking and Judge Temple have multilayered motivations for the positions that they advocate. Cooper has successfully dramatized the complex social and economic issues related to environmental conservation and preservation. Cooper’s presentation fails to resolve the conservation controversy, because he was aware that no consensus existed at that time that would allow him to bring the issue to resolution. Instead, Judge Temple returns to legislative matters, presumably resuming a preservationist economic position. He foresees the changes that will come, whether he agrees with them or not. His only concern therefore is to devise the most efficient combination of conservation and development that will lead to his greatest financial gain. Leatherstocking has “gone far towards the setting sun – the foremost in that band of Pioneers, who are opening the way for the march of the nation across the continent” (Cooper 1980: 456). He advocates for low impact growth, but at a time when the vast number of people arriving on the frontier to claim land makes his view archaic and impractical. Dekker claims that Leatherstocking “became the first memorable victim of socio-economic progress in world literature” (Dekker 1987: 88). Thus, Cooper sets Leatherstocking in a role of the avant-garde, who can only survive at the margin of society and therefore is

always moving west as the frontier is pushed back. Yet, Leatherstocking's path is illustrative of the 'law of unintended consequences', for he will be followed by the settlers he seeks to escape and who spread the pattern of the environmental depredation which accompanies them.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

- A Historical Guide to James Fenimore Cooper*, 2007, ed. by Leland S. Person, New York.
- Audubon John James, 1831, *Ornithological Biography, or an account of the habits of the Birds of the United States of America*, Edinburgh.
- Brook Thomas, 1984, *The Pioneers, or the Sources of American Legal History: A Critical Tale*, „American Quarterly”, vol. 36, no. 1 (Spring), pp. 86–111.
- Cooper James Fenimore, 1823/1980, *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna; A Descriptive Tale*, eds. by James Franklin Beard, Lance Schachterle and Jr., Kenneth M. Andersen, Cooper Edition, Albany, NY.
- Coxe Trench, 1794, *A View of the United States of America*, Philadelphia.
- Crèvecoeur St. John De, 1925, *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America: More 'Letters from an American Farmer'*, eds. by Henri L. Bourdin, Ralph H. Gabriel and Stanley T. Williams, New Haven.
- Dekker George, 1987, *The American Historical Romance*, Cambridge.
- Godden Richard, 1985, *Pioneer Properties, or 'What's in a Hut?'*, [in:] *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert Clark, London.
- MacDougall Hugh C., 1999, *James Fenimore Cooper: Pioneer of the Environmental Movement*, James Fenimore Cooper Society Website, <http://external.oneonta.edu/cooper/articles/informal/hugh-environment.html> (22.12.2011).
- Ponting Clive, 2011, *A New Green History of the World*, Vintage Digital, 15 February, Kindle Edition.
- Rans Geoffrey, 1991, *Cooper's Leather-Stocking Novels: A Secular Reading*, Chapel Hill, NC.
- Robinson E. Arthur, 1967, *Conservation in Cooper's The Pioneers*, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/461165> (22.07.2010).
- Swann Charles, 1985, *Guns Mean Democracy: The Pioneers and the Game Laws*, [in:] *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, ed. by Robert Clark, London, pp. 103–105.
- Taylor Alan, 1995, *The Great Change Begins: Settling the Forest of Central New York*, July, James Fenimore Cooper Society, <http://www.oneonta.edu/~cooper/articles/nyhistory/1995nyhistory-taylor.html> (22.09.2010).
- Willis Lloyd, 2011, *Environmental Evasion: The Literary, Critical, and Cultural Politics of "Nature's Nation"*, Albany.

### Other Sources

Axelrad Allan M., private conversation with Barbara J. Rumbinas, Oneonta, 10 July 2011.

Rozważania na temat zaniepokojenia stanem środowiska  
w *Pionierach* Jamesa Fenimore’a Coopera

**STRESZCZENIE**

*Pionierzy* (1823) to dynamiczna, wielogłosowa powieść, traktująca o użytkowaniu ziemi oraz prawach własnościowych poprzez przedstawienie opinii par bohaterów dominujących i podległych. Niniejsza analiza wykazuje, że stanowiska reprezentowane zarówno przez Skórzaną Pończochę (Leatherstocking), jak i Sędziego Marmaduke’a Temple’a mają wielopoziomowe motywacje. Cooper z powodzeniem dramatyzuje złożone kwestie społeczne i gospodarcze związane z ochroną przyrody i konserwacją środowiska naturalnego w XVIII wieku. Analiza rozważa jeden z zarzutów kierowanych pod adresem powieści – fakt, iż Cooper nie zaproponował rozwiązań problemów poruszonych w *Pionierach* – i wykazuje, że autor świadomie nie dał rozwiązania kontrowersji dotyczącej ochrony środowiska, przekonany, iż ówczesnie brak było konsensusu, który pozwoliłby mu na doprowadzenie do rozwiązania tej kwestii. Zamiast dostarczać łatwych rozwiązań tych złożonych i niepokojących kwestii, Cooper pozwala czytelnikowi kontynuować rozważania na długo po skończeniu lektury.

**NOTA AUTORSKA**

Barbara Rumbinas jest doktorantką na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim w Krakowie. Jej zainteresowania naukowe obejmują historię Ameryki i Europy XIX wieku, studia związane z rdzennymi mieszkańcami Ameryki, przedstawienie wydarzeń historycznych w literaturze, literaturę środowiskową oraz pisarstwo historyczne.