CHAPTER- V

FOURTH NOVEL OF LEATHERSTOCKING TALES

THE PATHFINDER: THE BORDER WARFARE AND

THE INDIANS

Thirteen years intervened between the publication of The Prairie in 1827 and the publication of the last two novels of the Leather Stocking Tales (The Pathfinder, published in 1840, and The Deerslayer, published in 1841). In this period, Cooper had returned to America, become embroiled in personal litigation, grown increasingly unpopular with the reading public, and rethought many of his earlier, more optimistic views concerning American democracy.

Indian survival had moved beyond a theoretical discussion concerning Indian land rights. It was now a fact of history. During this period, however, the Semin-oles, a Florida group of Creek Indians who had inter-married with escaped negro slaves, continued to oppose survival in what has been called the Second Seminole War (1835-42). American treachery during this war was exemplified by the seizure of the Seminole leader, Osceola, during a peace parley. Although Osceola died in prison early in 1838, the war continued until 1842. After more than two thousand American soldiers had been killed and between forty and sixty million dollars had been spent, enough of the Seminoles surrendered and agreed to go west for the United States government to feel that it had won a moral victory.

The novel The Pathfinder contains many features which have been already noticed in The Last of the Mohicans and The Prairie. A treacherous Indian guide, male Indian attraction for a white girl, scenes of Indian savagery, the presence of "good" Indians, and the final victory of Natty Bumppo, or Pathfinder, and his friends.
The Pathfinder differs from the other Leatherstocking novels in that much of the action takes place on the water instead of the land. It emphasizes white rather than Indian treachery and the central concern of the novel is Natty Bumppo’s love for, and unsuccessful proposal to, Mabel Dunham, the daughter of an old army friend. It is to this last feature that the story of this courtship and its conclusion have important implications for the understanding of the hero and his function in the Leatherstocking saga. Then briefly at the novel's presentation of Indians and their relationship to whites can be seen.

As Natty symbolizes the frontier, so Mabel Dunham symbolizes the growing civilization and culture of the eastern states which were being rapidly transformed from their rude beginnings. On this level, therefore, the relationship between Natty and Mabel can be understood in terms of the continuing political dialogue between the eastern states and the frontier.

Mabel, although the daughter of an enlisted soldier, had received training which tended to raise her above the class into which she had been born (PF, 111-112). This superior training resulted in a squeamishness which did not accept the necessity for armed conflict. During her time on the frontier, Mabel is able to maintain this attitude only through ignorance. “I know nothing of arms, and wish to live in ignorance of them” (PF, 12). When Mabel’s father is in danger an Indian ambush, Mabel talks with her Indian friend, Dew of June, about possible courses of action. June suggests that if Mabel had the nerve, or the “heart,” she could scalp the Indian warriors when they got drunk:

“If Lily like June, might do much for her people."

"I am like you, June, if a wish to serve my countrymen can make a resemblance with one as courageous as yourself."
"No, no, no." muttered June in a low voice; "no got heart, and June no let you, if had. June's moder prisoner once, and warriors got drunk; moder tomahawk'd 'em all. Such the way redskin women do, when people in danger and want scalp."

"You say what is true," returned Mabel, shuddering, and unconsciously dropping June's hand. "I cannot do that. I have neither the strength, the courage, nor the will, to dip my hands in blood." (PF, 380-381)

The bloody act of toma-hawking and scalping captors as an act which could be performed by an Indian, but not by a white, woman is presented. Historically, of course, as the story of Hannah Duston shows, white women had proven themselves quite capable of this feat.

On the symbolic level, however, it is quite right in ascribing this squeamishness to Mabel. By the middle of the eighteenth century, people living on the eastern seaboard had passed the period in which Hannah Dustons were necessary. In Cooper's own time the major opposition to mistreatment of the Indians came from New England and other eastern states; these areas no longer recognized the necessity for the violence of Indian wars, or for injustice similar to that which had been practiced by their own ancestors. Thus, Mabel represents the point of view of those who had opposed forcible removal of Indians.

Mabel likes and respects Pathfinder, but she does not love him. The novel indicates that any marriage between them would be not only unwise, but, in Mabel's own word, "unnatural" (PF, 287). Natty Bumppo places a great deal of stress upon conformity to the demands of nature. The description of a marriage as "unnatural", therefore, is taken as a very serious criticism of such a match.
The unnatural element lay not in the age difference between Natty and Mabel but in the incompatibility of two ways of life. Love for Mabel causes Pathfinder to lose all sense of value. Thus, in a desire to show Mabel his skill with the rifle, Pathfinder, in a most wanton and useless manner, kills two gulls. *The Deerslayer* relates the only other time in *the Leatherstocking novels* when Natty Bumppo kills birds or animals in such a senseless, destructive manner; Natty, as a young man, is given his first chance to use Hutter’s famous rifle, “Killdeer”. He shoots first a duck and then an eagle and immediately repents, feeling that he is not worthy of such a weapon (DS, 463). Pathfinder confesses that since he has known and loved Mabel he has become increasingly derelict in his duties as a scout:

"I'm sometimes afeared it isn't wholesome for one who is much occupied in a very manly calling, like that of a guide or scout, or a soldier even, to form friendships for women—young women in particular—as they seem to me to lessen the love of enterprise, and to turn the feelings away from their gifts and natural occupations."

Before we became so intimate, as I may say, I loved to think of my scoutins, and of my marches, and outlyings, and fights, and other adventures; but now my mind cares less about them; I think more of the barracks and of evenings passed in discourse, of feelings in which there are no wranglings and bloodshed, and of young women, and of their laughs, and their cheerful, soft voices, their pleasant looks, and their winning ways. I sometimes tell the sergeant, that he and his daughter will be the spoiling of one of the best and most experienced scouts on the lines!" (PF, 199)

By spending time with her Pathfinder allows French and Indian spies near the English fort. Thus, Mabel, the symbolic representative of civilization, is a siren luring Pathfinder away from his true vocation.
The inhibitions which Mabel arouses in Pathfinder are revealed in a dream which has definite implications for the understanding of Pathfinder's self-perception:

“The very last night we stayed in the garrison, I imagined I had a cabin in a grove of sugar maples, and at the root of every tree was a Mabel Dunham, while the birds that were among the branches sang ballads, instead of the notes that natur' gave, and even the deer stopped to listen. I tried to shoot a fa'n, but Killdeer missed fire, and the creatur* laughed in my face, as pleasantly as a young girl laughs in her merriment, and then it bounded away, looking back as if expecting me to follow.” (PF, 291-92)

While not attempting a detailed Freudian analysis of Pathfinder's dream, I do not think it too much to suggest that it symbolizes a moment of extreme self doubt about his manhood in relation to Mabel Dunham. As seen in the Leatherstocking tales, Pathfinder's role in life is to make America safe for Mabel Dunham and her kind. Nevertheless, he is completely abashed in her presence; he feels that his way of life is not good enough for her. He knows that he could provide a good subsistence living; at the same time he also knows that he could not provide those opportunities for growth and development for which he thought Mabel was destined: "When all is remembered, age, looks, l'arning and habits, Mabel, conscience tells me I ought to confess that I'm altogether unfit for you, if not downright unworthy; and I would give up the hope this minute, I would, if I didn't feel something pulling at my heart-strings which seems hard to undo" (PF, 487).

The dream of impotence has two references: First Bumppo is not a complete man in any situation but that of the frontier. It is already seen that in the Templeton of The Pioneers he has lost a great deal of stature which he only regained on the frontier
of *The Prairie*. Second, If he marries Mabel, he will not be able to function fully as a man on the frontier since he will be completely inhibited by Mabel’s more squeamish values. If the discussion of *The Deerslayer*, is anticipated notice that Bumppo is originally known as "Deerslayer". Thus, the image of Mabel as a "fawn", which he could not kill, questions Natty's entire understanding of himself as a man. Also in *The Deerslayer*, Cooper described Natty Bumppo's first human kill is his entrance into manhood. Again, Mabel's ignorance and dislike of arms questions this ideal of masculinity.

It is clear in a saying of Jesus: "There are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." (Matthew 19:12)

This is the classical text used in the justification of monkish celibacy. In the context of *the Leatherstocking Tales*, Natty Bumppo is a man who has made himself a monk for the sake of the kingdom of heaven which was to be in America. For Natty, marriage is a falling away from his calling as a man of the frontier. Pathfinder in his loneliness can be sympathized and in his awkward attempts at love, even as he has led to recognize that it is best for Pathfinder to remain single, and for Mabel to marry Jasper.

The failure of Pathfinder's romance suggests a necessary division in American life between the virtues of civilization and those of the frontier. Each way of life has its own integrity; the violence of the frontier cannot be judged by the laws of civilization any more than Pathfinder's way of life can be judged by Mabel's more delicate values. This leads to be seen that how marriage destroys Pathfinder as well as Mabel. Thus, he affirms the essential value of the scout's frontier way of life even
while he denies it any permanence or posterity. Mabel's marriage to Jasper, and Jasper's subsequent career as a merchant, suggest that the values of the frontier is gradually give way to the superior values of civilization.

In the context of a transitory and ever-receding frontier the place of the Indian is tenuous indeed. On one occasion, Pathfinder tells a story which symbolizes the Indians' border warfare for existence. Pathfinder and Chingachgook, along with a young Delaware visit Niagara Falls. In spite of their advice the young man venture onto the river in a canoe:

"All we could say did not change his mind, and the lad had his way. To me, it seems, Mabel, that whenever a thing is really grand and potent, it has a quiet majesty about it, altogether unlike the frothy and flustering manner of smaller matters, and so it was with them rapids. The canoe was no sooner fairly in them, then down it went, as it might be, as one sails through the air on the 'arth, and no skill of the young Delaware could resist the stream. And yet he struggled manfully for life, using the paddle to the last, like the deer that is swimming to cast the hounds. At first, he shot across the current so swiftly that we thought he would prevail, but he had miscalculated his distance, and when the truth really struck him, he turned the head up stream, and struggled in a way that was fearful to look at. I could have pitied him even had he been a Mingo! For a few moments his efforts were so frantic, that he actually prevailed over the power of the cataract; but natur' has its limits, and one faltering stroke of the paddle set him back, and then he lost ground, foot by foot, inch by inch, until he got near the spot when the river looked even and green, and as if it were made of millions of threads of water, all bent over
some huge rock, when he shot backwards like an arrow and disappeared." (PF, 303-304)

There was something "really grand and potent" about the expansion of the United States. No Indian, or group of Indians, no matter how valiantly they struggled against that stream, could deny its force. The image of the Indian, paddling against the force of Niagara, is a tribute to the desperate courage of the Indian people as they continued to struggle against dispossession. At the same time, the image underlines the futility of such a struggle. This image from The Pathfinder bears a striking similarity to one found in The Last of the Mohicans. Natty Bumppo has shot a Huron who has climbed out onto the branches of an oak tree:

After a few moments of vain struggling, the form of the savage was seen swinging in the wind, while he still grasped a ragged and naked branch of the tree, with his hands clenched in desperation. ...

All eyes, those of friends as well as enemies, became fixed on the hopeless condition of the wretch who was dangling between heaven and earth. The body yielded to the currents of air, and though no murmur or groan escaped the victim, there were instants when he grimly faced his foes, and the anguish of cold despair might be traced, through the intervening distance, in possession of his swarthy lineaments. . . . At length one hand of the Huron lost its hold, and dropped exhausted to his side. A desperate and fruitless struggle to recover the branch succeeded, and then the savage was seen for a fleeting instant, grasping wildly at the empty air (M, 82-83).

The picture of the Indian going over Niagara Falls encapsulates the over-all effect of The Pathfinder on the reader's understanding of Indian-white relations. The three Indian characters of the novel, Arrowhead, June, and Chingachgook, are all
separated from their tribes. They serve as pawns in the power politics of the English and French rather than as independent actors who have their own political objectives.

Arrowhead, acting as a double agent for the French while in the pay of the English, unsuccessfully tries to manipulate the situation to his own advantage. Because he lacks tribal roots, as well as the demonic quality of Magua, Arrowhead's defeat and death has neither historic nor mythic significance. This lack of tribal roots, and the absence of Indian political goals contrast sharply with the situation in The Prairie where the political scene is dominated by the struggle between the Sioux and Pawnee people.

Natty Bumppo, sets forth a doctrine of race that stresses the exclusive nature of Indian and white. Thus, at the beginning of the novel, Pathfinder says:

"Every skin has its own natur', and every natur' has its own laws, as well as its own skin. It was many years afore I could master all them higher branches of a forest edication; for redskin knowledge doesn't come as easy to white-skin natur' as what I suppose is intended to be white-skin knowledge. . . . The white man has his difficulties in getting redskin habits, quite as much as the Injin in getting white-skin ways. As for the real natur', it is my opinion that neither can actually get that of the other." (PF, 23)

At a later point in the story, Pathfinder remarks, "'I tell the Sarpent, that no Christianizing will ever make even a Delaware a white man; nor any whooping and yelling convart a pale-face into a redskin'" (PF, 100). The implications of such a doctrine of racial exclusiveness are two-fold. It allows Pathfinder to accept Chingachgook’s love of revenge, his bloodthirst, and his desire for scalps as being
somehow right and natural. Thus, when Chingachgook runs what Jasper considers unnecessary risk to obtain Iroquois scalps, Pathfinder remarks:

"Chingachgook is not a Christian white man, like ourselves, but a Mohican chief, who has his gifts and traditions to tell him what he ought to do. . . . "'Tis his gift, and let him enjoy it. We are white men, and cannot mangle a dead enemy; but it is honour in the eyes of a redskin to do so. . . . "I have passed days thinking of these matters, out in the silent woods, and I have come to the opinion, boy, that as Providence rules all things, no gift is bestowed without some wise and reasonable end." (PF, 77-78)

Pathfinder's convictions about what a white man could and could not do sometimes lead him into a form of casuistry which detracts from the picture of him as a naturally good man. For example, he tells of a time when he came across six Mingos sleeping in the woods. Pathfinder resists both the temptation to scalp them, as Chingachgook would have done, and also the temptation to steal their weapons:

"No, no; I did myself, and my color, and my religion, too, greater justice. I waited till their nap was over, and they well on their war-path again; and, by ambushing here, and flanking them there, I peppered the blackguards intrinsically like. . . that only one ever got back to his village; and he came into his wigwam limping. Luckily, as it turned out, the great Delaware had only halted to jerk some venison, and was follow-ing on my trail; and when he got up he had five of the scoundrels' scalps hanging where they ought to be; so you see nothing was lost by doing right, either in the way of honor or in that of profit." (PF, 465)
Although Pathfinder maintains the line between what he and what an Indian can honourably do, he does so in such a legalistic and mechanical manner that any moral distinction is completely lost. English and French use of Indians in warfare, and the fact that once arouses, is that the Indians can not be restrained. On a personal level, however, Path-finder follows the same practice in his relations with Chingachgook. There is mild irony in the treatment of Pathfinder's apology for Chingachgook. Pathfinder's doctrine of exclusive racial gifts seems to make possible a cultural pluralism which modestly declines to judge Indian people on the basis of American protestant standards. Thus, Pathfinder refuses to stand in judgement on his foes and dismisses them by saying, "I never knew an honest-minded Mingo; one that you could put faith in, if he had a temptation to deceive you. Cheatin' seems to-be their gift, and I sometimes think they ought to be pitied for it, rather than parsecuted" (PF, 222). However, Pathfinder usually applies his cultural relativism to actions such as scalping and double-dealing, which is found abhorrent. Pathfinder's doctrine of gifts, therefore, does not lead to a true cultural pluralism, but rather to a perception of the Indian as a dehumanized being in a state of nature who cannot be changed by either Christianity or civilization.

As the relationship between Mabel and Pathfinder and the underlying symbolism of that relationship suggests, this novel shows the need for frontiersmen who must kill at times in order to lay the foundation for future civilization. That most frontiersmen are of an entirely different character from that of Pathfinder does not take away from this need, any more than does the protests of a more genteel and civilized eastern seaboard. If, as The Pathfinder shows, the frontier is necessary, then it is also necessary and inevitable that the Indian people must give way to the advancing whites. Thus, at the end of the novel, Arrowhead is killed, June dies
because she has nothing left for which to live, while Chingachgook, without family or
tribe, has only his friendly relationship to Pathfinder as a fragile contact with human
society.

Sergeant Dunham and his superior officers repeat the mistakes of Munro, Webb,
and Braddock by refusing to observe the precautions their frontier circumstances
require. They cling repeatedly to the military codes of Europe and squander the
opportunities of the New World. Tribal leadership is similarly recalcitrant. They fail
to overcome their rivalries and ensure their annihilation by aligning themselves with
the British and French. An amoral negation of convection is however, no more
conducive to personal or cultural security than it was in Mohicans. Both Arrowhead
and Lieutenant Muir, the garrison’s quartermaster, subordinate loyalty to greed, and
pay for their treachery with their lives. Captain Sanglier, the French liason to the
Iroquois, adopts the practices of the tribes and organizes an effective fighting force,
but because he abandons Christian sanctions along with the codes of European
warfare, he becomes, like Montcalm, a moral bankrupt.

The French and Indian wars again suggest the fatal implications of a slavish
conventionality. Just as they refuse American venison and salmon for Scottish oat
cakes, the British soldiers at Ontario reject colonial advice and preserve the military
protocol of Europe. When, for example, Mabel warns Corporal McNab of an
impending ambush, he dismisses her fears and insists that “this American mode of
fighting that is getting into so much favor, will destroy the reputation OF His
Majesty’s army, if it no destroy its spirit.” Take “the word of an old soldier, who has
seen his fifty-fifth year,” he tells her, “there is no surer method to encourage your
enemy, than to seem to fear him and that there is no danger in this Indian warfare, that
the fancies and imaginations of the Americans have not augmented and enlarged upon
until they see a savage in every bush. The Scots come from a naked region, and have no need, and less relish for covers.” Rather than alerting his troops, he lectures Mabel on Scottish military history, a lesson that is interrupted by an Indian bullet which claims McNab’s life. Cooper generalizes McNab’s arrogance by describing him as “an epitome, though on a scale suited to his rank, of those very qualities, which were so peculiar to the servants of the crown, that were sent into the colonies, as these servants estimated themselves in comparison with the natives of the country, or, in other words, he considered the American as an animal inferior to the parent stock, and viewed all his notions of military service in particular as undigested and absurd.” (PF, 335)

European and Indian conventionally are found lamentable, it is regarded that obstinace is as less irrational than colonial submission to British authority. Cooper describes that dependence as an attribute of a prerevolutionary childhood. He writes:

America, at the time of which we are writing, was remarkable for its attachment to the German family that then sat on the British throne, for, as is the fact with all provinces, the virtues and qualities that are proclaimed near the centre of power, as incense and policy, get to be a part of political faith, with the credulous and ignorant at a distance. This truth is just as apparent today, in connection with the prodigies of the republic, as it was always safe to applaud, and whose demerits it was treason to reveal. Is is a consequence of this mental dependence, that public opinion is so much placed at mercy of the designing, and the world in the midst of its idle boasts of knowledge and improvement, is left to receive its truths, on all such points as touch the interests of the powerful and managing, through such a medium only, as may serve the particular views of those who pull the wires. Pressed upon by
subjects of France, who were then encircling the British colonies, with a belt of forts and settlements that completely secured the savages for allies, it would have been difficult to say, whether the Americans loved the English more than they hated the French, and those who then lived would have considered the alliance which took place between the cis-Atlantic subjects, and the ancient rivals of the British Crown, some twenty years later, as an event entirely without the circle of probabilities. (PF, 212)

Chingachgook, compromises his life and those of his companions by subordinating reason to tradition. Rather than avoiding a party of Iroquois, he launches a one-man warfare against them. Natty’s marksmanship saves his life, but when Chingachgook returns from his nearly fatal adventure, the scout chastise him. “Was it well done, Chingachgook,” he asks, “to ambush a dozen Mingoes, alone! Killdeer seldom fails me, it is true; but the Oswego makes a distant mark, and that miscreant showed little more than his head and shoulders above the bushes, and an onpractysed hand an eye might have failed. You should have thought of this, chief; you should have thought of this!” Chingachgook responds by citing the burden of his ancestry. “The Great Serpent is a Mohican warrior,” he insists, “he sees only his enemies, when he is on the war-path and his fathers have stuck the Mingoes from behind, since the waters began to run.” Natty commends Chingachgook’s devotion to his blood but insists that “prudence as much becomes a warrior as valor.” (PF, 77) Tradition must, he argues, function as a guide to conduct and not as its final arbiter.

The assault on subservience in *The Pathfinder* is paralleled by an equally strenuous attack on unbridled originality. Each of the novel’s three villains—Arrowhead, Lieutenant Muir, and Captain Sanglier—has abandoned the restraints of his heritage. Arrowhead, like Magua, is a traitor loyal only to himself. He has freed
himself from his history, but in the process, has become an outcast and a moral leper. His death in the novel’s concluding episode assumes a didactic force. Arrowhead has himself been betrayed by Lieutenant Muir whom he ironically accuses of “Too much lie.” (PF, 422) When Muir responds to that charge by attempting to strike him, Arrowhead plunges his knife into the Lieutenant’s chest and dashes into the forest, where he is scalped by the faithful Chingachgook. Although by killing Arrowhead, Chingachgook hastens the eventual destruction of the tribes, his triumph over the renegade is a victory for principle over expediency.

Captain Sanglier’s treason is more subtle than that of Arrowhead and Muir. He never betrays the interest of France and, indeed, wins Natty’s grudging respect as a “lawful and nat’ral enemy.” But as an instigator of Indian ambushes and the paymaster of traitors, he violates principles which transcend national loyalties. Like Muir, Sanglier “has failed awfully in his duty.” Cooper writes about him

His leadership during Iroquois raids: exhibited the contradictory results of both alleviating the misery produced by this species of warfare, and of augmenting it, by the broader views and greater resources of civilization. In other words, he planned enterprises that, in their importance and consequences much exceeded the usual policy of the Indians, and then steeped in to lessen some of the evils of his own creating.” (PF, 418)

The personal consequences of that ambiguous service are considerable. Sanglier has acquired “a portion of the habits and opinions of his associates” and has, Natty insists, polluted his “white gifts” with red habits (PF, 419). Cold-blooded and selfish, he observes neither Christian nor savage restraints and becomes a frightening image of civilization’s corruption in the wilderness. The legendary status he has acquired as a frontier wraith who leaves bloodshed in his wake is, unduly inflated. Sanglier’s is
terrifying, not simply because his Indian allies threaten the colonists’ security, but because his alliance with savagery suggests both the fragility of civilized values and the psychic vulnerability of every man. Writing in 1840, Cooper is not primarily concerned with wilderness regression, but he employs Sanglier to address a more pressing cultural anxiety—the fear of unrestrained originality. Like Ishmael Bush, Sanglier is a version of American possibility. His liberation from the restrictive order of the Old World is not the source of a new beginning for mankind but an emblem of moral chaos and cultural decay.

Having framed the characteristic polarity of the *Leatherstocking series*, Cooper again imagines a marriage which suggest both the preservation of context and a departure from the past. Mabel and Jasper have demonstrated repeatedly their respect for traditional restraints. By rejecting three inappropriate suitors, each of whom asks her to violate the boundaries of principle and decorum, Mabel establishes the strength of her commitment to social order. Her refusal to become Arrowhead’s squaw is phrased in conventional rhetoric—“To me it would be a lighter evil to be killed than to become the wife of an Indian”—but her defense of racial barriers is not advanced in the comfort of a drawing room (PF, 122). She is Arrowhead’s prisoner and knows that the price of her integrity is torture and death. By virtue of his age and his five previous marriages, Lieutenant Muir is also an unworthy candidate for her hand, but his social position complicates Mabel’s decision. As the daughter of a sergeant, she has been denied the position her education and talents merit, and finds herself in an untenable position. “While I am not,” she confesses to Jasper, “good enough to be the wife of one of the gentlemen of the garrison, I think even you will admit…I am too good to be the wife of one of the common soldiers” (PF, 214). A marriage to Muir would resolve that dilemma and enable her to claim the rank she has been prepared to
occupy, but Mabel’s discipline overcomes her ambition. She is only briefly tempted by the prospect of “being raised above [her] station” (PF, 215) and concludes that she cannot marry a man who would come to regret that his wife was “the daughter of one so much his inferior as a sergeant” (PF, 215).

Western’s loyalties are tested as rigorously as Mabel’s. convicted without trial of treason and displaced as the captain of his own vessel, he has more than sufficient provocation for deserting the British cause. The inducements of vengeance and a French bounty do not, however, persuade him to sacrifice his honor. He continues to assist Sergeant Dunham and Charles Cap in the face of their suspicious and distinguishes himself in battle. Unlike Lieutenant Muir, Jasper resists the claims of self-interest and acts within the limits of his heritage.

Their marriage is also a formulaic device. Their union is not a narrative convenience which sustains a precarious synthesis but is the central concern of the novel. Rather than renewing a paradoxical model of national time, Mabel and Jasper’s marriage invalidates the prospect of American originality.

The American Revolution, which is a constant albeit a shadowy presence throughout The Pathfinder, is the principal analogue of Mabel and Jasper’s diminished autonomy. The novel’s postlapsarian motif redefines that cornerstone of America’s freedom from the past and empties it of its authority. Repetition and not difference is, Cooper suggests, the result of every War of Independence.

While the British soldiers at Ontario “battalion it about…in the forest, just as they did in their parks, at home” (PF, 51), Natty masters the “ways of the woods” and becomes a guide who finds his way “where there is no path” (PF, 18). But unlike Captain Sanglier, he fights “like a white man, and never like an Injin” (PF, 24).
“Peace and marcy,” he insists, are his “real gifts” (PF, 96). He never kills “unless it be plain that…death will lead to some good ind” (PF, 73).

Natty’s humility serves as an insistent counterpart to the hubris of his companions. Rather than boasting of his exploits, he attributes his triumphs to the hand of God. He states, for example, that he is able to rescue Chingachgook during one of their adventures because the Almighty “led me to the only spot where execution could be done.” “Many and many is the time,” he says, “that my head would have been stripped of hair, skin and all, had’n’t the Lord f’it of my side” (PF, 31). Throughout The Pathfinder, he excoriates his friends for trying to transcend their limitations. When Jasper pleads with him to miss his target during a shooting match so that he might distinguish himself in Mabel’s eyes, Natty grants his request but exclaims, “What a creatur’’ is moral man! He pines for things which are not of his gift, and treats the bounties of Providence lightly” (PF, 165). He refuses Cap’s offer to go east with him to become a seaman as a violation of his gifts and explains his reluctance by relating a fable of Delawares. A young brave, he tells Cap, once attempted to paddle his canoe to an island at the head of a waterfall, but despite his heroic efforts, he continued to lose ground until he was swept over the falls to his death. “Natur’ has its limits,” Natty concludes, and man’s efforts to exceed them can only result in his destruction (PF, 286). Natty is summarized with a lengthy encomium:

Even the same, simple-minded, faithful, utterly without fear, and yet prudent, foremost in all warrantable enterprises, or what the opinion of the day considered as such, and never engaged in any thing to call a blush to his cheek, or censure on his acts, it was not possible to live much with this being…and not feel a respect and admiration for him, that had no reference to
his position in life…A disbeliever in the ability of man to distinguish between
good and evil, without the aid of instruction, would have been staggered by
the character of this extraordinary inhabitant of the frontier. His feelings
appeared to possess the freshness and nature of the forest in which he passed
so much of his time; and no casuist could have made clearer decisions in
matters relating to right and wrong; and yet, he was not without his prejudices,
which, though few, and coloured by the character and usages of the individual,
were deep-rooted, and almost formed a part of his nature. But the most
striking feature about the moral organization of Pathfinder was his beautiful
and unerring sense of justice. This noble trait, and without it no man can be
truly great, with it no man other than respectable, probably had its unseen
influence on all who associated with him, for the common and unprincipled
brawler of the camp had been known to return from an expedition made in his
company rebuked by his sentiments, softened by his language, and improved
by his example. As might have been expected, with so elevated a quality, his
fidelity was like the immovable rock. Treachery in him was classed among the
things which are impossible; and he seldom retired before his enemies, so was
he never known, under any circumstances that admitted of an alternative, to
abandon a friend. (PF, 134)

The practical effects of Natty’s hubris are reinforced by a corresponding psychic
damage. His contentment vanishes as he longs to be young and handsome enough to
please Mabel, and he begins to worry that he will come to covet material things to
make her comfortable. “Afore I knowd you,” he tells Mabel, “the new-born babe did
not sleep more sweetly that I used to could.” His dreams, he reports, were full of his
hunts and Indian pursuits; he woke with pleasure to resume his calling:
“Now,” he admits, “I think no longer of any thing rude in my dreams. But the very last night we stayed in the garrison I imagined I had a cabin in a grove of sugar maples, and at the root of every tree was a Mabel Dunham, while the birds among the branches, sung ballads, instead of the notes that natur’ gave, and even the deer stopped to listen. I tried to shoot a fa’an, but Killdeer missed fire, and the creatur’ laughed in my face, as pleasantly as a young girl laughs in merriment, and then it bounded away, looking back, as if expecting me to follow” (PF, 276).

Like the characters of Hawthorne and James, whom they anticipate, Mabel, Jasper, and Natty are saddened but not diminished by the events of The Pathfinder. Freed from the illusions of childhood, they attain a maturity which paradoxically implies an admission of dependence. From its inception, the nation maintains a naïve conception of its possibilities. America’s inability to achieve a separate destiny and effect a new beginning for mankind has not, resulted from a failure of politics or social decorum but from the inescapable limitations of human nature.

Overland observes: “The Great American Desert has become the Garden of the West- and Cooper has presented us with a reversal of the mythic Fall” (PF, 171). He gives full weight to the necessity of Natty’s exile and his opposition to the orderly progress of the middletons of America. He shrewdly points to the justification of Mahtoree in his final exchange with Hard-Heart and the curiously disparaging implication it has for the assessment of the latter’s wisdom and foresight. And he is memorably sceptical about Middleton’s ineffectual piety in Natty’s epitaph:

“May no wanton hand ever disturb his remains”: “The advancing plow, to which one side of Cooper’s mind hardly objected, was sure to turn up the
remains of the trapper as it infact did those of the historical Hard-Heart, the
admired and noble, but nevertheless doomed Petalesharo” (PF, 172).

Such a position ends by merely echoing the “lament”-which like Natty’s epitaph
sounds sincerely, but feebly-against what history has told and will have to tell. The
rejection of Natty, the destruction of forest, and the genocide are not just “an
important part” of civilization. They are essential to that civilizations empire. The
destruction is not just a regrettable byproduct of civilization’s construction but
essential to it.

It is on the whole a bourgeois figure, for it relates to a modern form of
liberalism. Reality is first reduced to its analogues; then it is weighed; finally, equality
having been ascertained, it is got rid of. Here also there is magical behaviour: both
parties are dismissed because it is embarrassing to choose between them. One flees
from such an intolerable reality, reducing it to two opposites which balance each other
only insomuch as they are purely formal, relieved of all their specific weight.
(Mythologies 153)

The Natty who deplores so bitterly, for himself and for the Indian, his own
humiliation and the destruction and degradation of the Indian is totally seen here.
Clearly enough, a romance story line, in which Natty’s idealization is essential, is
allowed dominance.

The muting of Indian presence in The Pathfinder would lend strength to this
point of difference: Chingachgook is reduced to a mere actor in the adventure story,
not often present. The Delawares are lamented and extolled but carry little of stress
of complaint evident elsewhere in the series; the Mingoes are predictably excoriated
by Natty but act simply as the enemy within the military plot line and the threat in the
forest scenes, and-Dew-of-June expect-they receive little of complexity of treatment that attends Magua and Sioux Mahtoree.

Natty’s preference for unspoiled nature over life of the settlement is affirmed in all five novels, and, of course, in the novel it is central to the choice both Natty and Mabel must make. It is a constant in awareness of Natty as in Natty’s awareness of himself, and no insistent argument is needed to establish it as a link, and an irritant to the reader’s memory. “That towns and settlements lead to sin, I will allow, but our lakes are bordered by the forests, and one is everyday called upon to worship God, in such a temple” (PF, 24) This statement represents an opinion that is so pervasive in the series that, unidentified, it would be easy to ascribe to Natty, but to place it in its specific context. In The Pathfinder there are several such passages, but, although the polarity it addresses underlines the tale’s denouement, the expression of it is made not by direct reference to the polarity but in terms of the feelings the principals have for one another. The replacement of nature unspoiled by settlements is simply not the crucial historical issue it is elsewhere, and to take its full measure one needs the memory of The Pioneers, The Prairie, and The Mohicans; with that memory, The Pathfinder is immeasurably deepened. Near the end, with Natty’s vehement “wasty ways of the settlement’(PF, 444), it is difficult not to muster The Pioneers into full consciousness, and when one does the romantic and noble tale of Natty in the toils of the “master passion”(PF, 3 is subjected to an enriching decline into the “reality” of Templeton forty years on.

The reduction in The Pathfinder of reference across the books of matters of narrative and character is matched by the diminished energy with which issues of history and political thought are addressed. That “the Indian Character has so little variety” (PF, I) is inadequate to explain the reduction of Arrowhead to mere villain;
contact between Indian and European is noted neutrally (PF, II) and no longer seen as
the source of inevitable degradation and deprivation that it was to Mauga, Tamunund,
Mohegan, and Mahtoree. Chingachgook’s loss of his son and his tribe is reduced to
his “trouble,” and although Natty unfailingly extols the virtues of the Delawares,
“what is left of them,” and remembers the tears he shed with Chingachgook, the vast
impact of Mohicans finds its strongest overt expression in Natty’s words:

“Ah’s! me! No shoot of the old Mohican stem remains! He has no children to
delight with his trophies; no tribe to honor by his deeds; he is a lone man in
this world, and yet he stands true to his training and his gifts!” (PF, 79).

Arrowhead is, without comment or qualification, one of “the native owners of
the soil” (PF, 8), and only once is reference made in such a way as to detain
the reader’s attention. Dew-of-June says to Mabel: “Yen geese too greedy-take
away all hunting grounds-chase Six Nation from morning to night; wicked
king-wicked people. Pale Face very bad.’ ” And Mabel acknowledges the
validity of this complaint:

“Mabel knew that, even in that distant day there was much truth in this
opinion, though she was too well instructed not to understand that the
monarch, in this as in a thousand other cases, was blamed for acts of
which he was most probably ignorant. She felt the justice of the
rebuke, therefore, too much to attempt an answer and her thoughts
naturally reverted to her own situation” (PF, 346). The moment passes
quickly, however, to be replaced by the dominant narrative. The
European arrogance that undergoes such strictures in Mohicans is here
referred to only infrequently and marginally, except where it is made to
have narrative consequences—as in case of death of Corporal McNab.
There are other elements, however, that are more urgently charged. In a conversation between Natty and Jasper, the question of settlements and the spoliation that invariably attends them arises:

Natty observes, “The things they call improvements and betterments are undermining and defacing the land! The glorious works of God are daily cut down and destroyed, and the hand of man seems to be upraised in contempt of his mighty will. They tell me there are fearful signs of what we may all come to, to be met with, west and south of the great lakes, though I have never visited that region” (98). The Prairies, Natty continues, are “marked by vengeance of Heaven”: “I have heard as honest Delawares as I ever knew, declare that the finger of God has been laid so heavily on them, that they are altogether without trees. This is an awful visitation to befall innocent ‘arth, and can only mean to show what frightful consequences a heedless desire to destroy may lead” (PF, 98). Jasper’s agrarian response is met by Natty’s absolutism and Cap’s uncomprehending coarse materialism. The discussion serves to lay a foundation for the difference between Jasper and Natty, important in the tale’s resolution. When Mabel is so certain that “no Christian, seeing a woman approach alone, would fire upon her,” recalls the exploits of Hutter and March in *The Deerslayer*, it seems impossible not to recall The Pioneers. Likewise, while the extended idealization of Natty at the end serves his role in this romance admirably. It cannot in its stress upon “his beautiful and unerring sense of justice” fail to raise memories of *The Prairie* and *The Pioneers*-the
various problems that surround his idealization in the former and the way in which another view of justice besets him in the latter.

In the order of fictional chronology, *The Deerslayer* at once establishes the idealization of Natty and ensures that the almost allegorical parade of his virtues will be what we shall always first remember. The work itself operates in a context neither of memory nor of a conceivable future. The rendering here is a historical, absolute and almost exclusively moral; although Natty’s enmity to the “settlements” is affirmed, it has no locus. The appalling slaughter at the end, while it does have historical significance, has none of the resonance it must take on for the reader who can recall the massacre at Fort William Henry in Mohicans. Natty’s refusal of Judith is apt to seem merely priggish, lacking the preparation offered by *The Pathfinder*.

The move from *Deerslayer* to *Mohicans*, while it is coherent with the Redcoats’ carnage in the forest, is extreme—from idealization to relentless realism. The violence of imperial warfare invades the stillness of lake and forest and is allowed to occupy them unopposed; the outcome of the French wars is left unsettled in favour of the working out of romantic tale and the extermination of an indigenous people.

Natty who shares the grievance and grief of the Indians is replaced by the idealized Natty of *The Deerslayer*; his extended debates with Bat are abbreviated into the less searching differences with Cap. When he muses on his newfound “craving after property” (PF, 432), it is a reflection upon human acquisitiveness. Mabel’s relationship to her father, it is the romance element that is fully played out. The central issue is resolved simply in terms of Natty’s superior virtue. The effect of that resolution—like the effect of almost every
character’s rhetoric is further to idealize Natty and to set him firmly apart from civilization and its institutions. If the security of hegemony rests upon its success in persuading its subjects into complicity with its power, Natty remains in this novel immune.

The novel, *The Pathfinder* constitutes a critical moment. It returns to the historical time of *Mohicans* and, specifically, and gives it a name Natty. The idealization of Natty is picked up from *The Prairie* and intensified. It is constantly affirmed by all which has a still, almost abstract tone. The tale Natty is drawn out of his elected marginality onto a wrong path, innocently misled by an equally idealized Mabel Dunham. He is fully humanized and moves in his love, romantic generosity, and heartbreak, but even in the alien world into which he has taken a false track, his virtue proves adequate to the test. It is perhaps the greatest of all his merits that he alone is capable both of recognizing its falseness and of restoring a just order. His virtue is not passive or merely idealized but is fully active. Society does criticize him only mildly and civilization does not reject Natty, or so express itself as to make life within it for Natty intolerable. The break with civilization is made by Natty himself—it is his recognition, his will. The idealization of Natty is fully achieved in *The Pathfinder* and, indeed, amplified beyond all other presentations of Natty to this point, Natty’s past embodiment in Mohicans is not eliminated and his future victimization is in *The Pioneers*. It is difficult not to recall Templeton, and Natty’s bitter memories of his experiences that even in *The Prairie*, when of Jasper’s future as a merchant in New York.

Natty’s virtue is not superhuman. Even though he is on the wrong path in craving Mabel and domesticity, from the first he is not without a sense of his error;
his desire to find a mate is shown as natural enough, but it is Dunham who arouses that feeling. Even as Natty responds, he is equally aware that it is unsuitable for him and that he and Mabel make an unlikely match. Upon Mabel’s refusal, he characteristically recognizes its rightness: “I have indeed, been as a false trial, since we met!” (PF, 272). However, that merely articulates decisively what one part of his mind has known all along as “misgivin’s”; his awareness is evident early and continues throughout. His concession is rational, generous, gentle, and considerate. Above all, it is just. Although he goes to woo Mabel despite his reservations, he does not endorse her father’s folly. In thinking that Natty’s military accomplishments—or even his unequalled virtue—ought to guarantee Mabel’s amorous affections. In this his view is reasonable and just. In his final recognition, he is fully capable of acting upon it.

It is immediately after this early exchange with Dunham, Natty’s virtues are delivered as an extraordinary encomium. He is “a sort of type of what Adam might have been supposed to be before the fall, though certainly not without sin” (PF, 134). The most surprising peculiarity about that man himself is the entire indifference with which he regards all distinctions that does not depend on personal merit. He is respectful to his superiors from habit, but have often been known to correct their mistakes and to reprove their vices, with a fearlessness that proved how essentially he regards the more material points, and with a natural discrimination that appear to set education at defiance. In short, a disbeliever in the ability of man to distinguish between good and evil, without the aid of instruction, would have been staggered by the character of this extraordinary inhabitant of the frontier. His feelings appear to possess the freshness and nature of forests in which he passes so much of his time, and no casuist can make clearer decisions in matters relating to right and wrong; and
yet, he is not without his prejudices, which, though few and coloured by the character and usages of the individual, are deep-rooted, and have almost got to form a part of his nature. But the most striking feature about the moral organization of *Pathfinder* is his beautiful and unerring sense of justice. He knows his rights and his border warfar in the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario city ends with his death.

Natty is compared to Captain Sanglier, “One served for money and preferment, the other because his life had been cast in the wilderness, and the land of his birth needed his arm and experience” (PF, 419). The duality is clearly noted. Natty as man of the wilderness and as the “arm” of his nation. The epic implications of the latter are too obvious to require comment. Natty’s conduct is military, social, and personal—constitutes an extended aristiea for the society which he serves, and which fails to recognize him—except in word, in reputation, and in “legend.”

The entire series, with the polarities that structure it, seems to insist upon the idea of choice. Choice is often implied in a general sense, quite apart from the tale being told. The main story lines of *The Pioneers, Mohicans* and *The Prairie* do not involve choice to a significant degree for their evolution, but the characters—constantly exposed to opportunity for choice—between virgin land or social community, between respect for native rights or insistence on the “march of civilization,” and so on. This lack of choice is inscribed early in the series in Elizabeth Temple’s sense of her impotence to correct the injustice whose advantages she inherits. The question, the implied choices, do not recede because their resolution cannot affect the outcome. They become the substance of a critique of history that reveals how certain effects, “civilization,” are produced.

The novel *The Pathfinder* is viewed as less discontinuous with *The Prairie*. In fact the process of choice lies at the thematic, generic, narrative, and structural heart
of *The Pathfinder*. For the narrative resolution, Mabel must choose, romance-fashion, between two equally worthy competitors for her hand, but Jasper and Natty are also involved in a choice as well. For Natty, the choice lies at one level between “protection” and “tyrant,” justice and force. More personally, it lies between, on the one hand, nature-his bride, his way of life, his pastoral setting, a parade of cherished flora and fauna, the source of his virtue, God’s voice-and, on the other hand, Mabel Dunham-the charms, pleasures, and responsibilities of domesticity, the yearning of his heart, the settlements, property, education in a word, civilization. His choice of justice is, in fact, for him, a choice of nature. When he enforces choice upon Mabel, he knows what her answer must be—as he had senses what it should be throughout.

Thus Natty with a transcendentised tone enacts with great purity on an insistently elevated moral plane because he wants to make the life of the Indians more happy so that they are not lost in the wilderness and they have a firm survival. He goes against the injustice and tries his best for their social rights.