Chapter 4

Mixing of Genres and Mixing of Races

In the history of literature, we can find many writers who used different genres in their works. In James Fenimore Cooper’s The Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper utilized to their fullest extent genres including the biography, autobiography, adventure, romance, and saga. He also mixed the races to meet his artistic purposes and to discharge his historical function as a writer. There are some characters in his novels that are racially mixed. Cooper used the biography of his father, William Cooper, and Colonel Munro, who was an army commander. William Cooper was a landlord, judge, and founder of Cooperstown. This Cooperstown is the Temple town of The Leatherstocking Tales. William Cooper was the son of a poor member of the Pennsylvania Quakers, and rose up the social scale by marrying Elizabeth Fenimore, who belonged to a wealthy Quaker family. The writer introduces his father as Judge Temple in The Pioneers, who goes for a trip to his field. He used the character, Munro, which was the real name of the commandant of the British troops at Fort Henry. The Leatherstocking is a saga, in which the protagonist is a young man in the woods, who first appears in The Deerslayer. He is first to the wilderness and warpath. In the Last of the Mohicans, he is matured, and struggles to rescue the Munro sisters. He continues to be the master of the forest in The Pioneers but is near to old age. In The Prairies, he dies in the Indian village after saying „Here”. The history of the nation impresses the change upon Natty, for the first time in the fight with the Indians and then the French. As I have argued in the early part of this
dissertation Cooper’s intertextual art captures the historical development of America in the most intense and artistically effective manner. This achievement is nowhere more evident than in the author’s salient delineation of his characters, particularly in the inter-racial context of an evolving America.

Racial Mixing

Cooper was intensely aware of the presence of different races in America. He used racially mixed characters in his works to show the hybrid culture of the Americans as early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There were some rules of racial identity prevalent in this singular geographical and cultural context. The Rules were general passing, rule of recognition, and the rule of descent. For Natty, it was the general passing. Cooper implemented some of these rules in *The Leatherstocking Tales*. However, the generational rule of recognition was also in force. The rule of recognition was dependent upon parents. The dominance of pedigree could never be underestimated. Under the rule of generation, Natty was legally white. Cooper was aware of these rules and he made the characters accordingly in *The Pioneers*.

Natty’s feature of racial identity was his enormous mouth, gray eyes, reddish hair, and skin that too well to the sun all sure sign of native descent under the eye test of identity. Natty’s height and body structure, likewise, suggested native origin. Natty’s height, about six feet in his moccasins, did not match him as a European, but as a northeast native (Cooper, *The Deerslayer*, 20). Gray eyes, wide mouth, tall and slender
make, and angler build, straight hair sun able skin – these were the widely recognized markers of native identity.

In his works Cooper clearly represented the position of women in the American society. He depicted some female characters very accurately in *The Leatherstocking Tales*. In *The Deerslayer* and in *The Last of the Mohicans*, he presented two women characters to show the racial cultural mixing in American society. There were interracial marriages between different races. These interracial marriages influenced Cooper to write about American racial identity and its hybrid character in his novels. Judith and Hetty were the Hutters. Though there was confusion in identifying the race of the both characters by appearance and behaviour, they were obviously different from the rest.

James Grossman (3), has stated that “the five novels about Natty Bumppo are adventure stories” He suggests further that the “use of the hero of the *Leatherstocking Tales* as a convenient symbol of „pure” adventure and freedom from civilized complication is fully justified in its context” (Grossman James Fenimore Cooper 4). (Fiedler 179) states that Cooper uses the American frontier “to invest his projections of the primitive with the pathos of the lost cause, and to play out his action on the „ideal boundary” between cultures, one „civilized and cultivated,“ the other „wild and lawless.” Further in his discussion of *The Leatherstocking Tales*, Fiedler (1966: 180) says that “out of Cooper’s enormous creation the handful of books still read with pleasure by any number of Americans are entertainments, the most Scott-like of all his romances.” Moreover, “he maintains them in large print and embellished with pictures, remember them, exciting and incredibly boring by turns.” Fiedler (1966: 181).
None of the critics, for reasons related to the above-mentioned emphases, takes more than a superficial look at the Tales as contributing to racial description and to perpetuating a stereotype. However, in this day and age, we must not dismiss the manifestation of ethnocentrism in *The Leatherstocking Tales*. Certainly these novels, written in the nineteenth century, can mould the society of today and enable it to consider the racial counterparts of the fictional characters as an inferior or superior. It would therefore be appropriate to take another look at the first two of Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. *The Pioneers* and *The Last of the Mohicans* can be considered from such a perspective, and we may suggest that Cooper’s literary bent may also be interpreted as perpetuating the separation of the races in the New World. These two novels are most characteristic in showing that the *Leatherstocking Tales* are more than five adventure stories. Each story addresses itself to a critical area of the American experience, and each deals with the treatment as well as the confrontation of two or more races.

“The matter which is discovered in each novel is that a race of people new to the Western hemisphere”s accomplishments to encroach upon and limit the existence and lifestyle of the original inhabitants of the land in the name of God and civilization. Thus, far from being just another adventure story, *The Leatherstocking Tales* are novelistic works that can also be considered as having a specific design or as serving a “white” purpose; and that is to put the red man, the black man, and the white man in their proper social relation with each other. In *The Leatherstocking Tales*, one finds that the novels racially delineate the nonwhite. Each novel carries as its underlying theme the idea that the man of color must be confined to the boundaries set out for him by the white man in the New World. The five works by Cooper also declare it to be an anathema if the three
races should intermarry. Cooper also suggests in his works that the constituent of savagery or incompetence is so deeply and permanently embedded in the red man and in the black man that they cannot be trusted or civilized and must either be imprisoned or exterminated. It is up to the contemporary critic to contest such insinuations, particularly in the context of contemporary counter-discourses surrounding the politics of race, class, and gender.

Perhaps D. H. Lawrence (1971: 33) had the best insight into what Cooper’s works were actually about and was the least afraid to say so. As he declares in his *Studies In Classic American Literature*, “A curious thing about the Spirit of Place is the fact that no place exerts its full influence upon a new-comer until the old inhabitant is dead or absorbed.” This is because Cooper’s fictional episodes do not indicate that the races who came, who were brought, and who were already here could live mutually and harmoniously together except in the happy hunting ground “when the whites shall meet the red-skins in judgment, and justice shall be the law and not power.” One gets the impression that until that time it would be better “to be dead rather than red.”

This idea of racial delineation is aptly suggested in *The Pioneers*. In this work, the positions of the red man and the black man are characterized as adjunct to the position of the white man. The reader is immediately made aware of this distinction and is introduced to a set of stereotypes designed to demarcate the nonwhite. There is no doubt that this demarcation will have an effect on the reader who will gain insight into the nature of Cooper’s portrayals and will quickly understand how he will treat his characters. As Cooper moves from the description of the white community, the
description of the sleigh (the “noble bay horses” with their “buckles of brass, that shone like gold in those transient beams of the sun”), to the description of the driver, the racial stereotype emerges. Agamemnon is

“a Negro of apparently twenty years of age. His face which nature had colored with a glistening black was now mottled with the cold, and his large shining eyes filled with tears; a tribute to its power, that the keen frosts of those regions always extracted from one of his African origin. Still there was a smiling expression of good humor in his happy countenance that was created by the thoughts of home and a Christmas fireside, with its Christmas frolics” [Cooper, The Pioneers, 15]

May not the modern reader depict Agamemnon, this cheerful, “glistening black” servant with “large shining eyes” in the same way as he depicts Amos in Andy that is servile obsequious and comic. Here we get an illustration of how racial representations influence the subtleties of the reader’s response to the text. Cooper suggests that the servant’s thoughts of a fireside are sufficient enough to warm his happy countenance and to make him smile in the bitter cold. On the other hand, Cooper gives the reader quite a different description of Marmaduke Temple and his daughter who, it seems, need more than just the thought of a Christmas fireside to keep them warm. They are buried beneath an avalanche of furs and clothing:

“A greatcoat that was abundantly ornamented by a profusion of furs enveloped the whole of his figure, excepting the head, which was covered with a cap of marten skins lined with morocco, and the sides of which were made to fall, if necessary, and were now drawn close over the ears and fastened beneath his chin
with a black rib and. The top of the cap was surmounting with the tail of the animal whose skin had furnished the rest of the materials, which fell back, not ungracefully, a few inches behind the head. From beneath this mask were to be seen part of a fine manly face, and particularly a pair of expressive, large blue eyes that promised extraordinary intellect, covert humor, and great benevolence. The form of his companion was literally hid beneath the garments she wore. There were furs and silks peeping from under a large camlet cloak with a thick flannel lining that, by its cut and size was evidently intended for a masculine wearer. A huge hood of black silk that was quilted with down concealed the whole of her head, except at a small opening in the front for breath” (Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 14).

This lengthy description of the driver and the riders would suggest a design on the part of the author to make a racial as well as a social distinction. In other words, as a subtle critical interpretation would have it, Marmaduke has the brains and Agamemnon has the reins.

As we gain further insight into the character of Judge Temple, we find that his stature in society, his home, his city, and his daughter, all epitomize all that is good and beautiful in life. Temple is socially and economically above his fellow burghers. He is, so to speak, on the top of the societal totem pole. This level distinguishes him from the other citizens in the town. He is emulated and admired by the villagers. As a judge, his word is law; and because the societal level of Cooper’s characters is determined by wealth, Temple is dramatically placed in contradistinction to Agamemnon. The judge is depicted
as a paragon of virtue, intellect, and probity. But by referring to Agamemnon either as “the black” or “the Negro,” Cooper “emasculates” the black man, as it were, and places him at the bottom of the societal totem. Here, in the person of Richard, Cooper can regard Agamemnon as typical of all Negroes and can philosophize on the happy-go-lucky nature of the Negro race. He says:

Holla! Aggy-Merry Christmas, Aggy I say, do you hear me, you black dog! There’s a dollar for you; and if the gentlemen get up before I come back, do you come out and let me know. I wouldn’t have duke get the start of me for the worth of your head. The black caught the money from the snow, and promising a due degree of watchfulness, he gave the dollar a whirl of twenty feet in the air, and catching it as it fell, in the palm of his hand, he withdrew to the kitchen, to exhibit his present, with a heart as light as his face was happy in his expression. (Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 171)

Later in the book, as Agamemnon crawls out of the doghouse to greet Richard, the reader is made to conceive of this freed black man as being nothing more than a substitute for a dead dog.

The haunting spectrum of the relationship of the black man to the white man as Cooper envisions it shows forth throughout *The Pioneers*. Cooper seems to fix the position of the black man in the society of the New World and make him look subservient even though free in the North to his white counterpart. Take, for example, the turkey shoot in Chapter 16 of the work. This incident may also be understood as a further example of a racial and social limit that Cooper uses to characterize one of the three races
in the novel. In this chapter, he gives a description of Abraham Freeborn as that of a two-tone Negro (black with brown spots, and with brown hands) who, but for want of a tail and horns, is more devil than human. When Natty takes his stand to shoot, Cooper supplies this description of “Broom” (Cooper, *The Pioneers* 23). The following passage is significant in the context of our discussion:

“His skin became mottled with large brown spots that fearfully sullied the luster of his native ebony, while his enormous lips gradually compressed around two rows of ivory that had hitherto been shining in his visage, like pearls set in jet. His nostrils, at all times the most conspicuous features of his face, dilated, until they covered the greater part of the diameter of his countenance; while his brown and bony hands unconsciously grasped the snow crust near him, the excitement of the moment completely overcoming his native dread of cold” (Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 150).

It now becomes evident from this absurd and inconsistent description of Abraham Freeborn that Cooper’s adventure stories are structured around racial stereotypes and caricatures that can instill the prejudices of inferiority and superiority based on skin color in the mind of the reader. Without this structure, without this emotional appeal to the reader’s prejudice, Cooper’s stories would lose their entertainment value and thus become trite. In the case of *The Leatherstocking Tales*, Cooper states his views on race in preppie persona, and advocates and justifies the religious and historical arguments for treating anybody who is nonwhite as an inferior. It is also pertinent that he also does not approve of inter-racial marriage, and has not the slightest intention of encouraging it in
his own works. Oliver Edwards in *The Pioneers* may be used as an example to support this contention. It is assumed at first that Edwards is part Indian and thus part savage. Because of this assumption, Cooper keeps Oliver and Elizabeth separated in the story. It would seem that people of mixed blood cannot be placed on the same socio-economic level as people of pure blood! Thus Elizabeth and Oliver may not marry. But when it eventually turns out that Oliver Edwards is white, and heir to part of the Judge’s estate (the necessary racial and social distinctions that demarcate the white man from the nonwhite in the novel), and merely an honorary member of the Delaware tribe, he is welcomed into the Temple, so to speak, and is allowed to marry Elizabeth. Thus the red-white boundaries in Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* are similar to the black-white boundaries previously discussed. In *The Pioneers*, these boundaries to which the man of color is confined help to determine race relations in the novels under consideration and set the conditions for interaction of men in the New World different from one another.

### 4.1 Inter-Racial Relationships in Eighteenth-Century America

In Paul A. Gilje’s opinion, race [is] starkly the social contradiction in the egalitarian ideas in nineteenth century in America. Apparently, before 1860 though the continuation of slavery in the south and the race riots of the north, this denial of democracy persisted from the war for independence past 1860 and into the years of tragedy that ended. The American Revolution transformational relations in the United States throughout most of the 18th century. All but a handful of blacks were slaves. The
experience of war with its upheavals and the British recruitment of the slaves helped to free many blacks.

One state after another took a position against slavery by the opening of the nineteenth century. Besides, almost every state to the north of Margin land set the legal machinery into motion to end slavery, which was then referred to euphemistically as the “peculiar institution.” The challenge to slavery, however, did not end subtle forms of racial antagonism and unease. White fear, hatred, and dislike for the black community continued and is visible in the contemporary racial tensions in the United States. In fact, the liberalization trend of the 18th century was reversed. Southern states became more committed to slavery, and expanded upon the racist doctrines justifying it. Jurisdictions protect themselves from re-enslavement. African-American also built their own institutions and developed for themselves a separate community identity that became the target of northern white mobs.

4.2 Contextualizing Genre

Connecting the real-life situation or historical events with fictional characters may be called contextualizing the genre. Cooper’s The Pioneers is the first book in The Leatherstocking Tales. This book is sub-titled as The Sources of the Susquehanna. The diversity in the tributary streams is meant to represent the variety of types and nationalities to be found in the single location of the book. Surely they are different, and each is prepared to speak intentionally in the form of speech used in each novel. Each one is a hero in a different way and this is evident in the fictional idiom. The formal hero is Oliver Effingham, who is restored to his proper station in life and wins the heroine. Judge
Temple is the central character around whom all the actions of the novel turn. Natty Bumppo, though not consistently presented in a sympathetic manner, is the one who excites most immediate admiration for his masculine ability and the air of obscurity which surrounds him. But it is Judge Temple whose superiority is most normally stressed, and he who knows the pain of difficult decisions. He knows enough about life itself to imagine a plan and to give confidence to others to live by it. The responsibility for the execution of the law in the settlement is unquestionably his, but his responsibilities extend further as the protector of his people. In one discussion with his daughter, he reminisces upon the former hardships of the settlement and the burden which fell upon him. He tells her:

“I had hundreds, at that dreadful time, daily looking up to me for bread. The sufferings of their families, and the gloomy prospect before hem, had paralyzed the enterprise and efforts of my settlers. Hunger drove them to the woods for food, but despair sent them, at night, enfeebled and wan, to a sleepless pillow. It was not a moment for in action. I purchased intelligently in order to derive maximum benefit from them. When reprimanded for his extravagance, he replies: But this is always the way with you, Marmaduke; first it’s the tree, then it’s the deer, after that it’s the maple sugar, and so on to the end of the chapter. One day you talk of canals through a country where there's a river or a lake every half-mile, just because the water won’t run the way you wish it to go; and the next, you say something about mines of coal, though any man can see more wood than would keep the city of London in fuel for fifty years.” (Cooper, The Pioneers 179-202)
As Cooper knew from his personal understanding as an American and as a writer, it was no easy thing to keep the respect and friendliness of one’s neighbors and inferiors when one wished to follow a self-sufficient policy. However, in consideration of Cooper’s wholehearted approval, the Judge is left over as the moral focus and the cornerstone of the structure of the novel. Standing as he does for the most excellent aspects of civilization, the fundamentals of his superiority are broad-based, though they are therefore legally responsible to be undermined. Despite being described abstractly, as a powerful moral force, there is one person to whom all what Temple represents is distasteful. This person is “Natty Bumppo,” who is called Leather-Stocking in this book. He is the eventual hero of the series, and the actual representative of the best of Cooper’s art.

In *The Pioneers*, however, Natty is devoid of his heroic status; he is a survival driven into the settlement by some inexplicable circumstances. These circumstances remain unexplained till the end. Cooper required some outstanding state of affairs to keep Natty Bumppo in nearness to the settlement: this turns out to be that Bumppo hides old Major Effingham in his cabin. Effingham is the dispossessed former owner of the property, now decrepit and mentally disturbed. Through loyalty to Effingham, therefore, Bumppo is kept close to the settlement, but he appears as a strange figure in this environment. At the beginning of this tale, he stands out as an article of the author’s disgust: his appearance is repellant, he is known as “the Leather-stocking” and pathetic remainder of a way of life which no longer exists nor has any relevance to that community. His truthfulness with a rifle and the mystique surrounding him earn him the hesitant acceptance of the community at large, but when he speaks it is with hostility and
for some time he remains a depressed, objectionable figure different to the kindness and
good nature of Judge Temple. He is drawn into the affairs of the settlement only through
his connection with Oliver Effingham; otherwise, he is content to exist, aloof and recluse,
with his Indian friend on the other side of the lake. His agency in the main plot of the
novel only becomes active one third of the way through the book when Elizabeth Temple
enlists his help in the Christmas Day turkey-shooting match: “she said that the old
Christmas sport of shooting the turkey is yet in use among you” (Cooper, *The
Pioneers*, 144). And it is through the three shooting incidents which take place in the book
that Bumppo becomes attractive. First, when he kills the turkey in the shooting
competition; then, when he shoots one specific pigeon separated from the millions in
their migratory passage over the valley; finally, when he shoots the panther to save the
life of Judge Temple’s daughter. It is because of such feats as these that he achieves his
stature in the novel rather than because of the symbolic role he plays as a victim of
society. Throughout, he is strangely the hunter and marksman, the man who shoots the
panther rather than the man who goes to prison for slitting the throat of a deer out of
season. He is the adventure-story hero displaced from centrality because Cooper’s
concerns were more socially oriented at this stage.

The fact that Cooper entitled the book *The Pioneers* instead of *The Pioneer*, that
is, in the singular form, seems to reflect the bias of the author in that Judge Temple and
Oliver Effingham are the most sympathetic characters, rather than the character most
germane to the frontier situation, the Leatherstocking. Cooper’s interest in the way
civilization impinged upon the wilderness is explicit, as he declares his preoccupation
with the way in which society evolves vertically rather than the way it expands
horizontally. These polarized interests represent the central misunderstanding of the book, and the way in which he attempts to advance the cause of Judge Temple over that of Bumppo. But Bumppo is a character who perennially interests him. In spite of his old age, debilitation, and surliness, he has a vigor which makes the Judge’s best attributes seem sanctimonious and his worst seem like self-induced suffering. The confrontation of the two results from the deer killed out of season and Bumppo’s refusal to allow his shack to be searched. There is a superstructure of secondary interests here: whether or not Natty has found the silver mine; what is the secret of his shack; and wherein his antipathy to Judge Temple lies. But the main clash is only between two different ways of life. Temple represents the sophisticated social intelligence (such as Cooper himself strove to achieve and display) while the Leatherstocking represents the untutored and recalcitrant man of nature. Of course, this is a case of the much-celebrated primitivism we find in D.H. Lawrence and many other writers and philosophers. The result is therefore inevitable, and Bumppo must be punished while the Judge must be lenient to maintain the character of one exercising “wholesome restraints” (Cooper, The Pioneers 293). The courtroom scene was a difficult one for Cooper to portray since the verdict had to be pronounced against Natty to preserve the hypothesis of the novel. But by this time, the prowess and steadfastness of the old hunter have increased his stature. Therefore, Bumppo comes out of the court as a character engaging the sympathy of the reader: “Natty seemed to yield to his destiny, for he sunk his head on his chest, and followed the officer from the court-room in silence” (Cooper 360). Temple becomes the impotent legislator, constricted and manipulated by the system he is meant to interpret. The Judge is not without sympathy for the old man and feels anguish for the punishment which the
hunter must receive. This clarifies one of the interesting parallels of the book in that Judge Temple becomes more of an acceptable character the more like Natty he becomes. Among his genuinely endearing qualities are his consideration for nature and creation in general, albeit in a very utilitarian way. Remember that such utilitarianism was the subject of much anti-Enlightenment critique in both literature and cultural theory. The Judge is in favor of a cautious exploitation of nature, which likens his position to that of the old hunter to whom nature is sacred. Bumppo shoots one pigeon, spears one fish, but he also kills one deer and is therefore persecuted by laws which are intended to safeguard the attitude of which he is the living embodiment: frugality, respect, and utility. Hence the nascent ambivalent feelings towards the Judge on the part of the author, whose sympathy becomes redirected towards the hunter.

Cooper clearly points out the hunter’s purity of heart during the night fishing episode on the lake. The villagers had to work hard to build a fire by which to see the fish and illuminate the scene. When built, their fire was fitful and erratic. As the villagers drag the thousands of fish to the shore they will eventually rot upon, they see the old hunter fishing on the other side of the lake. At first, they see only his torch: Such an object, lighted as it were by magic, under the brow of the mountain, and in that retired and unfrequented place, gave double interest in the beauty and singularity of its appearance. It did not at all resemble the large and unsteady light of their own fire, being much more clear and bright, and retaining its size and shape with perfect uniformity (251). Soon the old hunter becomes visible, intent on catching, more correctly “spearing”, the one fish which will be enough for his needs. Unfortunately, Cooper makes the whole statement too explicit when he has the old man castigate the wanton excess of the villagers, and
rescue one of their number who has fallen in the lake. But this is the aspect of the hunter’s personality which prevails: the competent, self-reliant, reverent force which abhors the wishy-washy ways of the settlers. At this point there begins a weakening of the primary theme of the novel, that which centers around the Temples and the Effinghams, and strengthening of sympathy for the Leatherstocking who, in this novel, appears at first as no more than the associate of the formal and nominal hero. Given Cooper’s explicit interest in the developing social forms within a pioneer community, and the way in which the direction of The Pioneers shifts towards the old hunter, it seems that Cooper did not fulfill his original intention in the book. The Pioneers begins as a creative exposition of moral excellence which is oriented to social practices, and ends as an examination of the frontier hero.

In the subsequent Tales, Cooper developed this figure more fully, creating a situation in which the frontier hero is seen as the mythic prototype of the American consciousness. The next novel in the series The Last of the Mohicans is set in the Adirondacks and the headwaters of the Hudson River. The time is the summer of 1757, during the French and Indian wars rage in America. The story is sustained by a series of encounters between the Iroquois Indians and Natty and Chingachgook then at the height of young manhood. The novel makes little pretence to be other than an adventure story, during the course of which Natty and his Indian friend escort the two daughters of Munro, the commander of the English forces, in their attempt to reach their father. This is probably the most exciting of The Leatherstocking Tales but in terms of the author’s increasing interest in the lateral movement of the frontier it has little to say. It is chiefly noteworthy for the information it supplies about the valor of Natty and Chingachgook
and the nature of Cooper’s feelings towards the Indians. As a novel about the frontier it is vastly less important than the next novel in the series. *The Prairie* takes over the time scheme as Cooper had left it at the end of *The Pioneers*. The temporal scheme is worthy of our attention. At the conclusion of *The Pioneers* Natty had been hounded out of the settlements. The reason for his remaining devotion to old Effingham had been removed at the denouement of the book, but he was not allowed by the author just to move on of his own free will. Elizabeth Temple and Oliver Effingham watch his romantic exit, and Cooper tells us: “The hive has remained stationary, and they who flutter around the venerable straw are wont to claim the empty distinction of antiquity, regardless alike of the frailty of their tenement and of the enjoyments of the numerous and vigorous swarms that are culling the fresher sweets of a virgin world” (Cooper 73).

Thus Cooper explains some of the advantages of American society over European society, in a way which is very similar to that of the old trapper towards the end of the book. The intrusion is no less startling for what it says than for the manner in which it suddenly occurs in the narrative. In the sentence following this passage, Cooper ostensibly dismisses the matter to continue with “such matters as have an immediate relation to the subject of the tale”. Again this is interesting because Cooper immediately returns to a comparison between European and American cultures and then specifically to the clan of Ishmael Bush, for whom some considerable case could be made as being the central protagonist of the novel. In *The Pioneers* Cooper had dealt with the themes of waste and spoliation, and this motif is re-introduced in *The Prairie* with the entrance of Ishmael Bush. When the family of this man prepares a camping ground for the evening, they fell several trees in order to fortify their position against attack, provide fuel for a
fire, and to graze their starving beasts. The scene is interpreted, just as in *The Pioneers*, through the eyes of the Leatherstocking: “As tree after tree came whistling down, he cast his eyes upward, at the vacancies they left in the Heavens, with a melancholy gaze, and finally turned away, muttering to himself with a bitter smile, like one who disdained giving a more audible utterance to his discontent” (Cooper 20).

The above passage closely parallels Bumppo’s criticism of the dissolution of the settlers in the earlier novel, but at this point it seems that a deliberate case is being assembled against Ishmael and his family. To them the trees mean little in themselves, but they are of vast utility. The attitude of the old hunter, now trapper, towards nature has previously allowed its thoughtful exploitation. The above interpretation of the behavior of the squatters initiates the air of gloom of the disaster which attends them always. In this sense they are far from being the settlers of Turner’s description who show “a grim energy and self-reliance”. With these people the grimness turns to gloominess and prevails over all else. These people provide the prototype for many other “squatters” in Cooper’s book. Ishmael thunders out: “Can you tell me stranger, where the law or the reason is to be found, which says that one man shall have a section, or a town, or perhaps a county, to his use and another to have to beg for earth to make his grave in?. This is not nature, and I deny that it is law” (Cooper 67).

In *The Prairie* Cooper does not reply to such impassioned rhetoric by having one like the Chainbearer advance a lucid, simplistic argument. He did such a thing later in the Anti-Rent trilogy, but in this book Cooper undermines their position in a completely different way: he attributes to them the sinfulness of the society from which America has
seceded. He says: “Although the citizen of the United States may claim so just an ancestry, he is far from being exempt from the penalties of his fallen race” (Cooper 73).

In *The Pioneers* society was seen as good and Cooper’s interest lay primarily in working out how it could be improved by sophistication and legislation. In *The Prairie* there is a tremendous shift of interests: emphasizing the destructiveness of society, the author sees it as merely an extension of the corruption of Europe. The perspective has changed from that of Judge Temple to that of the Leatherstocking. The standard of cautious exploitation of nature, whereby Temple becomes like the Leatherstocking and admirable towards the end of *The Pioneers*, is no longer sufficient: now nature is sacred and it is sacrilegious to destroy it. The settlements, previously potentially good if carefully supervised, now become definitively evil as Temple’s utilitarian attitude is subordinated to the reverential attitude of the Leatherstocking. All settlers become identified collectively as evil: they bring hatred, greed, and envy with them, having no respect for the change they must undergo to make the basic transition from European standards to American ones. The prop which Cooper thought could save them, paternal care together. Intelligent legislation is especially insufficient in the frontier situation. The sinfulness of the people there is merely a shadow of the sinfulness of the society which will flourish in their wake. For this reason these people are named as the offspring and not the parent of a system”. At some length Cooper goes on to enforce the connection between the settlers and the society of which they are harbingers:

The gradations of society, from that state which is called refined to that which approaches as near barbarity as connation with an intelligent people will readily
allow are to be traced from the bosom of the states, where wealth, luxury and the arts are beginning to seat themselves, to those distant, and ever receding borders which mark the skirts, and announce the approach, of the nation, as moving mists precede the signs of day”. (Cooper, *The Prairie*. 73)

Given this light in which the settlers are viewed, it is difficult to reconcile the point made against them within the old Dispensation. Their names are all those of characters from the Old Testament: they are called Ishmael, Esther, Abiram, Asa and Abner. When Ishmael first appears, Cooper describes his person in detail: There was, however, a singular and wild display of prodigal and ill-judged ornaments, blended with his motley attire. In place of the usual deer-skin belt, he wore around his body a tarnished silken sash of the most gaudy colours; the buck-horn shaft of his knife was profusely decorated with plates of silver; the martin's fur of his cap was of a fineness and shadowing that a queen might covet; the buttons of his rude and soiled blanket-coat were of the glittering coinage of Mexico; the stock of his rifle was of beautiful mahogany, revived and banded with the same precious metal, and the trinkets of no less than three worthless watches dangled from different parts of his body (12) This is indeed an unlikely person to encounter on the American prairies. The most striking contrast would be seen in this hybrid and the aesthetic purity of form of the Pawnee chief Hard-Heart. A more detailed comparison will be made later in the dissertation. At this stage the most interesting fact arising from the amazing description is that it seems to come right out of Cooper’s Gothic imagination and seems to be the incarnation of a Caliban like pagan spirit. Consistent with their position among the damned, the lives of the Bush family are characterized by misery, hardship, and disaster. They can do nothing but pursue their
worthless, wasted lives in the best manner they are able. Apart from dwelling in an atmosphere of lugubrious uncertainty, their physical beings are unpleasant they lack any spark of physical emotional or intellectual vitality. When Ishmael climbs to the top of a small rise to attempt to find a sheltered spot for the evening, he is thwarted even in this small matter. Cooper tells the reader: “It would seem that his search was fruitless; for after a few moments of indolent and listless examination he suffered his huge frame, to descend the gentle declivity, in the same sluggish manner than an over-fatted beast would have yielded to the downward pressure” (Cooper, *The Prairie*, 1).

Not surprisingly, what I described above is the norm of his personality above which he cannot hope to rise. If Ishmael and his clan do represent, in one sense, a geographical and moral projection of the evil of the settlements, they have one feature which partially mitigates the otherwise hopelessly black case against them. Just as Judge Temple in *The Pioneers* achieved his most sympathetic status the more like the Leatherstocking he showed himself to be, so the settlers of *The Prairie* can achieve some merit. Like the Bush family, Natty personifies a spirit which is antipathic and antithetical to the destruction they wreak, to the evil they represent, and to the social laws which they attempt to impose upon a natural order which is outside their area of jurisdiction. In this respect he has an anarchic quality similar in appearance to that of the Bush family though founded upon a completely different basis. However, the apparent similarity seems a sufficient reason to allow Ishmael his one lyrical outburst of the novel. This amounts to quite a concession on the part of Cooper, to whom the rights of property, the subject of Ishmael’s speech, were sacrosanct.
The argument itself is not allowed to sound convincing but it is the one moment at which Ishmael is allowed to escape from the dullness by which he is otherwise consistently circumscribed. He speaks of the rights of property and the ways in which boundaries are made: “Why do they the surveyors not cover their shining sheep-skins with big words, giving to the landholder, or perhaps he should be called, air-holder, so many rods of heaven, with the use of such a star for a boundary mark, and such a cloud to turn a mill” (Cooper, *The Pioneers*, 88).

This is the apex of the merit of Ishmael who most usually is referred to in such terms as his dull smile, “like a gleam of sunshine flitting across a naked ragged ruin” (90). Cooper mentions his “repulsive spouse” (passim) and voice which is a stentorian blast in the ears of his family. His role among his family is that of the complete patriarchal authoritarian. He suffers no contradiction, and has a starkness we have come to expect in any events in which the family is concerned: “The sun was near dripping into the plains beyond, and its last rags laughed the naked branches of the willow. Ishmael saw the ragged outline of the whole drawn against the glowing heavens, and he even traced the still upright form of the being he had left to his misery” (Cooper, *The Prairie*, 413). Having experienced so much misfortune and having demonstrated the extent of their evil, they are then consigned back to the settlements to fritter away their meaningless lives: “On the following morning the teams and herds of the squatter were seen pushing their course towards the settlements. As they approached the confines of society, the train was blended among the thousand others” (Cooper, *The Prairie*, 416).
Since he has demonstrated fully how the tarnish of their sinfulness excluded them from the frontier, Cooper has no more use for the Bush family, and their fate is sealed as they are relegated to anonymity. Interestingly, this indirectly implies a strongly pejorative comment upon the settlements themselves. Though they are in themselves a very strong force in the book and an autonomous creation, Ishmael and his family also serves as a means of illuminating the virtues of various other characters. In particular, these other characters are the Leatherstocking and the Pawnee chief Hard-Heart. “The law -'tis bad to have it, but, I sometimes think, it is worse, where it is never to be found. Yes -yes, the law is needed when such as have not the gifts of strength and wisdom are to be taken care of” (Cooper, The Prairie 29). Though he is still convinced of his own “strength and wisdom”, he has need for such protection even in the last days of his life. Even as an old man he has not come to be able to forgive the settlers for the damage they do and the destruction they embody: Out on the prairies they will have nothing to destroy, a fact from which he can derive bitter satisfaction:

“Look around you, men; what will the Yankee Choppers say, when they have cut their path from the eastern to the western waters, and find that a hand, which can lay the „earth bare at a blow, has been and swept the country, in a very mockery of their wickedness. They will turn on their tracks like a fox that doubles, and then the rank smell of their own footsteps will show them the madness of their waste”(Cooper, The Prairie, 84)

The reason why the Leatherstocking can be so emphatic in his denunciation is that he is wise. This is the point which the Indians make over and over again – that he is wise,
he has snow on his hair, and that he has seen ever. They believe that he sees the thing there is to be seen, and that therefore his opinions are bound to be worthwhile. Natty himself is aware of this point, and Cooper allows him to make the point. One of the devices employed by the author to demonstrate Natty’s half-intuitive, half-pragmatic wisdom is in the creation of the naturalist Dr. Obed Bat. During the course of the novel Bat prattles on, humiliates himself, and demonstrates the uselessness of his pedantic knowledge and search after definitive classification. He often prepares to engage the Leatherstocking in academic argument, but the old hunter, as can be expected, disregards him. On occasion, the latter is sufficiently exasperated to announce his certitude in his own convictions: “Here have I been a dweller on the earth for fourscore and six changes of the seasons, and all that time have I looked 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 pinched by the frosts” (20) From the reader’s observation of the old man he is forced to concur.

Among the old man’s most appealing characteristics is his warmth towards the Indians and the stately, ritualistic way in which he is able to deal with them. This is very much in accordance with the ambivalent feelings Cooper had toward the Indians. This can be seen from his effect upon Hard-Heart, one of Cooper’s most intentionally admirable Indians: “The youthful warrior listened to the words, which came from the lips of the other with a force and simplicity that established their truth, and bowed his head on his naked bosom, in testimony of the respect with which he met the proffer” (357). In terms of a confirmation of Cooper’s theme of natural excellence, the character of the old hunter in The Prairie demonstrates a remarkable advance from The Pioneers, both in the
excellence attained and in the liveliness of the conception and the vigor with which it is
drawn. Bumppo is the symbol of the consciousness which can show a concern towards
nature and empathy with all of nature’s creations. Though he feels an emotional link with
the aboriginal Indians, he is wise and generous enough to preserve an objectivity to
assess all men on their individual merit. As far as Cooper’s mythopoeic intentions in The
Prairie are concerned, one should certainly judge them as deliberate.

Let us now turn to the mythic function of Cooper’s characters. The mythic
function of the central character of the series is ambivalent: no precise idea is
immediately apparent and some critical interpretations are even more ambivalent than
Cooper’s original intentions. This would seem to be the case with Richard Chase, who
seems reticent to say whether or not Cooper attempts to solve the dilemma he perceives
in the settlement of America. It is difficult to agree that the summation of Cooper’s
achievement is pastoral nostalgia as Chase seems to see it. Speaking of Cooper’s own
ideal social order, he states the case quite succinctly when he calls it “that shared and
harmonious social order in which the hereditary aristocracy dwells in its country
mansions while on the borders of its lands Natty Bumppo talks to the forests” But Cooper
does not deal in ideal situations such as this and it is important to remember that Judge
Temple, apogee of agrarian gentility, expels Bumppo from the borders of his lands. In
The Prairie there is a very definite association between Natty and the Pawnee Indians;
they are closely connected morally and ethically and then brought into physical
juxtaposition to emphasize their mutual congeniality. What seems to be happening
symbolically is that Natty becomes united with the benevolent spirit of the continent,
represented by the antiquity and excellence of the Indians, while still attaining his white characteristics.

What Frederick Jackson Turner speaks seems to have a meaning for Cooper which requires him to dig inside right to the kernel of the situation. The efficacy of Judge Temple is founded upon European forms and manners but Cooper comes to realize in *The Prairie* that the imposition of these forms upon America produced a whole new situation. To do so required a unique kind of excellence which could perform the function he was so concerned with: that of standing as a spectacular model of goodness, knowledge, and practical ability for those to whom becoming American meant much more than geographical relocation. Indeed these values were to have a profound bearing on the historical evolution of America. “Cooper was less concerned with ideal situations than with ideal people within actual situations scattered by the wayside” (12). But soon he makes a much more specific comment on the nature of the man himself. Natty is in a word a being who finds the impress of the Deity in all the works of nature, without any of the blots produced by the expedients, and passion, and mistakes of man (13). In this, he is a pantheist by orientation. Clearly, Cooper has left the social context in which he began writing the series. Part of his mythic plan was to offer a convincing picture of human excellence in the state which is most conducive to the attainment of that excellence. On his own admission the author was trying to present the portrait of the most worthwhile virtues he knew, “without offering to the spectator a monster of goodness” (13). Significant also is the microcosm of the world which Leatherstocking inhabits. Being removed from society, from the occasions of the sin of the settlements, he pursues an almost solitary existence in the forest and on the prairie. But his existence is not
completely solitary, for his lack of affection for social man does not make him thoroughly misanthropic: in each of the five tales, as with the hero in several others of Cooper’s novels, he has one friend with whom he shares the entirety of his predicament. In each it is Chingachgook, the Mohican chieftain, except in The Prairie, wherein, the Mohican being dead, his symbolic role is taken over by the young Pawnee chief Hard-Heart.

The fact that both these Indians are chiefs and are of noble lineage is of considerable importance given the fact of Cooper’s bias in favor of long-established aristocracy. It is also important when we realize that it was part of Cooper’s design to illustrate the apogee of red nature as well as white, especially when we learn from Cooper that his hero had a great deal to learn from his Indian friends to supplement the Christian morality he had gained since birth: He is too proud of his origin to sink into the condition of the wild Indian and too much a man of the woods not to imbibe as much as was at all desirable, from his friends and companions (12). Natty was, in short, “placed in the best associations of that which is deemed savage” (12), and for Cooper these “best associations” were of considerable value. In his reply to those of his critics who had objected to the high status of the Indians of his tales, in the Preface Cooper explicitly endorses the sincerity and reliability of the Moravian historian Heckewelder, from whom most of his material was obtained. This man, a Moravian missionary, proved to be much more of a folklorist than a historian, but this fact is immaterial to Cooper whose conception of the red man had much more than an historical role to play in his novels. As R. W. B. Lewis says with reference to Cooper, “American fiction is the story begotten by the noble but to assume the perspective of the Indians completely; he tried to see life as
The Mohican Indians were a branch of the Delaware nation which had seceded from the five other principal tribes of the area who were unified in one body. Commonly, the Delawares were held to be inferior to the Iroquois. In the Preface to the first edition of *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper gives the story, acknowledging his reliance upon a primary source: There is a well-authenticated and disgraceful history of the means by which the Dutch on one side and the Mengwe on the other, succeeded in persuading the Lenape to lay aside their arms, trusting their defense entirely to the latter, and becoming, in short, in the figurative language of the natives, “women.” Like the luster of the dying lamp, their glory shone the brightest as they were about to become extinct. The closeness between Cooper’s legend and Heckewelder’s History is remarkable. According to the latter, the Iroquois [Mengwe] plotted the downfall of the Lenape [Delawares] from motives of jealousy, and frustration at not being able to conquer them in battle.

This plan was very deeply laid, and was calculated to deprive the Lenape and their allies, not only of their own power but of their military fame, which has exalted them above all the other Indian nations. They were to be persuaded to abstain from the use of arms, and to assume the station based upon the broad outlines of Milton’s conception of Satan: he is physically magnificent, eloquent and heroic. While other members of this tribe are referred to as “the less refined monsters of the band” (117) he is shown “gliding among his countrymen, and speaking with his fatal and artful eloquence” (188), urging them on to further evil and treachery, stimulating them with his “fatal and appalling whoop” (189). Towards the climax other book, Magua is pursued by the Leatherstocking and his allies into a cave, and the diabolism of the renegade chief and his tribe becomes even more explicit: The place, seen by its dim and uncertain light, appeared like the shades of
the infernal regions, across which the unhappy ghosts and savage demons were flitting in multitudes (36).

Just like Magua, the Sioux chief Mahtoree in *The Prairie* is frequently referred to in diabolic terms then he steals into the camp of Ishmael Bush. Cooper likens him to “the master of evil” (7). Just as with the “good” Indians, their merit is assessed in terms of their extreme characteristics. All of Cooper’s Indians, whether good or bad, are a concatenation of fact, fiction, and folklore. But as an artistic creation they are inked by a specific code of behavior by which they are circumscribed and idealized. Most noticeably, they are silent, never prone to garrulous outbursts. Their silence is indicative of the impassive aspect of their character.

It certainly seems to have been the rich native culture, the mythic potential of their heritage, the natural beauty of form and speech, and the power and nobility of their sentiments which endeared the Indians to Cooper. It is interesting that his portrait of Wah-ta-Wah comes closer to a convincing presentation of a woman than any other of his wilting, blushing heroines. Just as he was attracted to the power of evil in Magua he has also attracted to the magnificence of the “good Indians,” Chingachgook, Uncas, and later, Hard-Heart. Though, as Walker points out, there is no real tribal differentiation between his Indians at all (other than into good and bad tribes, a simple case of binarism), and all must be consistent with the code of honor for which Cooper makes them stand. Oddly enough, it is in the person of Uncas that the Indian code of behavior finds its best expression in Uncas, the most magnificent warrior, but one who is unable to live up completely to the pattern determined for him by his color. Apart from his “tragic flaw, his
attraction for Cora, the daughter of Munro, he is the incarnation of the best possible
practice of Indian virtues. If his ethics allow him to take scalps and revel in bloodshed
they also require him to conduct himself in a way which must be objectively
acknowledged as admirable. His behaviour while he is the captive of the Mingoes, his
prodigious physical attributes, his ability to remain impassive in the face of physical and
verbal provocation, his total disregard for pain and suffering, demonstrate the fullness of
the code that required the maintaining of one’s personal dignity at all costs. The
description of Uncas being tortured is much more majestic and convincing than the
equivalent one involving the Leatherstocking. The latter acts as though he were oblivious
to everything the former unlike an Indian under torture, resolutely determined to preserve
his self-esteem and the admiration of his persecutors. In this situation, Cooper ascribes a
faintly God-like quality to Uncas as he ignores Cora’s questioning eye: “The Mohican
chief maintained his firm and haughty attitude and his eye, so far from deigning to meet
her inquisitive look, dwelt steadily on the distance, as though it penetrated the obstacles
which impeded the view, and looked deep into futurity” (260).

Such were the characteristics which Cooper admired and which the
Leatherstocking learned from his association with these noble people, thereby becoming
a considerably more admirable person in the scale of values as Cooper erects them. The
theme of the white man learning from the Indian is an important one, since the author is
often at pains to point out that the uncompromising honour of the Indian constitutes a
formidable, positive moral force. It is this moral force which fosters the pieties of the
Leatherstocking in the wilderness. More importantly, it could prove efficacious to the
tenor of white nature in general, if the white man could open up his heart to learn from
them. When the party of Natty and his associates are received into the Pawnee village, Paul Hover, the bee hunter, a character quite sympathetically regarded by the author, reveals basic inadequacies in white nature. His behaviour is scornfully described as prying with but little reserve into their domestic economy, commenting sometimes jocularly, sometimes gravely, and always freely, on their different expedients, or endeavouring to make the wondering housewives comprehend his quaint explanations of what he conceived to be the better customs of the whites (418).

Cooper rather sententiously points out the superiority of the behavior of the Indians: “This inquiring and troublesome spirit found no imitators among the Indians. The delicacy and reserve of Hard-Heart were communicated to his people” (260). Understandably, the white man lacks the primitive simplicity and intuitive sense of propriety of the „good” Indian and even the devotion to a specific ideal of the „bad.” The white man is of the “old order” as this is delineated in The Prairie, and the red in spite of his history carries along with him a spirit of freshness and purity which is preserved by his way of life and his strict code of behavior. In The Last of the Mohicans, Uncas dies because he desires Cora, because he wishes to introduce a representative of the old corrupt system into that tribe which demonstrates the consummate excellence of Indian freshness and purity. This is the sense in which Cooper’s fear of miscegenation is strongest, that the Indian should be tempted to be false to his code. The codes of the Indians ranks second in importance only to the natural pieties of the Leatherstocking. At different times Cooper makes his statement of this code poignant, terrifying, or even faintly ridiculous. In support of the last observation, there are many examples such as the occasion in The Last of the Mohicans when Natty vilifies the duplicity and arid treachery
of Magua who has not the honor to acknowledge being beaten. Thus Cooper is careful enough not to essentialize racial virtues and vices. Natty says: “An honest Delaware now, being fairly vanquished, would have lain still, and been knocked in the head, but these bravish Maquas cling to life like so many cats of “other mountain” (124). But the reason that this seems amusing may perhaps be that the reader too lacks genuine sympathy with the code which Cooper extols so highly. The rupture is both personal, cultural, and historical. A much more powerful, if horrible, exposition of similar Indian adherence to their beliefs may be found in the description of the old Sioux chief Bohrecheena.

In many other regards Cooper was wise to conclude the series with the “birth and young manhood of his hero” since it is in The Deerslayer that we find the strongest statement of the other elements of the myth which Cooper had discussed previously. Apart from the expression of Natty’s timeless innocence and practical virtue, the theme of the perniciousness of European society through its devotion to worn-out and corrupt forms is re-introduced from The Prairie, where it finds its most vehement expression. In The Deerslayer, the symbol of the corruption of Europe and its unsuitability to the American situation is the old wooden trunk of the trapper Hutter. His earlier career as a pirate is suggested throughout, and the contents of the chest confirm this. The scene in which Natty, Chingachgook, and Judith Hutter examine the contents of the chest in an attempt to find something with which they can bribe the savages to release Judith’s captive father is one which breathes the suspense and wide-eyed innocence of the hero in anticipation of the mysteries it may contain. This attitude changes to one of admiration for the richness of the finery which the trunk holds, and this rapidly becomes a contempt for the prodigality it represents. When Judith puts on the ornate brocade dress they have
found, Deerlsayer gently reprimands her for the approval which putting on the dress implies. Counterbalanced against the evil of the old world there is the theme of the attractiveness, majesty, and vigour of the new expounded in the magnificent descriptions of the forest and Lake Glimmerglass, and the tenderness and beauty of the love between Chingachgook and Wah-ta-Wah, his sweetheart. In *The Deerslayer*, Cooper’s approval of the valor, majestic bearing, and faultless conduct of the “good” Indians is given a new lyricism and poetry especially in their speech, but also in the panegyric descriptions which he often gives of their actions, such as the one in which he describes Chingachgook’s sweetheart:

One unpracticed in the expedients and opinions of savage life would not have suspected the readiness of invention, the wariness of action, the high resolution, the noble impulses, the deep self devotion, and the feminine disregard of self, where the affections were concerned, that lay beneath the demure looks, the mild eyes, and the sunny smiles of this young Indian beauty. (179)

Such are the ideal virtues of the “good” Indians as expounded in *The Deerslayer*. In addition, the connection between the French and the Iroquois goes some way towards explaining the evil of the “bad” that are corrupted through their affiliation with the Old World French. Previously the bad Indians, especially the Sioux in *The Prairie*, were congenitally evil, and Cooper felt required to give no explanation other than that here Cooper sees him as a fair example of what absence from bad example the want of temptation to go wrong, and native good feeling can render youth (40).
But Cooper seems to be deliberately understating the case since he omits from the description the positive virtues which he attributes to his hero throughout. To him, the “native good feeling” is not merely a general amicability but something much more positive; the author expounds this with occasional annoying repetitiousness throughout the book. References to the fact that Natty Bumppo is “a man without a cross” who spent his childhood among Moravian missionaries pervade the Tales but they become much denser and much more explicit in *The Deerslayer*, the only book in the series in which the details of his childhood and early education are sketched in. Very often, it is Natty himself who provides these details, but a frequent device on the part of the author is to have other characters, often those degenerate types whose vision is clouded by self-delusion and malice, state the case. They thereby provide a comment on the hero which the narrative proves to be calumnious, and at the same time illustrate their own depravity. When Hurry Harry, the woodsman who is noble in appearance but base in mind and morality, observes, “You’re a boy, Deerslayer misled ailed misconceived by Delaware arts and missionary ignorance” (51) the comment reveals as much about the speaker as about the Deerslayer.

All the characters of *The Leatherstocking Tales* represent types rather than individual people. This may recall the humour-characters of Ben Jonson. At worst such characterizations are stilted, wooden, and uninteresting; at best, their personality is subsumed by an ideal which lends to the character an interest and value in proportion to the energy and attractiveness of the ideal itself. Such is the case with the Deerslayer in his symbolic capacity as the apogee of Christian nature in the American wilderness. He often makes the forthright statement, “I am a Christian born (284),” and just as often succinctly
states Cooper’s view of the nature of his position as the forerunner of civilization: “I am white in blood, heart, nature and gifts, though a little redskin in feelings and habits” (283). Since he has kept intact those things which his color and his religion provided – his "gifts" as he calls them – he is enabled to enter into a unique closeness with created nature. Towards the very beginning of the book Cooper pinpoints the intimacy of the union between. As for the youth and the wilderness, “[i]t was the air of deep repose[s] the solitudes that spoke of scenes and forests untouched by the hands of man the reign of nature in a word, that gave so much pure delight to one of his habits and turn of mind” (38).

Therefore, it is that the white man, in spite of the fact that part of his function in America is to destroy, can achieve a perfect unity of spirit with the soul of the continent itself. In the progression from *The Pioneers* to *The Deerslayer* we watch the way in which one soul, that of Judge Temple, in spite of its good intentions, is required to be broken down to have all its energies and sympathies re-ordered so that it might become not only congenial to but part of the continent itself. Though Cooper professed to be more interested in the upward social evolution of society, than in the lateral advance of civilization across the continent, the lesson of *The Leatherstocking Tales* is that he had to carefully examine how precisely he could follow his interest in the structure which grew up from them. The myth of *The Leatherstocking Tales* is one which includes Judge Temple, the first exponent of social excellence whom Cooper proposed as the cornerstone of an established society of which the author then established the foundation. The Leatherstocking precedes Temple in historical time, legitimizes Temple’s society through his virtue, and leaves a legacy of wisdom and good example.
When the young hunter is presented in *The Deerslayer*, he is young in years but is old in wisdom. As Lawrence puts it, “the simplicity of age rather than of the love of which he writes is certainly present throughout the Tales but the ultimate object of Leather stockings’s love is no one person and no one man.” Admittedly the relationship between the hunter and the Indian is as profound as Lawrence states, but the Leatherstocking’s love had a specific object except for nature and the best of nature’s creations. He can love Chingachgook so deeply only because he loves nature first. In *The Deerslayer* when Judith Hutter asks him outright whom he loves, attempting to elicit the name of one whom he could prefer to her, he tells her lyrically: “She is in the forest Judith hanging from the boughs of the trees, in a soft rain in the dew on the open grass the clouds that float about in the blue heavens the birds that sing in the woods the sweet springs where is lake my thirst and in all the other glorious gifts that come from God’s Providence” (129).

It is because of the way in which he can totally submerge himself in nature, and indirectly in the personality of the Creator of the nature that he can form relationships with others of mankind, particularly those, like Chingachgook, with whom he shares a common perception of the evidence of the creator in the beauty and majesty of nature. Just as the Leatherstocking can learn from his Indian friends so he can learn from nature. He tells Judith that there is no need of churches as places of worship while the wilderness is available, for it is inconceivable to him that anyone should live long in the woods and not be aware of the hand of God (409). “So nature can speak personally to him, as in the episode when Hurry Harry attempts to shoot a buck for no reason and the echo of his rifle rolls round the hills sounding Deerslayer like the voice of nature complaining against the
intended wastefulness” (47). As I pointed out earlier, this is a pantheistic world view, which is further idealized by Cooper in the American context.

Apart from the close identification between the hero and the spirit of nature, the apprehension of his mythic status emerges from the way in which he conducts himself at all times and in all situations throughout the Tales. Observing this, David Brian Davis perceives in *The Deerslayer* a symbol of Christian virtue and manhood analogous to the chivalric knight whose code was also to honor God, to fight, and to display his Christian virtue at all times. This similarity provides an illuminating basis of comparison though it may not be as comprehensive as Mr. Davis suggests. He writes of Cooper being required to give “religious sanction to his American hero” in order to justify his hero as “a true Christian symbol” This seems to be overstating the case since the natural pieties of the character tends to de-emphasize his explicit Christianity, and the Deerslayer might more properly be called a hero whose origins and outlook are Christian, rather than in the manner of an overtly Davis designate him the “Democratic Knight of the Wilderness”, with ramifications of the explicit Genesis-like situation. More probably, the function of Judith Hutter in the tale is significant on a different level. As Cooper states in the Preface to *The Deerslayer*, “The intention has been to put the sisters in strong contrast: one admirable in person, clever, filled with the pride of beauty, erring and fallen; the other, barely provided with sufficient capacity to know well from evil” (Cooper, *The Deerslayer* Preface). The author sees them very strongly as types: the beautiful, sensual Judith, who has the vigour and sensitivity to achieve harmony with the rhythms of nature were she not already fallen; and the weak-minded Hetty unable to distinguish between the ideal and the actual, knowing only what is right, and unable to feel compassion or censure for
what is wrong. Both sisters are therefore unequipped to identify themselves with nature in the wilderness. Cooper demonstrates this forcibly: Hetty is shot and killed by a “stray” bullet, and Judith goes off to England, the seat of evil itself in Cooper’s frontier paradigm, to be mistress to her previous seducer. What is further interesting about the women in *The Deerslayer* is that they do not exist within a formal plot which is engineered to bring about their eventual marriage. As Henry Nash Smith says, in “[a] novel, according to exposition of this situation, the basic premise is his conviction that society in America can become organically sound, but must purify itself” (Chase, *The American Novel and its Tradition*, 44-47) The processes of purification which he equates with shedding the forms of the Old World takes nothing at face value until proven to be beneficial and acceptable in the American situation. *The Pioneers*, whose events take place within a fledgling society, describes the potential of that society for sound social advancement. This advancement is counterpointed by a retreat into the mythic past where exists a powerful symbol which both justifies that society and stands as an example of “understanding virtue”, strength, and proficiency to be emulated by it.