CHAPTER 2

COOPER'S NOTIONS ON CIVILIZATION - A CONFLICT
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One of the first novelists to set a distinct American trend in the nineteenth century was James Fenimore Cooper. Cooper's paternal grandparents James and Esther Cooper were Quakers who emigrated from England to Trenton, New Jersey and later moved to the Philadelphia area in Pennsylvania. His mother too hailed from a New Jersey Quaker family. Cooper's father acquired large tracts of land in upper New York and founded a pioneer settlement named Cooperstown. Cooper believed not in the egalitarian ideas of Jacksonian democracy but in the more aristocratic Jeffersonian brand of democracy. He preferred to be a land owner, a gentleman farmer rather than a working farmer. He was one of the pioneers in the field of American literature and considered it his sacred duty to express his national fervour while pointing out his personal distastes in an attempt to create national consciousness. He hoped to wean the American citizen from the European Yoke and attempt a review of the social scene so that democracy could be ushered in the true sense.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the Richardsonian tradition was heroine-oriented and the Romantic tradition was hero-oriented. But as both these were European traditions, Cooper chose the American Gothic, set by Charles Brockden Brown, which was a combination of the two. The
American Gothic had a male protagonist at the centre of a novel with two heroines, the contrasting 'fair' and 'dark' to project the conflicts in the protagonist's mind. The protagonist was in a sense the archetype of the American male and the ambivalence towards women helped to project certain pairs of contradictions that Cooper discensed, viz., myth and reality, aristocracy and democratic equality, European past and American present, White American and Red American, Christianity and Paganism, and finally the WASP or White Anglo-Saxon Protestant and any other race such as Hispanic, Negro or Amerindian.

In his five Leatherstocking Tales the protagonist is Natty Bumppo for Nathaniel Bumppo, also called Hawkeye, Deerslayer or Pathfinder. These are the fair and dark maidens in each of these novels which project Cooper's conflicts which he shared with other Americans of his time. The ambivalence towards the women characters arises because the common anti-bourgeois hero Natty Bumppo befriends the 'good' American Indian Chingachgook and yet prefers a WASP woman to an American Indian woman. Natty is reserved when it comes to his ideal of womanhood. For instance in The Deerslayer, Natty Bumppo, the closest to being Cooper's spokesman, considers Hist as an ideal of womanhood among the American Indians but when it comes to his personal life, he can never think of marrying any American Indian woman, however beautiful or noble she may be. Natty equally cannot
entertain marriage with a white woman. He almost proposes to Mabel Dunham but cannot. He is the mythic hero who must avoid all entrapment and domestication in order to carry on his journey into the western wilderness. He is a free spirit who can be bound by no woman. Thus, such conflicts between what is professed and what is practised, or between idealism and realism gives rise to an ambivalence towards women on the author's part. Commenting on Cooper's notions on ideal womanhood, Leslie A. Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, writes:

The notion of the sacredness of womanhood ... he accepted as literal truth ... portraying all upper-class, white Anglo-Saxon women as without sin ... just as his dream of an idyllic union with the Red man was his inner escape from a world of blameless, sexless females.¹

This ambivalence towards women expressed in the form of female 'dark' and 'fair' characters, comes from the conflict between opposite ideas which Cooper along with many of his contemporaries felt. The early settlement days were over and yet the ghost of those days would haunt the deepest recesses of Cooper's mind. If the memories of the early struggle, when the settlers, already tired from the long and arduous journey, had to encounter the American Indians were a facet of the past, another facet was the memory of the subsequent quelling of the American Indians and settling down.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the American nation was well established and there was no fear of encroachment, either internal or external. But this was the time when people began to think of their past and about their present introspectively. This gave them a feeling of guilt that they had perhaps wronged the American Indians by violently suppressing them and by the rape of their land. They also felt that they were not the real owners of the New World but merely usurpers. Referring to this feeling of guilt, Leslie A. Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, writes:

To write ... about the American novel is to write about the fate of certain European genres, ... which had left behind the terror of Europe not for the innocence it had dreamed of, but for new and special guilts associated with the rape of nature and the exploitation of the dark-skinned people.  

The guilt then was that while the immigrants had fled Europe to escape religious tyranny, they themselves had been tyrannical to others in the name of religion. They had destroyed the virginal forests in the New World to accommodate the settlements and had subjugated the American Indians brutally calling them 'savages' and 'heathens'. Though the justification the settlers sought was that they had been special emissaries to spread the light of Christianity amidst

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these 'savages', the feeling of guilt rankled nevertheless, in the deepest recesses of their minds. They knew that this was but a cloak to the real instinct of conquest. Drawing her conclusions from the writings of Henry Nash Smith and others, Lakshmi Mani writes in her book *Apocalyptic Vision in Nineteenth century Fiction*:

More than one critic has noticed an ambivalence in Cooper's vision of America, a vision that sees the country both as the new Eden and as yet another Sodom and Gomorrah.³

Cooper was of the generation that felt vaguely uncomfortable about this predicament and was trying to find its roots. A truly patriotic fervour was in the air and the creative artists tried to nurture nationalism through their creations. While objectivity was the topmost consideration, a certain subjectivity could not be avoided. Of this breed of artists, Cooper was one of the first in the nineteenth century. On the external plane, Cooper sought to present his ideas in the perspective of the times - a pervasive optimism. This was born out of the realization that though they had initially failed to find the haven they had sought, and had struggled hard, they had now settled down sufficiently to tackle both the wilderness and any alien people. The conflict in Cooper's mind was between, on the one hand, his commitment to the constraints necessary for an orderly society, and his attraction to anarchic freedom. Natty starts out in

The Pioneers as one who has contempt for man-made laws and social restraints, but becomes aware of their utility in The Prairie by realizing that man, in his present imperfect state, needs the law to restrain him. This gave rise to a dilemma which Cooper sought to resolve through his art.

Cooper chose the American Gothic form of novel-writing which could conveniently hold both myth and reality. He hoped to evoke national sentiments while catering to his personal sentiments. Through the male protagonist in his Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper could very well project his own subjective thoughts, while being able to portray the events overtaking the country, that is, the pioneering movement and its consequent destruction of the wilderness - the price that the nation had to pay for progress. As at heart, the theme of conquering the wilderness and the American Indians, with all its ramifications, was uppermost in this pioneering generation, Cooper chose a rugged individualist and a 'good' Red Indian as his central characters in the five Leatherstocking Tales. Of these, the former was to be the male protagonist and hero, and the latter, his constant companion and soul mate, namely, Nathaniel Bumppo and Chingachgook respectively.

The American dream had always been one of complete independence, individual as well as communal prosperity,
and equality for all. The Americans had originally dreamt this dream while coming away from Europe's yoke, but the ghost of Europe had continued to haunt their minds. Now in the nineteenth century, their hopes were revived because of the pioneering prospects. They could dream of fresh about the myth of the American Eden - about the world that lay beyond the Alleghenies. If in the beginning, it was the idea of finding the Eden in the New World, now it was the idea of finding it in the West. But, this was still a myth - time alone could make it a reality.

It was this myth combined with the reality of the American society in the east, that prompted Cooper to resort to the Romantic form of novel-writing. The Leatherstocking Tales numbering five, namely, The Pioneers, The Last of the Mohicans, The Prairie, The Pathfinder and The Deerslayer have projected this theme of myth versus reality. The Leather stocking Tales were written in the above mentioned order but if taken according to the age of Natty, the hero, from youth to old age, The Deerslayer portrays him at his youngest and The Prairie, in the last stages of his life. Accordingly, it would be more practical to examine The Deerslayer first. As in all the other of the Leatherstocking Tales, in The Deerslayer too, Cooper's ambivalence towards women can be seen in his creation of a 'fair' and a 'dark' heroine.

The Deerslayer is the story of Nathaniel Bumppo and Chingachgook, woven round a White American family - The
Hutters, who live on a canoe in the middle of a lake. Natty Bumppo, here assumes the name of Deerslayer, a name he earned for the reputation of slaying deer by his marksmanship. He had learnt this art from the American Indians. Tom Hutter, the father, lives in the company of his daughters Judith and Hetty. At the beginning of the tale, Deerslayer comes to the canoe-home in the company of Harry March or Hurry Harry as he is nicknamed. Both become acquainted with the Hutter family and defend them and their home against the attack by the Indian tribes of Iroquois and Hurons. In this task, they are helped by Chingachgook, Natty's American-Indian friend, who joins them. Hetty Hutter is made captive by the Hurons and Deerslayer and Chingachgook try to rescue her. But just as she is going to be rescued, they all get caught in a war with the Indians and in the confusion that follows an attack by the American soldiers, Hetty gets left behind only to be mortally wounded. She dies in the end.

The Hutter sisters, Judith and Hetty are the two main women characters of the book. The two are sisters and yet are poles apart where their physical attraction as well as personality traits are concerned. But Cooper's ambivalence towards them stems from the fact that he has associated beauty with seductiveness and evil, and plain looks with saintliness and good.

Judith is an extremely beautiful girl and Deerslayer
is attracted to Judith. To quote Cooper:

...he (Deerslayer) cast one admiring glance at Judith, which was extorted by her brilliant and singular beauty.4

She is described as "quick-witted" and "handsome", "uncommon for a mortal" (p.71). She is Tom Hutter's step-daughter and Cooper tells us that her mother had been "free" with men and that Judith's father was "unknown". Speaking of Judith, Hetty addresses Deerslayer and tells him:

I'm not one of them ... Judith likes soldiers ... She says the officers are great, and gay, and of soft speech; but they make me shudder.5

To this, Deerslayer counters that "beauty is apt to seek admiration" (p.71). Cooper informs us that Hetty is but a 'humble' copy of her sister and that her "person" is "agreeable". She has "none of the brilliancy of Judith's." Cooper adds:

...the calm, quiet, almost holy expression of her meek countenance seldom failed to win on the observer ... She (Hetty) had no color, in common, nor was her simple mind apt to present images that caused her cheek to brighten, though she retained a modesty so innate that it almost raised her to the unsuspecting purity of a being superior to human infirmities.6

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5 Ibid., p.71.
6 Ibid., p.68.
These are the descriptions that Cooper gives of Judith and Hetty at the beginning of *The Deerslayer*. Judith is not only extraordinarily beautiful but intelligent, quick-witted, easy-going in her social deportment and bold in expression. She is fair, with blue eyes "her rich hair shading her spirited yet soft countenance."

Judith is sometimes the 'fair' woman, sometimes the 'dark'. When it comes to her appearance, she has all that could merit appreciation even from the guileless Deerslayer. Of this Cooper writes:

... Judith rewarded it with a smile so sweet that even Deerslayer ... felt its charm.

But when it comes to her openness with everyone, she seems to evoke a sense of distrust about her modesty. To quote Deerslayer's words in response to Judith calling her sister the earth's purest being,

I can believe it — yes, I can believe that, Judith, and I hope earnestly that the same can be said of her handsome sister.

These passages not only give conflicting ideas about Judith but leave the reader wondering as to what exactly Cooper is trying to convey — whether Judith's real nature was misunderstood or whether despite her "coquettishness", she was attractive. Deerslayer is shown to be of perfect

7 Ibid., p.100.
8 Ibid., p.102.
goodness with a clear "conscience", "guileless", endowed with a "simplicity"of manner"; the kind of person who would represent a rugged American, bereft of his Adamistic traits of dominance, but one who was a creature of nature. He is also portrayed as a balanced person who can talk of his own exploits with ease. And yet we find that this ease of manner is more unselfconscious before Hetty who is less intelligent than Judith, but nevertheless charming in her simple beauty. Before Hetty, Deerslayer talks of his prowess as a hunter as if he wanted to win her favour. But with Judith, he speaks often of her extraordinary beauty and seems shy too. This may be actually because he feels that she is more intelligent, quick-witted and forthright than himself or Hetty. Cooper perhaps wants to show that Deerslayer secretly admires Judith's mental prowess and that this is her real quality. In Hetty, he finds it easy to allude to her simple innocence and "feeble-mindedness". This is why Deerslayer is shown to be in two minds about what he finds attractive in Judith, apart from her 'handsome' looks.

Judith is the personification of both the contrasting aspects of fair and dark. Here, the 'dark' has been associated with whatever Cooper considered as evil or opposed to virtue; and 'fair' has been associated with whatever he considered as synonymous with virtue. Judith is outwardly beautiful which attracts even the plebeian hero Natty, but Cooper suggests that her beauty is that of a temptress, with a seduc-
tive charm. But Cooper also mentions certain hidden qualities about her nature which are noble and which Natty, his hero is attracted to.

In Hetty, the charm lies in her virginal purity, innocence, simplicity, humility and religious nature; but yet Natty is not attracted to her, probably because of her outwardly plain looks and dull-wittedness. It is worth mentioning that Cooper generally uses the romantic motif of associating innocence with the idiot-figure, which is based on the Wordsworthian idea that knowledge is evil.

The myth of Eve after the fall is reconstructed in Judith and the myth of Eve before the fall in Hetty. Yet the reality is that Judith attracts Natty and Hetty does not. This may be because Natty, who is Cooper's own spokesman, finds something attractive about Judith's superior intelligence and finds Hetty's dullness of mind unattractive. Also, the old world Eve image subconsciously appeals, whereas the New World Eve image does not. Again, Cooper may be expressing his dilemma between the myth of the Old World Eve and the New World Eve and the reality of the educated versus the uneducated.

Judith is so plainspeaking and balanced that she prefers Deerlasyer to Harry March. She seems to prefer Deerslayer's rough looks, integrity, strength of mind and physical strength, to Harry's handsome looks, rough manners and uncouth language.
Judith tells Deerslayer:

You are a man of deeds and not of words,
I see plainly, Deerslayer ... and I foresee we shall be very good friends. Hurry
Harry has a tongue, and giant as he is,
he talks more than he performs. 9

While Judith openly expresses her opinion about Deerslayer, he cannot bring himself to show his feelings and
tries to promote Judith's goodwill towards Harry. This is
despite the fact that Harry talks slanderously of Judith
when he says:

... for though the gal (Judith) is uncommon,
she is so general in her admiration, that
a man need not be exalted because she
happens to smile. I sometimes think the
husky loves herself better than she does
anything else breathin.10

Judith is thus described variously by various characters:

Though she is an extraordinarily beautiful girl, who is
liberal in her speech, friendly, sociable and vain, she has
other qualities that are admirable as we gather from the
book. Though she does talk freely with everyone, she is en-
dowed with a generous heart that can discern the wickedness
in people and forgive them for it. She, for instance, knows
of Harry's rough ways and words but speaks to him without
rancour. She finds Natty a commendable person and says so to
her father and to Natty himself. She loves her sister Hetty

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9 Ibid., p.101.
10 Ibid., p.55.
as ardently as a mother and cannot see anything but innocence and sweetness in her. She declares her admiration of Natty in no uncertain terms as is shown in the following lines:

... and then Judith arose and grasped the hand of the hunter "Deerslayer", she said "I'm glad the ice is broken between us ... you are the first man I ever met who did not seem to wish to flatter - to wish my ruin - to be an enemy in disguise!"

About Hetty, she tells Deerslayer:

... she is beyond and above his (Harry's) slanderous malice. Poor Hetty! If God has created her feeble minded, the weakness lies altogether on the side of errors of which she seems to know nothing. The earth never held a purer being than Hetty Hutter, Deerslayer.

Deerslayer's attitude towards Judith may project Cooper's dilemma between myth and reality in a person; between the apparent and the innate qualities. What is apparent about Judith may be the myth and her innate qualities may be the reality and the myth in her may represent her as the prototype of Eve of the original garden of Eden and the reality as the prototype of the Eve in the New garden of Eden that was visualized in nineteenth century America. Cooper's dilemma reflects the social attitude which vacillated between acceptance and rejection of the new image of the American woman and this is the

11 Ibid., p.103.
12 Ibid., p.102.
reason for his ambivalence in the characterization of Judith.

Now, to consider Hetty, the other heroine, who is represented as the dark woman in appearance but who has maidenly virtues, Cooper refers to her variously as "feeble-minded", "dull-witted", "saintly", "less fortunate", "innocent", and so on. Referring to her dull-wittedness, Hetty's father tells her:

... But talk of other matters, now, for you hardly understand these, poor Hetty.13

Hetty thus, personifies the simple, unintelligent and unfortunate woman as Cooper shows her to be. Yet we find that while Judith is shown to be attracted towards Deer-slayer for his plain-speaking and rigidly simple personality, Hetty decidedly shows her liking for Harry March. She tells her father about her feelings for Harry. When her father tries to wean her away from her thoughts of romance and marriage with Harry, she decidedly says that she likes Harry because he is handsomer than Deer-slayer. Here too, Cooper has been ambivalent towards Hetty's characterization by his representation of both the 'fair' and 'dark' aspects in her. At first he extolls Hetty's virtues and there is an emphasis also on her virginal purity and innocence, her spiritual bent of mind and duty-mindedness which make her seem shy and reticent. She is the prototype of Eve before the fall or Esther. Her plain looks make her unattractive to men.

13 Ibid., p. 98.
But later, Cooper, in developing the plot of the story, makes her character out to be strong, wilful, jealous and worldly. She does not leave any doubts in the readers' minds about the way she feels about her father, Harry, her sister Judith and the DeerSlayer. She is fond of her father and is free in expressing to him her feelings and admiration for Harry March. Comparing Deerslayer with Harry, Hetty tells her father:

He (Deerslayer) isn't handsome, father, Harry is far handsomer than Deerslayer 
... Have I got a wilderness heart, father - and Harry, is his heart true wilderness?

Hetty seems more sure about her decisions than it is made out. She is described as "dull-witted" and "weak-minded", but her self-analysis as given by Cooper, contradicts this. When her father asks her if she wished for more sense, she replies very decidedly.

Not I. The little I have troubles; for when I think the hardest, then I feel the unhappiest, I don't believe thinking is good for me, though I do wish I was as handsome as Judith.

Hetty seems sure of her own physical unattractiveness but also seems sure that her deepest feelings may be brushed aside and not given credit for. Later in the story, when her father and Harry March are kidnapped and kept prisoners by the hostile American Indian "Mingoes", it is Hetty who

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14 Ibid., p.98.
15 Ibid, p.98.
takes a strong decision to offer herself in their place. With perfect faith, she stands by her decision and refuses to come back, when Judith asks her to. She says to Judith:

Neither (wild beasts and savages) will harm a poor half-witted girl, Judith. God is as much with me here as he would be in the ark or in the hut. I am going to help my father and poor Hurry Harry, who will be tortured and slain unless someone cares for them.16

Hetty, the less attractive of Cooper's heroines, is shown to be spiritually stronger and more dutiful. While she is repeatedly shown in her own and in others' esteem, as dull and unintelligent, who cannot think clearly for herself, she is yet shown to be of a stronger character and personality. Judith on the other hand, is pictured as a symbol of all that is beautiful, attractive, alluring and desirable in a woman - the temptress image. Yet, when it comes to matchmaking, Cooper keeps shifting from one pair to another until the scheme of events in his romance can cancel one pair one way or the other; Judith and the Deerslayer, the Deerslayer and Hetty, Hetty and Harry and Judith and Harry. These are contradictory especially since the reasons Cooper gives for the match-making in each case, keep changing in emphasis from one criterion to another. Judith is at first shown to admire the Deerslayer, and Cooper brings in the point of the rugged simplicity in the Deerslayer as the quality that attracts

16 Ibid., p.183.
Judith, thereby contradicting the allusion to Judith's wayward, and flippant character. Though Judith is the version of Eve the temptress, Cooper engages in a wishful matchmaking between Judith and the Deerslayer who is the epitome of American idealism, the friend of the good American Indians and an American at the crossroads between civilization and wilderness.

Cooper makes it a point to tell us that the Deerslayer does not respond to Judith's attentions. Yet, we see that the Deerslayer shows concern for her when he tells her:

> And I thought they would have killed you with their we'pons, Judith ... it was an awful risk for a female to run in ... Men af'nt apt to see females in danger and not come to their assistance.17

Again when the Deerslayer accompanies Judith and Hetty in search of Tom Hutter and Harry March, he says casually to Judith:

> No fear of me, Judith - no fear of me, my good gal. Do not look this - a - way although you look so pleasant and comely, but keep your eyes on the rock.18

Perhaps Cooper indicates a suppressed admiration on the Deerslayer's part for Judith. Yet at another point, the Deerslayer's detached attitude is overemphasized when he says:

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17 Ibid., p.100.
18 Ibid., p.163.
... why I've never lived enough among my own color to drop into them sort of feelin's. - no, never I dares to say they are nat'ral and right, but to me there's no music so sweet as the sighing of the wind in the tree-tops and the rippling of a stream.19

This may be a projection of the inner conflict between the charm of staying in the settled lands of the east and the spirit of pioneering and homesteading. It could be between urbanization and a nomadic move through the wilderness to the west between the reality of the known land and the myth of the unknown land.

We now come to the characterization of Hist or Wah-ta-wah, who is betrothed to Chingachgook, the 'good' American Indian friend of the Deerslayer. Describing this maiden, Cooper writes:

It was a girl ... whose smile was sunny as Judith's in her brightest moments, whose voice was melody itself, and whose accents and manner had ... gentleness ... Beauty among the women of the aboriginal Americans ... is by no means uncommon. In this ... the original owners ... were not unlike their civilized successors.20

Again, expressing a universal feeling about women without any racial bias, the Deerslayer says:

This sounds well, and is according to women's gifts ... the same feelin's is to be found among the young women of the Delawares I've known 'em, often ... sacrifice their vanity to their hearts ... 'tis as it should be, I suppose, in both colors.21

19 Ibid., p.171.
20 Ibid., p.190.
21 Ibid., p.170.
And yet many a time the Deerslayer talks of a White man's special gifts and of Christianity, both of which call for a White Christian woman to be his wife. For instance, when Hetty tries to persuade the Deerslayer to marry Sumach, the widowed American Indian squaw, he answers:

Are such your ideas of matrimony, Hetty? Ought the young to wive with the old - the pale-face with the red-skin - the Christian with the Heathen. It's again reason and natur', and so you'll see, if you think it a moment. 22

Referring to this combination of a white American and a Red American, Natty with Chingachgook, as soul-mates, D.H. Lawrence in his essay "Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales" writes:

... this perpetual blood brother theme of the Leatherstocking novels ... is a sheer myth. The Red Man and the White Man ... When they are most friendly it is as a rule that one betraying his race - spirit to the other. 23

Thus though Cooper has created the Deerslayer as an idealistic balance between the White and the Red Americans his own conflict between idealism and reality shows that Cooper allows the Deerslayer to be Chingachgook's 'blood-brother' and tells us they are almost inseparable. This is Cooper's idealism. Yet, when it comes to ideas on women, the Deerslayer is firm in his belief that while he and Chingachgook were inseparable, their paths would be different

22 Ibid., p.543.  
when it came to matrimony, and would be guided by their respective faiths and colours. Even when the Deerslayer holds the Iroquois or the Huron women in contempt because they are the 'bad' Indians, he upholds the Delaware women as the ideals of Red Indian womanhood.

He even advises Chingachgook to hold his betrothed Hist, in high esteem and to give her an elevated status, contrary to the usual American Indian practice. Advising his friend, the Deerslayer says:

In the first place, Chief, I wish to say a little about Hist, and the manner in which you red men treat your wives. I suppose it's according to the gifts of your people that the women should work and the man hunt ... but Hist comes of too good a stock to toil like a common drudge. 24

The concern for Hist is quite genuine, as Cooper intended it to be. But when it comes to wooing or wedding, Cooper almost seems to forbid it in Deerslayer. The liaison is inconceivable for Cooper even in a novel. Cooper could conceive of an American who lives and dies amidst the 'good' American Indians as one of them in the wilderness and yet could not permit Deerslayer to think of anything other than the white man's "gifts" one of which was the privilege of having a white woman in marriage. So in the Hist and, Judith or Hetty pair of women, Hist is 'inferior' as she is a non-white and Judith or Hetty would be 'superior', being white.

But Cooper is ambivalent towards Hist too as she is sometimes represented as the 'fair' and sometimes as the 'dark' maiden. Here the 'fair' and the 'dark' aspects are more for the projection of superiority and inferiority on a racial plane. When compared to other American Indian tribes and their women, Hist is superior, but when compared to the White American women, especially WASP women, she is inferior. This difference is used to project the ambivalence towards women because of a conflict between idealism and reality when it came to racial or religious differences. Considering all women, on a common footing where beauty and virtue are concerned is an ideal while in reality the white Christian woman is always held superior to a Red 'heathen' woman.

But even while representing the two white women, Judith and Hetty, Cooper expresses an ambivalence towards women as we have already seen. He not only makes Judith out to be a perfect 'white' beauty, whose skin is fair, whose hair is soft and glowing, and whose every feature is perfect, but also makes her vaguely undesirable because of the bad reputation she earns for her 'easy' and 'loose' ways. Harry March openly speaks of her ways with the officers of the garrison but pledges to marry her. He is the symbol of the White American Adamistic stereotype, who looks handsome, and is physically strong. Yet Cooper does not permit the match between Harry and Judith and shows Judith's preference for an honest, simple-hearted and strong man like the
Deerslayer. Harry has, on the other hand, planted the seed of doubt in the Deerslayer's mind which makes us think that this is done to prevent the Deerslayer's interest in Judith. Towards the end, Cooper makes it clear that the Deerslayer is unable to hide this doubt. When Judith proposes that she and the Deerslayer get married, she asks him "if anything light" of her that Harry March had said "may not have influenced" his feelings? In answer to this, Cooper writes of Deerslayer:

Truth was the Deerslayer's polar star. He ever kept it in view, and it was nearly impossible for him to avoid uttering it, even when prudence demanded silence. Judith read his answer in his countenance; and with a heart nearly broken by the consciousness of undeserving, she signed to him adieu, and buried herself in the woods. 25

But though this is the Deerslayer's decision towards the end, Cooper does show him toying with the idea of marrying Judith. When Judith says that the name "Bumppo" is a good one and that either Hetty or herself, "would a thousand times rather be called Hetty Bumppo or Judith Bumppo than to be called Hetty or Judith Hutter, the Deerslayer answers:

That's moral impossible ... unless one of you should so far demean herself as to marry me 26

And when Judith says, "I do not think Hetty will ever marry, Deerslayer, if your name is to be borne by either of us, it must be borne by me," the Deerslayer answers:

26 Ibid., pp. 466.
There’s been handsome women, too, they tell me, among the Bumppos, Judith, afore now, and should you take up with the name, oncommon as you be in this particular, them that knows the family won’t be altogether surprised.27

But it is an expressed desire for a few moments alone. The Deerslayer even feels that Judith, with her looks and education was fit to be a captain’s lady and was perhaps mocking him. Then he realizes that Judith cannot be accepted by him as she has a dubious reputation where her free behaviour with the men of the garrison is concerned. Cooper here refers to the Christian myth of Eve and the original sin through Deerslayer’s words thus:

That’s just it - yes, that’s the reason of the matter. Now, I’m not rally averse to serpents and I hate even the word, which the missionaries tell me comes from human nature on account of a certain serpent at the creation of the ‘arth that out-witted the first woman.28

Here, Cooper clearly refers to the association of Judith with Eve the temptress in the original garden of Eden and shows his own unconscious attitude towards women which came to him through his upbringing in a culture strongly influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition. But, this seems out of place when we consider that Cooper was trying to present an optimistic world-view, wherein people could transcend the barriers of race, religion and creed.

27 Ibid., pp.466-7.
28 Ibid., p.471.
Judith's character is portrayed as an antithesis to her sister Hetty Hutter. Hetty, as has been shown earlier, has been represented as a dull, unattractive girl who realizes that she could never win the heart of Harry March whom she loves. Yet her character is stronger than that of Judith. While Judith thinks of disowning her foster father Thomas Hutter, Hetty exhibits filial devotion right to the end. While Judith is concerned about her own personal safety and thinks nothing of sending her sister among the Mingos, Hetty offers herself readily for the sake of her father and Harry March, with little thought of her personal safety. Cooper has shown Hetty as a highly religious person who values life and lives by the word of the Bible. One cannot help feeling that Hetty's sacrifice is perhaps patterned after the biblical Esther, who saved her people while living among aliens. She is shown to be human when she expresses her love for Henry March, but since Cooper intends that she be represented as the "sinless" one, he drapes her in saintliness and presents her as an unattractive girl so that no men could defile her sanctity even in thought. Referring to her purity, Judith tells Hetty in the latter's last moments:

... gladly, Oh, how gladly would I exchange places with you, to be the pure, excellent, sinless creature you are! 29

Hetty, who is thus portrayed as a woman who could not be robbed of her maidenly virtues, is made to die under tragic

29 Ibid., p. 591.
circumstances. She flees along with the Huron women and children and is mistakenly shot at, by the British soldiers.

Thus died Hetty Hutter, one of those mysterious links between the material and immaterial world, which while they appear to be deprived of so much that is esteemed and necessary for this state of being, drawn so near to, and offer so beautiful an illustration of, the truth, purity, and simplicity of another.

Here, Hetty is portrayed as the outwardly plain and unintelligent girl who is pure and angelic at heart, as against Judith who is outwardly attractive but more worldly and experienced than Hetty.

Thus, in his novel *The Deerslayer*, Cooper has represented two women, Judith and Hetty on the one hand, and Wah-ta-Wah and Hetty on the other. Judith has good looks, intelligence, forthrightness and quickness of wit, but she has a tendency of being too independent and sociable, which lowers her status in the eyes of her society. Hetty has purity of mind, chastity, innocence and humility which make her angel-like but her plain looks, un-intelligent behaviour and dullness of wit make her less attractive to men than Judith. Wah-ta-Wah has virtues that another WASP woman would have, but she is inferior because of her race, and colour. Through the *Deerslayer's* words Cooper elevates Hetty when he speaks of her in the context of the American Indians.

Ibid., 598.
thus:

Aye, gal, you ain't Sumach, but a comely young Christian with a good heart, pleasant smile, and kind eye. Hurry might be proud to get you. 31

Hetty is 'white' and a Christian, so that even if she is plain and dull-witted she has 'white gifts', which make her more suitable as a wife. Hist, a Delaware woman, who, though she is of 'pure stock', a most 'beautiful maiden', is the only woman who could win the heart of Chingachgook. Yet, Hist could never be a whiteman's wife, not even of Deerslayer, who, Cooper says is a Red-man at heart, in everything except matrimony. So Hetty is superior because she is white and Christian, but still cannot be wooed or married, because marriage might pollute her purity and innocence. Judith too, cannot be wooed or married, because she could not help reminding Cooper of Eve the temptress by her tantalizing beauty. Thus, Cooper's ambivalence towards the women characters in The Deerslayer projects the conflict in his mind, between old and new ideas about women, myth and reality and between the superiority of the white Americans over the Red Indians.

In his second novel of the Leatherstocking Tales, The Last of the Mohicans, Cooper has portrayed Nathaniel Bumppo as Hawkeye. In this novel, Natty is slightly older than the Deerslayer and has Chingachgook and his son Uncas

31 Ibid., p.544.
as his constant companions. The three happen to meet a party of four Americans, namely Duncan Heyward, David Gamut, Cora Munro and her sister Alice Munro, who are being led through the forest by a Huron called Le Renard Subtil or Magua. Magua professes to lead the four to Fort William Henry, where Cora's and Alice's father Munro is waiting for them. On the way when they meet Hawkeye and his friends, Hawkeye warns them that Magua is not trustworthy and he is proved right when they find themselves being led, not towards their destination, but the enemy camp. They also find themselves surrounded by the Iroquois, a hostile American Indian band. They all manage to reach a cave known to Hawkeye and his friends; Heyward, David, Alice and Cora take shelter while Hawkeye, Chingachgook and Uncas guard the cave. Later, Hawkeye and his friends leave the four in the safety of the cave to reach Munro and give him the tidings to send his men to reach his daughters. But while they are gone, Heyward and David, along with the girls, are captured by the Hurons, led by Magua. On the way, they are again saved by Hawkeye and his friends and taken to Fort William Henry. Alice and Cora leave the fort with David Gamut and the women and children of the garrison under the impression that they would be provided protection by the French army. On the way, the girls are taken prisoners by Magua to the Huron village. Heyward, Munro, Hawkeye, Chingachgook and Uncas follow the tracks and finally meet David who leads them to the girls' prison. In the final part of the story, Alice is relinquished by Magua, but
Cora is demanded as a ransom bride. Uncas reveals his identity as the Mohican Chief's son, to Tamenund, the sage of the Lenape, in whose custody Magua had left Cora. Tamenund bequeaths Cora to Magua who moves away, but is pursued by Uncas and the Lenape warriors. In the end Uncas and Cora are killed by Magua and his warriors, and Magua himself dies when he falls off a precipice.

Alice and Cora Munro the sisters, have a common father while their mothers are different. Cooper has projected the 'fair' and 'dark' images of women through these characters. Alice is the 'fair' one, born of white Anglo-saxon protestant parents, while Cora is the 'dark' one born of a White anglo-saxon protestant and a 'coloured' mother. Cooper creates them as 'fair' and 'dark' in appearance to coincide with his conception of the 'fair - dark' images on the racial plane. Alice being of pure White parentage and Cora, being of mixed parentage. Nevertheless, unlike as in The Deerslayer, he endows them both with womanly virtues such as innocence, purity of mind and good looks. Through the attitudes of the various male characters, namely Hawkeye, Heyward, Munro, Uncas, and Magua towards these two women in various situations at various times, Cooper expresses his own ambivalence towards women. Cora and Alice have an equal footing where paternal parentage is concerned, and where their virtues are concerned, but the deep-rooted and unconscious ambivalence surfaces through the vacillating attitudes of the various main characters.
This ambivalence is more striking as it seems to stem from the colour of the skin rather than any fault of the women. Cooper has at every point emphasized that the two girls were both extremely noble. This nobility, one tends to think, is because of the aristocratic position of the girls' father, who is the commander of his forces. At the same time, because they happen to be different in colour, Cooper over-emphasizes the fact that Alice is "fair" and gives her the benefit of a higher status. Cora is the 'dark' one and in-spite of her aristocratic father, occupies a secondary position. Alice is the typical WASP woman, unlike Judith Hutter, who, because of an unknown father and a mother who was "free" with men, had to be created in the image of Eve the Temptress. Alice, by virtue of her "high" birth, has been created as an epitome of virtue as Cooper sees it in ideal American womanhood. Cora on the other hand, is not of the "pure-white" stock, as her mother was 'coloured'. The physical descriptions are given accordingly by Cooper, About Alice, he writes:

One ... permitted glimpses of her dazzling complexion, fair golden hair, and bright blue eyes ... The flush ... in the ... sky was not more bright nor delicate than the bloom on her cheek.32

About Cora, Cooper writes:

... her dark eye followed the ... savage... The tresses of this lady were shining and black. Her complexion was not brown but it ... appeared charged with the color of the rich blood that seemed ready to burst its bounds.33

33 Ibid., pp 27-8.
Cooper describes Alice as "artless", "dazzling fair" and she has golden hair, whereas Cora is described as having "rich blood that seemed ready to burst its bounds", mature and with black hair. Cooper here begins to express an ambivalence which springs because of a deep-rooted psychological bias in favour of a WASP woman of aristocratic parents. Cora is unacceptable to a White American, though acceptable to an American Indian. But because she has inherited genteel blood through her aristocratic white father, she must be preferable as a match for Uncas, the son of a noble American Indian Chief, aristocratic in his own way. Even this, Cooper cannot permit to fructify because Uncas is of "pure" and unmixed American Indian Mohican blood, whereas, Cora is of "mixed" blood. So in order to solve this problem, Cooper causes both Uncas and Cora to die in the end, thus preventing their match. He cannot consider such matches between individuals of mixed and pure blood even in his literary creation.

To analyze how Cooper exhibits an ambivalence towards women in The Last of the Mohicans, it is necessary to consider how Cooper has superimposed the concept of racial superiority and inferiority, on a 'fair - dark' pair of women. Alice, the WASP woman, is the daughter of Colonel Munro, whose family was "both ancient and honorable", and Alice Graham, "the only child of a neighbouring 'laird' of some estate" (p.175)
Alice Graham could not marry Munro initially "because her father was against the match." She "had remained in the heartless state of celibacy twenty long years" and then taken him "for her husband". Alice thus is the child of the union between Munro and Alice Graham, both of purely aristocratic White Anglo-Saxon Protestant families. So, Cooper describes Alice as virtually flawless, his ideal of American womanhood, very young, very innocent, 'veiled' from savages, pure at heart, kind, fragile and given to a very gentle behaviour. As Cooper, even in his imagination, cannot think of linking Alice with anyone but a similarly aristocratic all-American WASP male, he projects, throughout his novel, a series of incidents in which Alice is spared from cruelty by the "savages", "ardent" admiration by anyone except Major Heyward, to whom Cooper has decided, Alice will be betrothed. It seems as if Cooper studiously avoids any event that could jeopardize Alice's fragility or her pure love for Duncan, her match in every way. The one occasion on which Alice is kept captive, also seems as if it were deliberately created to allow Duncan and Hawkeye to rescue her successfully. Magua sends Cora as a hostage to the neighbouring village of the Lenapes but keeps Alice in his own village in a cave. Hawkeye dresses up as a bear and Duncan pretends to be a doctor and they both rescue Alice.

Cora, on the other hand, by the fact of her birth of
mixed parentage, is created deliberately as a 'dark' maiden, who by virtue of her birth, has to undergo misery and suffering. Cooper describes Cora as a noble and beautiful girl, whose hair and eyes are black and her skin not as fair as Alice's. The fact that Magua as well as Uncas are attracted and Duncan not so, gives the idea that Cooper deliberately created this situation because of a subconscious feeling that because of Cora's mixed parentage, he could not allow Duncan, the protagonist in the image of the WASP man, the American Adam, to be enamoured of her. At best, it could be an American Indian, and to justify Cora's noble paternity and her own nobility of character, thinks of a match with Uncas the son of the American Indian Chief and Hawkeye's "blood-brother", Chingachgook. So, Cora is made to feel as intensely for Uncas as he does for her. But as mentioned earlier, Cora being of "mixed" blood, cannot be married to Uncas, an American Indian "aristocrat" and of pure Mohican blood. So, in the end, Cooper lamely falls on the promise by Tamenund to Magua and arranges the events so that Cora follows Magua. Uncas also tarryes first, and then follows them and both he and Cora come to an uneventful and unspectacular end. Since Magua had had evil intentions towards the noble Cora, he too falls to his death from a precipice as if in answer to a divine justice.

Also, whenever Alice is captured or faces a difficult situation it is Cora who offers herself as ransom or protects
Alice as if she were her mother. Cora is alluded to, as "mother-like" to Alice. One cannot help feeling that this is a deliberate attempt to give a secondary position to Cora, in relation to Alice. Cora is just about five years older than Alice and yet shows a great deal of tenderness, protective attitude and a sense of sacrifice which is more motherly than sisterly. This representation of Cora could be the unconscious association of the dark skin of the negroes with slavery. The slave "mammies" had not only been entrusted with the job of looking after the white children but of being their wet nurses and foster mothers without the attendant status. Cora, by virtue of her one-time mixed parentage is perhaps doomed to a secondary position as viewed by Heyward, Munro and Hawkeye. Magua and Uncas, too, viewed Cora as inferior to Alice and so as more approachable and fit for their own selves. Here, Cooper shows his unconscious racial bias against the American Indians.

Magua and Uncas being both American Indians, are attracted to the dark beauty Cora and not Alice. Alice is of "white-veined" parents and as such unthinkable in Cooper's imagination as a match for an American Indian. Cooper mentions "Christian gifts" and "White Christian gifts" again and again. One of these "gifts" which he expresses through Natty's character is, that for a White Christian only a pure White Christian woman was acceptable as a match. Cooper verily maintains this in all the five Leatherstocking Tales.
No WASP man or woman has a chance even in his novels to contemplate or encounter an American Indian, be it a noble one like Chingachgook or Uncas, or a "bad" one like Magua. Such being the case, even in the novel, Cooper permits Magua or Uncas only to consider Cora. But then Cora is tossed between the two youths, and Cooper lets this dark heroine suffer "humiliating situations" as she herself mentions, with Uncas always round the corner but never quite catching up with her plight. That Uncas and Cora share a deep passion for each other, Cooper makes clear right from the start. While writing about Uncas attending on Alice and Cora, Cooper mentions:

Uncas acted as attendant to the females (Cora and Alice) ... with ... dignity and ... grace ... that ... were not entirely impartial. That while he tendered to Alice the calabash of sweet water and the venison ... in performing the same offices to her sister, his dark eye lingered on her ... with ... softness. 34

Of Cora's response, Cooper writes:

"... Go, generous young man," Cora continued, lowering her eyes under the ardent gaze of the Mohican ... with the intuitive consciousness of her power. 35

Comparing Heyward with Uncas, Chingachgook and Hawkeye, especially the first two youths, as her protector, Cora says to Heyward:

34 Ibid., p.66.
35 Ibid., pp. 91-2.
I have heard of your boasted skill in the water, too, Duncan ... follow ... the example set by these simple and faithful beings ... To us you can be of no further service here, but your precious life may be saved for other and nearer friends.36

She relies on Uncas and not on Duncan as her protector and confidante as she is the "dark one". She feels that she can rely more on a Red man than a White man because of her own dark colour. But because Cooper wishes to have Duncan protect Alice, the White maiden, he creates a situation in which Duncan manages to stay on if only to keep an eye on Alice, "who clung to his arm like an infant." The innocence of Alice is infant-like to warrant protection. In the last scene, when Magua claims Cora as his prize and Tamenund, the wise old descendant of Maniton decrees it, Cooper allows Uncas to submit to the undefeatable pronouncement and lamely lets him add that he would follow Magua's trail with his men. Of this episode, Cooper writes:

... the triumphant Magua passed unmolested ... followed by his passive captive, and protected by the inviolable laws of Indian hospitality.37

Almost as an explanation of this treatment of Cora, Cooper gives the details of her parentage through the words of Munro. Munro tells Duncan that he (Duncan) is from the south where "these unfortunate beings" – the negroes are

36 Ibid., p.92.
37 Ibid., p.343.
considered as a race inferior to his own, thereby alluding that he (Munro) would not consider them an inferior race. But when Duncan admits it, it is Munro who refers to the inferiority thus:

You scorn to mingle the blood of the Heywards with one so degraded - lovely and virtuous though she be? 38

Here, through Munro’s words, Cooper himself projects his uncertainty about the status of the negroes whether to reproach someone like Duncan from the south for calling them an inferior race or whether to admit that they are ‘degraded’.

Again, while referring to Cora’s mother, Munro says:

I had seen many regions ... before duty called me to ... the West Indies. There it was my lot to form a connexion with one who ... became my wife, and the mother of Cora. She was the daughter of a gentleman ... descended remotely from that unfortunate class ... so basely enslaved to ... a luxurious people. 39

Here too, Cooper shows an ambivalence towards women. When referring to Cora’s mother, Cooper vis-a-vis Munro, while professing to be anti-racist, yet refers to her descent as something inferior. The fact that Munro mentions the details of Cora’s as well as Alice’s mothers, it would seem, is for acquainting Heyward with the knowledge of the racial intermixture in Cora’s parentage and the purity of the race in Alice’s.

38 Ibid., p.174.
39 Ibid., p.176.
Of Alice's mother, Munro tells Duncan:

I ... therefore ... restored the maiden her troth and departed the country. When death deprived me of my wife, I returned to Scotland ... the suffering angel ... overlooked my want of faith ... and took me for her husband.40

Alice was the "blessing she bestowed" before she became a "saint in heaven," whereas Cora was the child born of a "connexion" formed by Munro whose "family was both ancient and honorable". Since Munro cannot erase Cora's 'dark' complexion and the fact that she was born of a mother of "unfortunate descent", he tries to make amends by shifting the blame on Duncan and by putting words into his mouth. He decries Duncan's Southern compatriots who considered the negroes "inferior" to their "own" but praises Duncan's lineage at another point thus:

Ye had ancestors, Duncan, and they were an ornament.41

Then he confesses that he must open his own "seared heart" to Duncan. So he tells him:

... Cora Munro is a maiden too discreet ... to need the guardianship even of a father.42

Cooper has brought out discreetly, the fact that Cora is not only 'dark' but would rather be abandoned to her

40 Ibid., pp. 176-7.
41 Ibid., p.174.
42 Ibid., p.174.
fate than protected, the way, Alice, the 'fair' and angelic one would.

Here, Cora is not made out as the stereotype of Eve the temptress as Judith in *The Deerslayer* was, but nevertheless, she is tossed from pillar to post almost as if Cooper cannot think, even in his imagination, of a marriage for her. Since Cora has been created as the 'dark' woman, not so much by her own "sins" as those of her mother's ancestors, she has to atone for them by dying in a state of maidenhood. Cooper portrays Munro as refraining from doing anything about Cora except silently watching her fate. Describing Munro at Cora’s funeral, Cooper writes:

> At her (Cora's) feet was seated the desolate Munro . . . in compelled submission to the stroke of providence but there was a hidden anguish . . . about his furrowed brow. 43

Cooper next describes how the Delaware girls extoll the virtues of Uncas and Cora and mention Tamenund’s interpretation of their being joined in matrimony after death in the other world. Yet Cooper writes:

> The scout (Hawkeye), to whom . . . the words were intelligible, shook his head like one who knew the error of their simple creed. 44

When Hawkeye suddenly remembered that Cora had been a Christian, he reminded the Delaware girls that from here onwards the "pale faces" would see to the death rites.

Yet, at the end Munro says brokenly, as if, he suddenly remembered the universal spirit of brotherhood:

Say these kind ___ females...that the Being we all worship... will be mindful of their charity, and ... we may assemble ... without distinction of sex, or rank, or color.45

In this novel, *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper projects the religious and racial conflict he experiences through the portrayal of Alice and Cora who stand for the superior white and the inferior races. Alice, the WASP woman is the 'fair' one and appears superior to Cora the 'dark' one with a racial mixture in her parentage. But she cannot be a match for an American Indian because he could be a "heathen" or a "pagan", and not a Christian. Alice, on the other hand, would not only remain protected and unharmed, but united to Duncan Heyward in marriage.

The *Pathfinder* would be the third of the *Leather stocking Tales* if we considered the age-wise sequence of events concerning Natty Bumppo, the hero of these five tales. Natty is called Pathfinder and is about forty years of age. In this novel, Natty tries to woo a White American girl called Mabel Dunham but is unsuccessful in winning her hand.

Natty or Pathfinder, in the company of his American Indian blood brother Chingachgook, comes to meet Charles,

his niece Mabel Dunham, a Tuscarora Indian named Arrowhead and his wife Dew-of-June. They also have in their company, a White American youth called Jasper Western, who speaks French fluently. They all proceed towards the place where Mabel's father, Sergeant Dunham is. Here, they meet among others, Duncan Heyward, who has figured in The Last of the Mohicans, as a young man, and David Muir, the quarter-master at the garrison.

For its story content, the novel is a series of voyages by the main characters on canoes, or on ships, on Lake Ontario or Oswego. But the main theme centres round four figures, around whom the other characters figure. These are Mabel, the Pathfinder, Jasper and David Muir. The American Indian woman Dew-of-June, though minor, is the only other female figure besides Mabel and Jennie, and is one who saves the heroine Mabel, when her own people, the American Indians were attacking and killing White Americans. Jennie figures barely for a while, but two female characters that are portrayed as 'fair' and 'dark' contrast, are Mabel Dunham and Dew-of-June. Once again in this novel, the main conflict seems to spring from racial prejudice.

Mabel Dunham, the 'fair' heroine, is representative of the WASP woman, and her hand is sought by the Pathfinder, Jasper Western as well as David Muir. Mabel represents Cooper's idea of civilization, whereas Dew-Of-June represents his idea of a pagan way of life. To Cooper, as to many others
of the time, civilization could mean only a White one, the American Indians being generally considered savages. This was the psychological division in the American mind - that which divided the civilized from the wild, the white from the Red. Accordingly, Mabel is shown to be afraid of the wilderness. She is bashful, and has an inherent fragility that needs to be protected. Dew-of-June, by the same count, is used to the wild way of life, and to managing things on her own. So, Cooper's ambivalence towards women, in this novel, stems from his notion that Mabel being a WASP woman would represent a civilized way of life and Dew-of-June, being an American Indian Tuscarora woman, would represent the uncivilized one.

But in the representation of Mabel, and Dew-of-June, there is a contradiction as they are shown to have different personality traits at different times. To take Mabel for instance, she is described as protected, naive, innocent, afraid of loneliness and the wilderness. She is referred to very often as a child too. Yet, later, when she is faced with danger and there is rampant killing all around her, by the Tuscarora Indians, she is shown as a courageous young woman who ventures out alone, encounters the death of Corporal McNab and remains calm. Cooper writes of Mabel's witnessing McNab's violent death thus:

The Corporal gave a spring ... fell forward ... and rolled...on his back ... so suddenly that Mabel scarcely heard the ... rifle.
that sent a bullet through his body. Our heroine did not shriek - did not even tremble; the occurrence was too sudden ... awful and ... unexpected for that exhibition of weakness.46

Cooper portrays Mabel both as a weakling and a strong and courageous woman. She fears the wilderness and solitude and yet is able to look death and that too, such violent death, in the eye without flinching. For this, there is but one explanation - that Cooper meant to portray Mabel as a gentle and not a genteel woman. Here, there is an ambivalence towards Mabel as Cooper projects certain preconceived notions as to what a genteel woman would be. A genteel woman would be of an aristocratic background, who might have swooned, as Alice Munro did at the sight of bloodshed in The Last of the Mohicans. The ambivalence stems from the fact that Cooper associates all the noble qualities with an aristocratic White American maiden and so is unable to attribute these qualities to Mabel Dunham, who is but a Sergeant's daughter. While describing the shooting event in the garrison, Cooper brings out this difference without doubt, when he writes:

A train of some twenty females of humble condition followed, among whom was seen the well-turned, ... intelligent, blooming, animated countenance of Mabel Dunham. Of females ... officially recognized as belonging to the class of ladies, there were ... three officers' wives.47

In the same context, he says that Mabel "had already been admitted to the society of the officers' wives, on the footing of an humble companion" and "was a good deal noticed by the ladies in front, who had a proper appreciation of modest self-respect and gentle refinement, though they were all fully aware of the value of rank, more particularly in a garrison."

This then is the reason why Mabel is portrayed as a WASP woman who is gentle as well as hardy, weak as well as strong. She is, in Cooper's opinion, superior when compared to Dew-of-June, but inferior when compared to an aristocratic maiden who would possess, extreme femininity and would represent ideal American womanhood. Mabel is no doubt a virgin, obedient to her parent (her mother, having died in Mabel's infancy), beautiful, gentle, a White American, yet she is neither aristocratic nor uneducated. So, Cooper does the match making through a series of eliminations which show his dilemma between aristocracy and a democratic equality. At first, it is the quartermaster David Muir, who seeks Mabel's hand. This is rejected on the grounds that Muir is a much-married man, who is too old for Mabel. The real reason is that Cooper considers a match between the aristocratic Muir, and Mabel, a social impossibility. So, he tries to justify it with the suggestion that Muir is rejected by Mabel's father and Mabel herself and also that he turns traitor in the end. This brings a satisfaction in the minds of the American readers
of the nineteenth century that this match did not materialize
and at the same time, social mores have also been preserved.

Yet another marriage that Cooper averts is the one
planned by Sergeant Dunham between Mabel and the Pathfinder
Natty. In this too, Cooper shows an ambivalence in the
portrayal of Mabel. Mabel is, in age, almost like a daughter
to the Pathfinder. Yet, the Pathfinder thinks it fit to woo
Mabel and expresses his feelings to her. Mabel's father
greatly recommends this match saying that Mabel's mother
had been much younger than him when he had married her. This
seems like a suggestion from Cooper, that such matches were
permissible and that the girl had very little say in the
matter, in those times. When Mabel tries to tell her father
that she could treat the Pathfinder only as a guide and
friend, he tries to seal the betrothal as a dying man's
last wish. The Pathfinder too is shown to be so attracted
to Mabel, that even after she rejects his proposal, he
expresses his hope by not denying Muir's suggestion that
Mabel may consent to marry him (Pathfinder).

Mabel clearly tells Pathfinder:

> What I wish you to understand is, that it
> is not likely that you and I should ever
> think of each other as man and wife.48

To David Muir, the Pathfinder says later:

> ...When I consider myself, ... how little
> I know, and how rude my life has been, I...
> distrust my claim ... of one so tutored...
> gay...light of heart, and delicate.49

48 Ibid., p.286.
49 Ibid., p.317.
Cooper here brings in the element of discrepancy in status rather than age, between the Pathfinder and Mabel. Cooper holds the difference in social status between the two as a greater justification for disallowing their marriage, than their age difference. The Pathfinder is rustic, simple, uneducated and a friend of the Good American Indian and Mabel is educated and refined. So nobility alone in both cannot bind them as man and wife. This again, is a reflection of the uncertainty in Cooper's mind as to what status in society meant and what factors could be taken as norms for equality, education, wealth, parentage or the white skin?

But this rejection of the match between Mabel and the Pathfinder does not come about till the very end. When Mabel rejects the Pathfinder's proposal of marriage, he finds it difficult to accept it. He blames Sergeant Dunham for having made an 'error'. It is not clear whether the Pathfinder means it as an error in misjudging Mabel's emotions towards himself or as an error in misjudging the times and the changes, which could make Mabel's ideas of matrimony different from her mother's. The very same Dunham had rejected Muir's proposal to Mabel on the basis of their age difference. But he wanted Mabel to marry Pathfinder who was much older than her. When the dying man asks his daughter Mabel to marry the Pathfinder, she however, meekly accepts it.
Cooper explains Dunham's error in judging his daughter's reactions to his proposal, not as stemming from the difference in generations between father and daughter, but as stemming from the difference in their education. Dunham was unable to discern the tastes of his daughter. He writes:

Sergeant Dunham ... had completely wrought himself ... into the belief that the man he ... esteemed and respected must be acceptable to his daughter ... Mabel was educated so much above him ... that he was not aware of the difference which actually existed between the parent and child.

In the same passage however, in which he gives credit to Mabel's superior knowledge when compared to Dunham, Cooper gives a contradictory explanation for Mabel's rejection of the Pathfinder when he writes:

Still, the worthy soldier was not so wrong ... knowing as he well did, all the sterling qualities of the man ... it was far from unreasonable to suppose that qualities like these would produce a deep impression on any female heart ... and the father erred ... in fancying that the daughter might know ... what he himself had acquired by years of intercourse and adventure.

Cooper is uncertain as to which he considers superior—a knowledge through education or one through experience.

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50 Ibid., p. 297.
51 Ibid., p. 297.
This contradiction comes out of wanting to acknowledge both
the value of taste, sophistication and refinement that
education could give, and at the same time the value of
honesty, character and integrity that could be had, even
without education. Cooper thus juxtaposes Mabel between
her father and Pathfinder in trying to justify her superior
accomplishments compared to her father and her inadequacy
of experience in rejecting Pathfinder as a match; thereby
he expresses an ambivalence arising out of a dilemma between
old-time and contemporary values. The older order stressed
the division of society into aristocracy and/or educated
and the uneducated common folk. Cooper himself had been
born in an aristocratic family which conservatively upheld
the aristocracy as superior to the other strata of society.
Cooper's democratic ideology was conservative and patterned
after Jefferson's concept of an aristocracy of worth. This
clashed with contemporary mainstream notions of democracy
which were Jacksonian, rooted in the Squatter philosophy,
namely the idea that land belonged to those who cultivated
it, not those who owned it. Added to this was the new
pioneering spirit and a sense of justice and equality for
all. Natty Bumppo was a character born out of this latter
idealism. Cooper emphasizes the fact that Mabel was
erroneously not accepting the inherent values in Pathfinder.
But unconsciously his supposition that the educated class
was superior to the uneducated, comes to the fore when he
compares Mabel's educated status to her father's uneducated
one.
But after this justification of Mabel's suitability for the Pathfinder, Cooper decides that Mabel should marry Jasper Western. When Dunham extracts a promise from Mabel before his death, she says:

... if he seek me again ... and ... wishes to make me his wife, I will be his. 52

This word of faith satisfies Dunham but little does he realize the catch in the word "if". When Mabel meets the Pathfinder, she declares:

I respect you - honor you - revere you;
save my father from ... death, and
I can worship you. Here is my hand as a pledge ... when you come to claim it. 53

Here there are two possibilities - one, that Mabel sincerely wanted that her father be saved from death and was willing to marry his saviour. Another is, that Mabel was perhaps sure that her father could not be saved and so she would lose nothing by pledging to marry the Pathfinder. This latter alternative sounds harsh but then Mabel is shown to have a distaste for marrying the Pathfinder whom she finds noble indeed and one who can be revered as an elder, friend and guide but not loved as a husband.

Another notion that Cooper could not shake himself

52 ibid., p.332.
53 ibid., p.401.
free of, was that a maiden who meekly surrendered to
her parents' every wish was pious. When Mabel pledges
to stand by her father's wish that she should marry
the Pathfinder, Dunham says:

Bless you ... God in heaven ... 
reward you as a pious daughter deserves
to be rewarded. 54

Piety was considered to be synonymous with sub-
missiveness, innocence, meekness and so on. That the
expression of one's ideas of love or passion, by a woman
was sinful was a Puritanical thought. Though Cooper
tells us that the novel is set to a time, a hundred years
earlier than his own, his portrayal of Mabel as an
educated woman who could still be pure in mind, contradicts
this scheme of events. This too shows Cooper's ambi-
valence towards women.

Between Mabel and Dew-of-June, Cooper brings out a
subtle difference in status on a racial plane. Of Mabel
and Dew-of-June resting in the blockhouse, Cooper tells
us:

Mabel was persuaded to lie down on one of
the straw beds provided for the soldiers,
where she soon fell into a deep sleep
... June ... lay near her ... sleeping
as tranquilly as if she reposed on - we
will not say down for the superior civi-
lization of our times repudiates the
simile - but on a French mattress. 55

54 Ibid., p. 332.
55 Ibid., p. 385.
While Cooper makes the subtle allusion to Mabel's 'civilized' and June's 'uncivilized' racial status, he nevertheless tells us of June's kindness to Mabel. Mabel was taken care of and brought to the safety of the block-house by Dew-of-June. The Tuscarora woman is shown to risk the anger of her own people, especially her husband, Arrowhead, in looking after Mabel—this, even while she guesses that Arrowhead has an admiration for Mabel. This shows Dew-of-June's innate kindness, nobility and compassionate nature. It is tantamount to declaring at once that Dew-of-June was used to an 'uncivilized' rugged life but was 'civilized' at heart. This shows the ambivalence on the writer's part towards Dew-of-June.

Finally Cooper implies a dual concept of virtue in women, one that is associated with utter frailty and another, with utter submissiveness. Though both are caused by notions on virtue in different generations, we cannot use those to express a difference in the levels of virtues on the basis of race. The idea about the virtue of meekness presupposes the need to be protected, shyness, soft-heartedness and so on, among one people and of servility to the husband, fear of him and acceptance of whatever he does, in another. But in considering one form of meekness as superior to another, Cooper has shown ambivalence towards the women characters by projecting them from his own subjective point of view and
suggesting that the white woman is superior to the American Indian.

In *The Pioneers*, Cooper has projected the contrast between aristocracy and plebeianism in the main, and a subtle contrast between the European feudalism and the American sense of liberty, equality and individual happiness.

The novel begins with Judge Marmaduke Temple and his daughter Elizabeth, travelling in a coach through the forest towards their aristocratic mansion-house. The two come across Natty Bumppo and Edward Oliver Effingham who have just shot a buck. Judge Temple claims that his bullet had killed the buck but discovers that he has wounded Edward in the arm. So Edward is persuaded to go with father and daughter. While Judge Temple is initially against any free hunting on his estate, seeming to protect the wilderness from being destroyed, he himself goes hunting, towards the end of the novel. In the meantime, the author introduces us to the clergyman Grant, and his daughter Louisa, Elizabeth's cousin Richard, and Natty's constant companion John Mohegan, who is none other than Chingachgook, the 'good' American Indian. In this novel, Natty and Chingachgook are aged, and Chingachgook, having lost his son Uncas, is a sad old man, who meets his end in a forest fire. At the end of the story, Edward discovers that Judge Temple has been a friend of his father's and that he has been holding Edward's rightful share to his
father's estate in trust. Elizabeth gets engaged to be married to Edward, and on this happy note, Cooper brings the novel to a close.

Elizabeth Temple and Louisa Grant are the two main female characters in the novel. Lesser in importance than these two, is a third character, namely, Miss Remarkable Pettybone, the housemaid in Judge Temple's mansion-house.

Elizabeth is the stereotyped aristocratic superior genteel woman and Louisa is the economically inferior genteel woman. Cooper writes of Elizabeth's "dark ringlets, shining like the raven's wing" and that "nothing could be fairer and more spotless than the forehead of Elizabeth" Her nose was "grecian" that gave "in character to the feature what it lost in beauty". Distinguishing between what Elizabeth inherited from each parent. Cooper writes:

.. of the tallest medium height, she inherited from her mother. Even the color of the eye, the arched brows, and the long silken lashes came from the same source; but its expression was her father's. Inert and composed, it was soft, benevolent and attractive.

Cooper here makes a distinction between the characteristics that Elizabeth acquired from her mother and those she acquired from her father.

57 Ibid., p.50.
Cooper pays a tribute to the pioneering efforts of his father in *The Pioneers*. Judge Temple is patterned after Cooper's father. Referring to Judge Marmaduke Temple's antecedents, Cooper writes:

Marmaduke deduced his origin from the contemporaries and friends of Penn. His father had married without the pale of the church. 58

Cooper lived in the nineteenth century, when a general sense of national fervour prevailed among the Americans. This has been reflected in the above extract where Cooper mentions Penn, the father of America in a sense. Elizabeth too, has aristocratic ways like her father. Yet, on her mother's and grand mother's side, Cooper tells us that the families were "without the pale of the Church" and without the influence of "religionists". A notion of superiority of the aristocratic stratum of society, may have been sub-consciously present as Cooper belonged to an aristocratic family. Superimposed on this, may have been a conscious notion that a certain liberalism and democracy were required for the nation's growth as a homogenous whole. Or, it may be that Cooper felt both ways consciously and was in a dilemma between his heritage and ideal. This finds expression in his ambivalence towards the portrayal of Elizabeth a product of both aristocratic, religionist as well as non-religionist parents. She is the heroine of the novel and though as we

58 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
shall see, Louisa Grant is portrayed as the ideal of American woman-hood, she ultimately occupies a secondary place as a heroine. This may be because at heart Cooper espoused the Jeffersonian tradition and favoured aristocracy. He makes mention of Elizabeth’s aristocratic antecedents when he writes:

An ancestor of Marmaduke Temple had ... come to Pennsylvania, a friend and co-religionist of its ... patron... He became the master of thousands of acres of uninhabited territory. 59

But Cooper adds that the original ancestor Temple had however died in time to escape poverty. Cooper tells us that as his 'comparatively uneducated offspring' were accustomed to ease and were 'compelled to yield' to the energies of a class 'stimulated by necessity, they had to work hard for a living. He also tells us that there were those that inherited wealth and those that had to work hard to acquire it, as 'two extremes of society'. 60

Cooper makes a reference to both inheritance and acquisition by hard work as the source of the aristocratic status that Elizabeth as well as her father enjoyed. Here also, the ambivalence towards Elizabeth is expressed because on the one hand she is described as an heiress to a property that was acquired by her original ancestor by virtue of his being a co-religionist and friend of Penn. On the other hand, she

59 Ibid., pp. 15.
60 Ibid., pp. 15-6.
is also the descendant of a later forefather who, after losing the inheritance had acquired great wealth 'out of necessity'. This is a projection of Cooper's conflict as to what is his ideal - the Jeffersonian idea, of a right to land through title, or, the Jacksonian idea of land acquired by hard work put into it. The first seems to be similar to a European feudal system and the latter, on application of the principles of democracy - that of liberty, equality and a right to individual happiness in tune with the Jacksonian tradition.

We have next, the other heroine, Louisa Grant. She is the simple and pretty daughter of the clergyman Mr. Grant. Cooper has portrayed her as the typical WASP woman, who is fair, beautiful, timid, with flaxen hair and of 'pure' white descent. Describing Louisa, Cooper writes:

... the innocent and timid maiden, his (Mr. Grant's) companion, was the only survivor of six children. The knowledge of the dependence ... each of these meek Christians had on the other, for happiness, threw additional charm around the ... attentions ... the daughter paid to the father. 61

Louisa, Cooper tells us further, was a 'slight' person with a 'gentle countenance' and with 'eyes that rivalled the soft hue of the sky'. Being the daughter of a clergyman and a 'meek' Christian, she is pious and devoted

61 Ibid., p.121.
to the Church. She is poor, representing the lower socio-economic stratum of society, but has all the ideal maidenly virtues like innocence, simplicity and piety. Cooper portrays the typical WASP woman in Louisa’s looks too and the ideal of American woman-hood, in her maidenly virtues in addition. She symbolizes the ‘fair’ woman.

Juxtaposed between these two heroines is the protagonist Edward Oliver Effingham, Natty being too old to be considered romantically. Cooper creates Edward as a simple, almost rustic youth, who is seen to keep company with Natty and Chingachgook and who claims descent from the Delawares. Of his own descent, Edward says:

Yes! I am proud of my descent from a Delaware Chief, who was a warrior that ennobled human nature. Old Mohegan was his friend, and will vouch for his virtues.62

This claim puts out Louisa as well as her father a little but they are convinced that Edward’s ‘white blood’ would take care that he did not relapse into ancestral Indian ways. This shows Cooper’s own bias that the ‘white’ race was ‘civilized’ and the ‘Red’, ‘uncivilized’ because the white race had the ‘Christian’ colour to make it superior.

Almost throughout the novel Edward is shown to be antagonistic towards Elizabeth, her father and their aristocratic style of life; on the other hand he is shown to be very atten-
tive towards Louisa. This has us believe that through Edward, Cooper prefers the WASP heroine Louisa with her 'pure' white descent to Elizabeth, with the mixed parentage of religionist and non-religionist ancestors. About Elizabeth and her father, Edward states clearly:

... he (Judge Temple) is too wily, too cowardly for ... a crime. But let him and his daughter not in their wealth, a day of retribution will come. 63

Yet, when it comes to a match for Edward, Cooper decides to pair him with Elizabeth rather than Louisa and brings in Edward's hitherto unknown riches as the deciding factor for the match, at the end. In the course of the development of the novel, Edward is referred to, as we have seen, as of 'Delaware blood'. But at the end of the story, Elizabeth though at first slighted and rejected as an aristocrat, by Edward, is accepted by him when he learns that he is heir to his father's large estate, which had been in Judge Temple's safe keeping. At this point, when Edward accepts Elizabeth's being on an equally aristocratic footing, Cooper informs us that Edward Oliver had 'no other' Indian blood, and that his father 'Major Effingham was adopted as the son of Mohegan'. He also tells us that Major Effingham had received the title of 'Eagle' from the Indians and declared that he had 'no other Indian blood or breeding'.

One wonders if this rejection of Indian blood has been deliberately wrought in order to create a situation where

Ibid., p. 123.
aristocracy may be wedded to aristocracy. But even here, there is contradiction because Cooper emphasizes the fact that Elizabeth was initially, only casually interested in Oliver and alludes that she has relented only because her father had been instrumental in hurting him, if even by accident. About Elizabeth's and Edward's reactions to each other, Cooper writes:

... if the color that gathered over the face of Elizabeth was contradicted by the cold expression of her eye, the ambiguous smile... about the lips of the stranger seemed equally to deny... his consenting to form one of this family group.64

Although Cooper seems to reject Louisa's match with Edward because he means wealth to wed wealth, there is another reason for this rejection. Louisa has been described as the real WASP heroine, and both Edward and Elizabeth as either of mixed parentage on a religio-cultural basis or of parents loyal to the crown of England. Edward was the grandson of Major Effingham, who had been loyal to the Crown of England. Elizabeth's mother and grandmother had been from families that did not practise religion even mildly. So, Cooper brings in a sudden change of events in the scheme of things, to cause Oliver to woo Elizabeth. As a justification, Cooper provides the revelation of the fact that Temple had faithfully looked after Edward's father's estate, as the probable cause of Edward's change of heart towards Elizabeth and her father.

64 Ibid., p.24.
Again, Elizabeth is the representation of an urbanized woman, having had her education in the city of New York, whereas Louisa is shown to have spent her time entirely in the countryside. But by his preference for both the heroines, Cooper shows an ambivalence. At first, Natty, his Leatherstocking hero is shown to nurture Edward in a similar, rustic, humble and simple way of living. But at the end, Cooper alienates Edward from this idealistic life by creating a legacy of wealth and pairing him with the aristocratic, urbanized, genteel woman Elizabeth, in place of the economically lower genteel woman Louisa. This change of ideals as well as heart shows Cooper's own conflict - his inability to choose between urbanization and agrarianism, urban culture and rustic culture, aristocracy and plebeianism and finally religionist fundamentalism and religious liberalism. Since Cooper is unable to pair his ideal heroine, Louisa, with Edward, he makes her unsuitable on the grounds of her being of 'pure' white descent that could not, even in a novel, be matched with one of 'loyalist' blood. Cooper's notions that were at conflict with each other, find projection in the ambivalence he expresses towards Elizabeth and Louisa, his two heroines, in relation to the protagonist.

Natty, the rustic older hero of the Leatherstocking Tales, also supports Edward throughout the length of the story, in his stand against aristocracy. But at the end, Cooper sets him aside and allows him to watch the union between the aristocratic Elizabeth and the aristocratic Edward, with complacency and happy resignation, as if to project Cooper's own
arrangement of events, to bring about a seemingly justifiable resolution to his inner conflicts.

Cooper's conventional notions on ideal American womanhood would combine the WASP qualities with aristocratic descent, like his own family antecedents. But he could not live away from another kind of woman - the emerging nineteenth century urbanized woman. So, he has combined the WASP qualities with a rustic background in Louisa, and given the urban-aristocratic combination to Elizabeth, thus portraying pairs which suggest polarities. This conflict is projected through his representation of women and his ambivalence towards them.

There are two kinds of 'past' and two kinds of 'present' that are placed one against another and are represented by the women characters. On the one hand, it is the religious past versus the non-conformist present - Louisa as the pious, saintly kind of woman as opposed to the emerging Eve of nineteenth century America, in Elizabeth. On the other hand, it is the new Eve, represented by Louisa, the perfectly American prototype of the ideal WASP woman, as against Elizabeth, who represents the Eve of the original garden of Eden or the Old World European Eve, who tempts not only by her seductive dark eyes and hair and her looks, but by her superior economic, feudalistic status, and liberal outlook.

Cooper chooses to neglect much mention of Louisa and
almost abandons her, but glorifies Elizabeth's kindheartedness, when she tries to get help, to rescue Mohegan in the end. Cooper shows Elizabeth as romantically inclined towards Edward in the end. Whether this emotion is an outcome of her knowledge of Edward's economically elevated status, Cooper does not say. But one cannot help wondering if Cooper himself is undecided as to what he considers ideal in women - money, beauty, education, urbanization, innocence, simplicity or piety, isolated from each other, or in combination.

Thus, *The Pioneers* is yet another novel, wherein, Cooper's ambivalence towards the heroines Elizabeth and Louisa, reflects his inner conflict between past and present values.

In Cooper's fifth novel of the *Leatherstocking Tales*, *The Prairie*, a pioneering family, that of Ishmael Bush, moves westward towards greener pastures and confronts the stupendous vastness of the prairies where the American Indians are the masters literally and figuratively. Ishmael Bush has with him, his wife Esther, his sons and daughters, niece Ellen Wade and his brother-in-law Abiram White. Along with White, Bush brings with him as a captive, a woman of Spanish-Catholic origin, belonging to an aristocratic family. There are three other White Americans they come across, namely Paul Hover, Duncan Uncas Middleton and none other than Natty Bumppo. There are also the American Indians Mahtoree, the Dakota Chief, Hardheart, the Pawnee youth and Mahtoree's wife Tachechana.
Talking about ambivalence towards women, we could take the female characters in pairs like Esther - Ellen, Esther - Tachechana, Esther - Inez, Ellen - Inez and then Ellen or Inez and Tachechana. The Esther - Ellen pair provides the ambivalence on the intellectual as well as emotional planes in Cooper's psyche. The Esther - Tachechana pair provides the same on the racial, as does the Ellen or Inez - Tachechana pair. The Esther - Inez or Ellen - Inez pair would provide the ambivalence on the religious or socio-economic plane and finally the Ellen - Inez pair on a WASP - non WASP plane.

Considering the women characters separately, we shall first find out how Cooper has represented them in his novel. Esther, the wife of Ishmael Bush, is shown to be a "sallow and wrinkled mother". About Esther, Cooper writes:

Whatever less valuable fruits had been produced in this uneducated woman by her migratory habits, the ... principle of female nature was ... deeply rooted. Of a powerful, not ... fierce, temperament, her passions were violent... Too fearless herself to have hesitated ... on her own account ... her ... imagination... began to conjure nameless evils on account of her son.

Esther is the stereotype of the Westering woman, who stood by her husband as a helpmate, while pioneering westward into the wilderness. She was fearless, and uneducated or barely educated. She was not only a sincere and faithful helpmate,

66 Ibid., p.127.
but a mother who looked after the basic needs of her brood and brought them up as fearless as herself. She was the opposite of the urban, educated, timid American woman. Of this kind of stereotype, Sandra Myres, in *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience*, writes:

Concomitant with the image of the frontier wife ... is the stereotype of the westering woman as sturdy helpmate and civilizer of the frontier. She ... trudged westward with grim-faced determination, baby at breast, rifle at the ready ... awaited unknown dangers ... we encountered her in ... Cooper's *Esther*.67

Next, we have Ellen Wade. She is the typical WASP woman and stands out as the best Cooper heroine in many ways. She is educated, intelligent, young, fair and beautiful if not alluring. Describing her, Cooper writes:

Of the females, there were ... two who had arrived at womanhood ... and the younger was a sprightly, active girl of eighteen who in figure, dress, and mien seemed to belong to a station in society several gradations above that of her ... associates.68

She is extremely young and maidenly but is distinct from Inez, who is specifically alluded to, as 'virginal', by the emphasis on the fact that she had been kidnapped.

within a few hours of the solemnization of her marriage. In fact, she is said to have been in her bridal dress when her husband Middleton had last seen her. Thus Ellen's maidenly virtues are projected as seemingly different from Inez's angelic and virgin purity.

Ellen has been bred in the town much as Inez has been, but Cooper makes a subtle distinction between these two on the basis of religion - Ellen being White Anglo-Saxon Protestant while Inez is Spanish, aristocratic and Roman Catholic. Ellen is described as 'superior' in 'morals' to Ishmael Bush's family. One wonders if this is because Cooper finds urban education as the basis of morality or whether he believes that Ellen acquired her moral sense from her parents; but he points out that she lacked the wilderness courage of Bush's daughters. Of this Cooper writes:

Although Ellen was ... superior in ... moral qualities ... she was by no means the equal of the two eldest daughters of Esther in the ... insensibility to danger.69

Ellen was clearly of the new generation of urban women who combined the New England idealistic characteristics of a WASP woman with education and meekness. Cooper was envisaging the emerging new Eve - an emancipated, intellectual woman who was of ordinary means and not of aristocratic antecedents.

69 Ibid., p.153.
This new Eve had one notable characteristic — that of fierce nationalism. The ambivalence towards women, that Cooper expresses, has arisen from the supposition that a WASP woman alone could show true nationalism. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, America was a potpourri of various ethnic groups from Europe and nationalism could no longer be limited to one ethnic group, but to the homogenous society called America. But the fact of considering one group, namely WASP alone, as the truly American society, was perhaps because Cooper and many of his compatriots were still unable to reconcile their White Anglo-Saxon antecedents with their present American multicultural society.

Cooper also shows an ambivalence towards Ellen when he contradicts himself by telling us that Ellen lacks courage in the wilderness but lets her roam in the dark, guarding the camp as its leader when the male members of the Bush family and Esther, go out to look for Asa. Then Ellen declares in no uncertain terms that she would wish to marry Paul Hover. She appears more unafraid than Esther's daughters who often 'huddle' close to their mother.

Inez is the 'beautiful', 'fragile' and extremely pious daughter of Don Augustin, who was the 'chief' of one of the ancient colonial families which had been content to slumber for ages amid the ease, indolence, and wealth of the Spanish provinces. Don Augustin was of the Catholic faith and his
daughter Inez 'was a girl just emerging from the condition of childhood into that of a woman'.\textsuperscript{71} Of Inez, Cooper writes:

Natural timidity and ... lassitude which forms the groundwork for female fascination in ... Spain held her in their ... bonds.\textsuperscript{72}

Cooper tells us that Duncan Uncas Middleton, an officer in the garrison next to Don Augustin's home, and who belonged to the Protestant faith, "was the affianced husband of the richest heiress on the banks of the Mississippi". As if to justify this pairing, Cooper gives an explanation:

Even the soft and amiable Inez thought it would be a glorious consummation of her wishes to be a humble instrument of bringing her lover into the bosom of the true Church.\textsuperscript{73}

Cooper writes that in Inez there was "much fervent piety mingled with" a strong "burst of natural feeling" and "so much of the woman blended with the angel."\textsuperscript{74} Inez is kidnapped when she is on her way back to Middleton after visiting her father immediately after the wedding. In fact she is still in her bridal dress. She is kidnapped by Ishmael Bush and Abiram White to be sold to the flesh traders. It is Inez who is brought in

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p.164.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p.164.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p.166.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p.167.
a covered wagon in the train that carries Bush and his family into the wilderness and which is jealously guarded until the secret is revealed. Meanwhile, Don Augustin reacts to Inez’s disappearance thus:

Like a spiritual governor, he began to think that they had been wrong in consigning one so pure, so young, so lovely, and above all so pious to the arms of a heretic.75

Inez is a ‘virgin’, extraordinarily beautiful, innocent, pure, devout and saintly. Yet she is kidnapped by Bush and White, to be sold in exchange for money. It merely shows how degraded Ishmael Bush and Abiram White are. In Cooper’s scheme of civilization, these men represent the lowest rung in the ladder of civilization. They are rapacious, unscrupulous men, not bound by the rules of civilized society since they are outside its pale. Equally corrupt are those in the East who are tainted by the luxury and ease of civilization - the type that Natty Bumppo has been fleeing from, till he can run no more after reaching the western prairies.

There is yet another angle to the ambivalence. It is one that arises from a conflict between the Puritan Judeo-Christian beliefs that gave way to Protestantism and the Catholic beliefs of the Pre Lutheran years in Europe, that were prevalent in the Hispanic culture. This conflict was also

75 Ibid., p.170.
perhaps because of a subconscious struggle to justify the Anglo-Saxon Protestant superiority and claim to the Land of North America as against the fact that the Spanish people had come there long before the English settlers.

Lastly we come to the characterization of Tachechana, the American Indian woman married to Mahtoree, the Dakota Chief. Yet she is cast aside when Mahtoree decides to take Inez for a wife. Tachechana has been shown as a devoted wife and mother who worships her husband and yet graciously accepts her husband's preference for Inez. Of the American Indians there are two men, the Pawnee Chief and Mahtoree. Of these, Cooper considers the Pawnee Chief noble hearted and Mahtoree as evil minded. Of the Pawnee youth's noble thoughts, Cooper writes:

... he (the Pawnee) suffered his ... glances to stray towards the ... beauty of Inez as... upon ... an ethereal being.76

Of Mahtoree's reactions on seeing Inez, Cooper writes:

The eyes of Mahtoree ... rested on the ... form of Inez. The look of the Teton was long, riveted and admiring.77

Though Cooper tells us that Mahtoree too like the Pawnee, looked on Inez as a heavenly being, he also tells us that later Mahtoree captures Inez and Ellen and brings them to his wigwam

76 Ibid., p.197. 
77 Ibid., p.225.
as captives. He releases Ellen but determines to marry Inez. Describing the scene where Mahtoree proposes marriage to Inez while Tachechana watches meekly, Cooper writes:

The bride of Middleton ...had... an air of pious resignation ... On the other hand, Ellen had ... wept until her eyes were swollen and red ... and ... the young Sioux wife ... with ... admiration and astonishment ... regarded them as beings of an entirely different nature. 78

Cooper describes Tachechana as of a complexion that was 'clear and healthy' with 'hazel' eyes which had 'the sweetness and playfulness of the antelope's', and a voice that was 'soft and joyous as the song of the wren'. But he tells us that her complexion was 'less dazzling' than that of Inez who was of 'surpassing beauty'. 79 Here Cooper brings the subtle racial innuendo. This comparison arises out of a subconscious notion that the white-skinned race was superior to the Red-skinned one. This notion seemed to justify the fact that the White-skinned race was entitled to the ownership of the land of America. It is this notion which contradicts the reality that the American Indians were indeed its real owners, that gives place to the ambivalence towards the women in projecting one as superior and one as inferior on a racial plane.

In this plane, the ambivalence, as we have mentioned earlier, is implied in pairs of women standing for fair and

78 Ibid., pp. 298-9.
79 Ibid., p. 298.
dark. In the Ellen - Inez pair, the women have been represented on the basis of the kind of emotion each would evoke in a frontiersman like Ishmael Bush, with little or no education and in a townsman with education like Paul Hover or Middleton. There is Natty who stands between the two poles as a sort of bridge between civilization and wilderness, more prone to a 'civilized' attitude due to a 'white man's blood' in him but with a sense of identity with an American Indian too. Ishmael Bush, along with his associate, Abiram White, chooses to protect Ellen Wade but kidnaps Inez. This in part is because Ellen is their relative and Inez is not. But this may be Cooper's way of projecting the fact that Ellen who was a representative of the nineteenth century American woman, had to be protected even if she was only attractive, not alluring like Inez, who was Hispanic.

The suggestion of Ellen as a relative, albeit distant and Inez as an alien, albeit Spanish-American, may form the basis for Cooper's own ambivalence towards women stemming from the belief that the English Americans, or Anglo-Americans were the true inheritors of the land and that they had nothing more to do with Europe - a dilemma between the desire to shake off the European past and the inability to do so.

Middleton, who is favourably disposed towards American Indians from his grandfather's accounts, even bears a middle name 'Uncas' after a heroic Indian youth who had befriended his grandfather Duncan Heyward (The Last of the Mohicans). He woos and marries the Spanish-Catholic bride Inez, only to
lose her to kidnappers. Paul Hover, on the other hand, doggedly pursues his bride-to-be, Ellen Wade, to the wilderness.

The pairing of Inez with Middleton and Ellen with Paul Hover is again because Cooper finds Middleton's 'Indian connection' suitable justification for his marriage to a bride of Hispanic culture, whereas with Ellen and Paul Hover, it is the WASP woman marrying a WASP man expressing the White American superiority.

The pair of women, Ellen and her aunt Esther too present a contrast on two planes, the apparent and the symbolic. On the apparent plane, the disparity is one which crops out of the two types of American women, one the city bred, educated and refined one like Ellen and the other, the westering woman who uses crude language and who is a sturdy and faithful helpmate to her husband in the wilderness. They were diametrically opposite in their outlooks, mode of language and expression of emotions.

Symbolically, the two women represent two facets of the American mind - one, that encouraged a settled and stable urban culture and another, that encouraged pioneering into the unknown west beyond the Alleghanies. This also includes the class within the class feeling - that of the intellectual section of society represented by Ellen, as against the larger, labouring, persevering, sturdy, pioneering section of society represented by Esther.

Then we have Inez / Ellen and Tachechna projecting an ambivalence with a racial connotation. The American Indian
woman Tachechana is represented as an antithesis, to Inez on the higher pedestal and Ellen on the lower, when viewed through the Dakota Chief Mahtoree's eyes. Here again, in addition to representing Tachechana as of the 'inferior' American Indian race, and Inez and Ellen as the 'superior' European-American 'white' race, there is the projection of the racial conflict in the American mind.

The plight of Tachechana, which shows how she was treated in deference to Inez or Ellen, by Mahtoree, shows that the "Squezewa" however, beautiful, were held as secondary, in comparison to one of European or American stock, even by an American Indian Chief. But there is a subtle ethnocentric ambivalence when Inez and Ellen are compared to Tachechana. In Mahtoree's eyes, Inez seems more beautiful and is held in higher esteem than Ellen, though Ellen too is acceptable in his 'wigwam'. It also implies that in a white man's opinion, Inez, a Spanish American would be only next in order above the American Indian racially, the highest being Ellen, the WASP woman. Inez has been considered as superior to Tachechana, only for the purpose of rejecting her European antecedent, while representing her as a 'white' American.

Thus, in The Prairie, Cooper has expressed his ambivalence towards women as 'fair' and 'dark' either in the same character or in pairs. This helps him to reconcile the conflict in his mind between the Past and the Present, Urbanization and Pioneering, 'Civilized' and 'non-civilized', Anglo-American and Hispanic American, educated and uneducated, sophisticated and rustic, the aristocratic and plebeian and WASP and non-WASP.