CHAPTER- VI

FIFTH NOVEL OF LEATHERSTOCKING TALES

THE DEERSLAYER: ADVENTURES OF THE INDIAN
WITH HOSTILE HURONS

Published in 1841, the last written novel of the Leatherstocking series *The Deerslayer*, deals with the earliest historical period, and celebrates Natty Bumppo's entrance into manhood. The action is episodic rather than being tightly connected. Throughout the story, there is continuity and the novel proceeds smoothly. The moral concern of the novel centres around Bumppo's, or Deerslayer’s, adventures search for a "true wilderness heart" (DS, 83), that is, an adventure which would allow him to survive on the frontier without losing his sense of honour. Faced by the different moral standards represented by the other characters, Deerslayer seeks to plot his own course which, however, must harmonize with the values he was taught in his childhood and youth. Of all the *Leatherstocking tales*, *The Deerslayer* is the only one in which Natty is not the social inferior of some of the other major characters. Here, apart from Captain Warley and the other soldiers who make a brief appearance at the end, Natty Bumppo is the social equal of Hurry Harry, Tom Hutter and his two daughters, Judith and Hetty.

Earlier in the novel, it becomes quite apparent that Natty neither accepts, nor is tempted by, the ethic of Hurry Harry. Although Harry is a blatant racist, he does not scruple to adopt the Indian practice of scalping. Deerslayer, by maintaining that God has given different gifts to different races, is able to respect the Indians without
adopting their practice of scalping. In an early dialogue between Harry and Deerslayer, the difference between the two positions is shown:

"Here's three colors on 'arth: white, black, and red. White is the highest color, and therefore the best man; black comes next, and is put to live in the neighborhood of the white, man, as tolerable, and fit to be made use of; and red comes last, which shows that those that made them never expected an Indian to be accounted as more than half human."

"God made all three alike, Hurry."

"Alike! Do you call a nigger like a white man, or me like an Indian?"

"You go off at half-cock, and don't hear me out. God made us all, white, black, and red; and, no doubt, had his own wise intentions in coloring us differently. Still, he made us, in the main, much the same in feelin's; though I'll not deny that he gave each race its gifts. A white man's gifts are Christianized, while a redskin's are more for the wilderness. Thus, it would be a great offence for a white man to scalp the dead; whereas it's a signal virtue in an Indian. Then again, a white man cannot ambush women and children in war, while a redskin may. 'Tis cruel work, I'll allow; but for them it's lawful work; while for us, it would be grievous work."

"That depends on your inimy. As for scalping, or even skinning a savage, I look upon them pretty much the same as cutting off the ears of wolves for the bounty, or stripping a bear of its hide." (DS, 36)

When Hurry points to the colonial law which places a bounty on Indian scalps and thus makes the practice legal, Deer-slayer places the law within a relativistic context subject to the absolute laws of God:

"Laws don't all come from the same quarter. God has given us his'n, and some come from the colony and others come from the King and Parliament."
colony's laws, or even the Kings laws, run again the laws of God, they get to be unlawful, and ought not to be obeyed. I hold to a white man's respecting white laws, so long as they do not cross the track of a law comin' from a higher authority; and for a redman to obey his own redskin usages, under the same privilege. (DS, 37)

Harry, who is twenty-six or twenty-eight years of age and several years older than Deerslayer, constantly urges the younger man to prove his manhood. He first of all suggests in a good-natured way that Natty do this by eating: "Fall to, lad, and prove your manhood on this poor devil of a doe with your teeth, as you've already done with your rifle" (DS, 6). When Natty objects that "there's little manhood in killing a doe", Hurry asks in a more challenging manner, "Did you ever hit anything human or intelligible: did you ever pull trigger on an inimy that was capable of pulling one upon you?" (DS, 7). Deerslayer is forced to answer that he has never killed a man.

Deerslayer's lacks of experience and objects to scalping Indians for the bounty, Tom Hutter then suggests that the young man does not yet have a "true wilderness heart" (DS,83). Similarly, when Hutter and Hurry are captured and Hutter wants Deerslayer to look after his daughters by fortifying himself in the "castle", Hurry Harry objects that Deerslayer would not be of much use because he was "settlement-conscienced" (DS, 102). Thus, in the minds of Hutter and Harry, the moral standards of the settlements are simply not applicable on the shifting frontier. This is shown also by Hutter's comment to Hetty: "Your heart is good, child, and fitter for the settlements than for the woods; while your reason is fitter for the woods than for the settlements" (DS, 83).
Deerslayer's understanding is completely different, but rather inconsistent. On the one hand, he believes that Indian gifts, such as scalping, are "more for the wilderness" (DS, 36). On the other hand, he maintains that the beauty of the wilderness should develop moral character in the whites who live in it. Thus, when he first sees Lake Glimmerglass, he remarks to Hurry, "Your Judith ought to be a moral and well-disposed young woman, if she has passed half the time you mention in the centre of a spot so favored" (DS, 22). When Hurry refers to Judith's failings, Deerslayer responds, "If she has—if she has, Hurry, this is a school to set her mind right again" (DS, 22). In the same way, Hetty says, "I don't like settlements; they are full of wickedness and heart-burnings, while God dwells unoffended in these hills!" (DS, 387-88).

The book shows that Deerslayer is mistaken in his belief that a wilderness state of nature automatically promotes morality. Living in the midst of wild beauty has not been sufficient to prevent Judith's fall from innocence, and both Hurry Harry and Tom Hutter display a violent and crudely materialistic disregard for all human values. Although the novel shows the naivety of Deerslayer's belief in the moral beneficence of the wilderness, it does not entirely discredit that belief. Rather, by contrasting Deerslayer's appreciation of natural beauty with Hurry's complete disregard for it, the novel suggests that, where the heart and mind of man are open to receive its influence, nature is able to affect man's morality for the better. Thus, in the following passage, Deerslayer's moral stature is strengthened by his open attitude to nature:

Untutored as he was in the learning of the world, and simple as he ever showed himself to be in all matters touching the subtleties of conventional taste, he was a man of strong, native, poetical feeling. He loved the woods for their freshness, their sublime solitudes, their vastness, and the impress that
they everywhere bore of the divine hand of their Creator. He rarely moved through them without pausing to dwell on some peculiar beauty that gave him pleasure, though seldom attempting to investigate the causes; and never did a day pass without his communing in spirit, and this, too, without the aid of forms or language, with the infinite Source of all he saw, felt, and beheld. (DS, 283)

In contrast to Deerslayer's enthusiasm for Lake Glimmerglass, Hurry reveals his insensitivity and lack of imagination when he observes in a matter of fact manner: "Lakes have a general character, as I say, being pretty much water and land, and points and bays" (DS, 30-31). Later, Cooper describes the early morning upon the lake. His description uses specifically religious terminology as he sets out the powers should have upon those who witnessed it:

If any earthly feeling could be presented to the senses of man that might soothe his passion and temper his ferocity, it is that which grows upon the eyes of Hutter and Hurry as the hours advance, changing night to morning. There are the usual soft tints of the sky in which neither the gloom of darkness nor the brilliancy of the sun prevails, and under which objects appear more unearthly, holy, and beautiful than at any other portion of the twenty-four hours. . . .

All this, however, Hutter and Hurry witnessed without experiencing any of the calm delight which the spectacle is wont to bring when the thoughts are just, and the aspirations pure. ... The whole was lost on the observers, who knew no feeling of poetry, had lost their sense of natural devotion in lives of obdurate and narrow selfishness, and had little other sympathy with nature than that which originated with her lowest wants. (DS, 331-32)
The frontiersmen remain blind to this beauty, but Chingachgook and Hist give themselves to a quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the nature: "It disposed the young warrior to peace; and never had he felt less longings for the glory of combat" (DS, 340). The moral influence of the wilderness, therefore, is purely subjective. At the same time the wilderness lacks the legal restraint which is to be found in the settlements. Thus, while Deerslayer finds that nature supports his moral character so that he is able to depend upon his understanding of the natural law, frontiersmen like Hutter and Hurry are completely lawless. Hurry is amazed at Deerslayer's confession that he had never killed a man:

"What! did you never find a fellow thieving among your traps and skins, and do the law on him with your own hands, by way of saving the magistrates trouble in the settlements, and the rogue himself the cost of the suit?" (DS, 7)

He suggests that if some other suitor had the temerity to marry Judith, he himself would kill that man:

"When we live beyond the law, we must be our own judges and executioners. And if a man should be found dead in the woods, who is there to say who slew him, even admitting the colony took the matter in hand and made a stir about it?" (DS, 13)

For frontiersmen like Hurry Harry, the phrase "beyond the law" has metaphoric as well as geographic meaning. Speaking of trappers and hunters as a class, Deerslayer says, "'Take 'em as a body, Judith, •arth don't hold a set of men more given to theirselves, and less given to God and the law'" (DS, 388).

For Judith, the wilderness symbolizes all of her lost innocence and virtue. It represents that happy and virtuous state of being in which she can have no place except through the mediation of a strong and virtuous man like Deerslayer. Thus her
proposal to Deerslayer is more than simply a proposal of marriage. It is a plea for life, "a desperate effort to rescue herself from a future that she dreaded with a horror as vivid as the distinctness with which she fancied she foresaw it" (DS, 566).

The attitude of the whites towards nature corresponds with their attitude towards the Indians. Hutter and Hurry share a complete contempt for all Indians and feel no qualms about killing and scalping Indian women and children in order to obtain the scalp bounty. Hurry's reputation as one of the strongest men on the frontier gives him a contempt for the Indians, who are his physical inferiors. After Hurry had thoughtlessly shoots a young Huron girl, Cooper says of him that "it was the habit of his mind to regard all Indians as being only a slight degree removed from the wild beasts that roamed the woods, and to feel disposed to treat them accordingly" (DS, 330). Hutter, less impulsive, and more concerned about profit, is annoyed at the useless shooting. During his fifteen year residence on the lake, he has learned to avoid needless risk. At the same time he is willing to take chances if there is an opportunity for profit. Thus, he plans to take Indian scalps in order to get the bounty. "'If there's women, there's children; and big and little have scalps; the colony pays for all alike’" (DS, 77). Hence life becomes drab and adventurous for the Indians as they have to bear the hostility of the whites.

Hetty Hutter, on the other hand, is incapable of either thinking or doing harm to anyone. Her approach to the Indians, however, is simplistic and moralizing. She does not interact with the Indians but simply comes and goes among them as an ethereal presence with an uncom-promising message of peace and forgiveness. Hetty functions in the novel as a Christian missionary. Thus her failure to alter significantly the conduct of either the whites or the Indians must be understood as a comment upon the relative ineffectiveness of actual missionaries upon the frontier. Innocent, harmless,
and likable, she comes and goes among the Indians in the same manner as she avoids mishap when she meets a bear with cubs:

It quitted the honey, and advanced to a place within twenty feet of her, where it raised itself on its hinder legs, and balanced its body in a sort of angry, growling discontent, but approached no nearer. Happily, Hetty did not fly. On the contrary, though not without terror, she knelt with her face towards the animal, and with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, repeated the prayer of the previous night. ... As the girl arose from her knees, the bear dropped on its feet again, and collecting its cubs around her, permitted them to draw their natural sustenance. (DS, 169-70)

The bears then accompany Hetty for nearly a mile as she makes her way to the Huron camp. The entire episode is reminiscent of the famous eschatological passage in Isaiah 11:6-7:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. (DS, 10)

Hetty and the bears, and her relations with the Indians, suggests that she was not subject to the usual limitations of nature or history. Consequently, Hetty's relationship to the Indians is an appropriate model for other people to follow. At the same time as—and no sooner than—her relationship to the bears also would be. In other words, Hetty functions in the novel as an eschatological, rather than as historical.

While Deerslayer maintains that different "gifts" make it lawful for Indians to scalp, Hetty holds to an absolute and uncompromising morality. As she
saying to Hist at their first meeting, "God will not pardon in a redman what he will not
pardon in a white man" (DS, 174). Within the Huron camp, Hetty reads to the Indians
those passages from the Bible which enjoin forgiveness and love for the neighbour.
To this, Hist, who has been translating for the other Indians, responds: "Neighbor for
Injin no mean pale-face. . . . Neighbor mean Iroquois for Iroquois, Mohican for
Mohican, pale-face for pale-face. No need to tell chief anything else" (DS, 191).
When Hetty persists, Rivenoak, the Huron chief, asks the inevitable questions about
the white-man's failure to live up to the precepts which he tries to teach the Indian:

If he is ordered to give double to him that asks only for one thing, why does he
take double from the poor Indians who ask for no thing? He comes from
beyond the rising sun, with his book in his hand, and he teaches the redman to
read it; but why does he forget himself all it says? When the Indian gives, he is
never satisfied: and now he offers "gold for the scalps of our women and
children, though he calls us beasts if we take the scalp of a warrior killed in
open war." (DS, 193)

When Hetty meets her father and Hurry Harry who are being held
captive by the Hurons, the older man tells her: "Preaching and the Bible are not the
means to turn an Indian from his ways" (DS, 196). On this occasion, Tom Hutter
articulates the general attitude of the book. Hetty's preaching of love and forgiveness
is "thrown away on beings trained in violence from infancy to manhood" (DS, 196).

Hetty is quite consistent in her application of absolute Christian principles to the
frontier. Thus, she opposes Hutter and Hurry in their plans to scalp Indians:

"Why should you and Hurry kill people—especially women and children?"

"Peace, girl, peace; we are at war, and must do to our enemies as our enemies
would do to us."
"That's not it, father! I heard Deerslayer say how it was. You must do to your enemies as you wish your enemies would do to you. No man wishes his enemies to kill him!" (DS, 81)

Deerslayer is not exempted from Hetty's moral censure. When the Panther, one of the Huron chiefs, hurls a tomahawk at Deerslayer, the white man catches it in mid-air and throws it back, killing the Indian. Hetty's comment on this is a reproachful question:

"Why did you kill the Huron, Deerslayer? ... Don't you know your commandments, which say, 'Thou shalt not kill!' They tell me you have now slain the woman's husband and brother."

"It's true, my good Hetty, 'tis gospel truth, and I'll not deny what has come to pass. But you must remember, gal, that many things are lawful in war, which would be onlawful in peace. The husband was shot in open fight; or open so far as I was consarned, while he had a better cover than common; and the brother brought his end on himself, by casting his tomahawk at an unarmed prisoner. Did you witness that deed, gal?"

"I saw it, and was sorry it happened, Deerslayer; for I hoped you wouldn't have returned blow for blow, but good for evil."

"Ah, Hetty, that may do among the missionaries, but 'twould make an onsartain life in the woods." (DS, 506-507)

Deerslayer fully realizes the dangers involved and wishes to avoid them. Deerslayer's answer reflects his concern to find a code of ethics for wilderness survival. He rejects the heartless barbarism of Hutter and Hurry, but, at the same time, he also rejects the simplistic Christianity of Hetty. Life in the woods is "onsartain" at the best of times. By placing the Quaker and Moravian doctrines of non-resistance to
evil on the lips of Hetty, it is denied, in a very effective manner, that these doctrines could have any validity in a wilderness situation.

In conversation with Hurry Harry, Deerslayer set forth his understanding of what the Moravians teach:

"Some of their teachers say, that if you're struck on the cheek, it's a duty to turn the other side of the face, and take another blow, instead of seeking revenge, whereby I understand—"

"That's enough!" shouted Hurry; "that's all I want, to prove a man's doctrine! How long would it take to kick a man through the colony—in at one ind, and out at the other, on that principle?"

"Don't mistake me, March," replied the young hunter with dignity; "I don't understand by this any more than that it's best to do this, if possible. Revenge is an Injin gift, and forgiveness a white man's. That's all. Overlook all you can is what's meant; and not revenge all you can." (DS, 78-79)

As he attempts to practice this ethic, Deerslayer is nearly killed in his first encounter with a Huron. After the Indian fires from ambush and is reloading his gun, Deerslayer has an opportunity to kill his opponent;

But every feeling of Deerslayer revolted at such a step, although his own life had just been attempted from a cover. He was yet unpracticed in the ruthless expedients of savage warfare, of which he knew nothing except by tradition and theory, and it struck him an as unfair advantage to assail an unarmed foe. .

"No, no—that may be redskin warfare, but it's not Christian gifts. Let the miscreant charge, and then we'll take it out like men." (DS, 108-09)

Instead of firing, therefore, he allows the Indian to reload and advance into the open, at which point Deerslayer hails him and the two men have an amicable
conversation in which Deerslayer asserts his belief that "war isn't needfully massacre" (DS, 110). After peacefully parting, the Indian once again try to shoot Deerslayer from ambush. This time Deerslayer does not stop to consider the ethical implications of his action. He fires and gives the Indian a mortal wound. As the Indian is dying, Deerslayer says to him,

"I overlook altogether your designs ag'in my life; first, because no harm came of 'em; next, because it's your gifts, and natur', and trainin', and I ought not to have trusted you at all; and, finally and chiefly, because I can bear no ill-will to a dying man, whether heathen or Christian." (DS, 115)

This passage reveals some of the implications of Natty Bumppo's doctrine of gifts. Because of the Indian's gifts, nature, and training, Deerslayer says, "I ought not to have trusted you at all." Thus, instead of leading to a healthy cultural pluralism, the doctrine promotes a racist view of the Indian as a person who cannot be trusted. Deerslayer does not again make the mistake of trusting an unknown Indian. By the end of the book he is quite willing to be the first man to fire upon helpless Hurons trying to escape from the encirclement of the British soldiers. Although feeling that "war isn't needfully massacre," Deerslayer plays his full part in the resultant massacre of the Hurons.

At the end of the novel, Deerslayer has also modified his understanding of the Golden rule. When Sumach reviles him for killing her husband and brother, Deerslayer replies, "I raised my hand ag'in 'em on account of what they were striving to do, rather than what they did. This is nat'ral law, 'to do lest you should be done by'" (DS, 515). Thus a few days experience has taught Deerslayer to repudiate his earlier opposition to Hurry Harry's "Do as you're done by" ethic (DS, 79).
Deerslayer is paradigmatic, accepts the possibility of a "just war" between whites and Indians. Deerslayer rejects the possibility of total amity and avoidance of violence in the same way as he rejects the notion that white men should engage in the more bloody practices of Indian warfare.

In many ways *The Deerslayer* presents a more favourable view of Indian life and Indian people than does any other of the Leatherstocking Tales. Rivenoak, the Huron chief, combines a basic commitment to justice and fair play, with his political cunning. Thus, while he, like Magua and Mahtoree, uses demagoguery to bring about his purpose, these purposes are not debased and treacherous as were those of the other two Indian leaders. Rather than scalping their white captives, the Hurons honourably ransom them for chessmen. The Mingos venerate Hetty Hutter. Hurry and Tom condescend towards her. When the Hurons declare war, they give forewarning through a bundle of bound pine knots.

Hurry shoots indifferently and without warning. Harry and Hutter are the first to seek scalps. Their method is to sulk after women and children during the night. The whites organize a scalping expedition, invade Indian camps, or shoot an Indian maiden. But these two renegades are not allowed to scalp any Indians. Although they are debited with the evil intention, it is left to the Indians to capture the horror with an actual scalping—that of Hutter himself:

He was seated, reclining in a corner of a narrow room, with his shoulders supported by the angle, and his head fallen heavily on his chest. Judith moved forward with a sudden impulse, and removed a canvass cap that was forced so low on his head as to conceal his face, and, indeed, all but his shoulders. The instant this obstacle was taken away, the quivering and raw flesh, the bared veins and muscles, and all the other disgusting signs of mortality, as they are
revealed by tearing away the skin, showed that he had been scalped, though still living. (DS, 364)

The situation exploits a basic fear and disgust of Indian warfare: "Hutter was simply scalped, to secure the usual trophy, and was left to die by inches, as has been done in a thousand similar instances by the ruthless warriors of this part of the American continent" (DS.366). Unfortunately, Deerslayer is not present to comment that the act is "in accordance with their gifts." By describing the effects of scalping in such detail, Cooper repudiates Natty Bumppo's easy tolerance of the Indian practice. Neither the failure of Hutter and Hurry Harry to scalp Indians, nor the actual scalping of Hutter, appreciably affect Deerslayer. However, they do affect the reader's perception of Indian and white-man. Cooper has left in the reader's mind a picture of Indian barbarity and cruelty which is not balanced by his editorial comments upon the crude violence and materialistic greed of the two frontiersmen.

The question of aboriginal land claims is not so necessary. Deerslayer and Hurry Harry establish the fact that Mohican, Mingo and white frontiersman all claim the land around Lake Glimmerglass. When Deerslayer raises the further question of formal ownership, Hurry replies, "'Not a human being, the Lord excepted, owns a foot of sile in this part of the country. Pen was never put to paper consarning either hill or valley hereaway, as I've heard old Tom say time and ag'in, and so he claims the best right to it of any man breathing.'" (DS, 8)

In the first three of the Leatherstocking Tales, there is considerable rhetoric about Indian rights to the land and the face value of this rhetoric is seriously undermined by the total effect of the books. In The Deerslayer, the disputed claim for the territory around Lake Glimmerglass subordinates the question of ownership to that of possession. Written in the 1840s, with the perspective of a century, the novel does
not question the continuing advance of American possession and Indian
dispossession. Instead it poses the question, "What kind of American is fit to enter in
and take possession of this land?" The novel implies that Hutter and Harry with their
violent and lawless materialism are as unequal to the task as are Judith with her
corrupted longing for luxury and Hetty with her simple-minded piety.

Only Deerslayer has the requisite strength of body, mind and spirit to survive in
the land. The adventures of *The Deerslayer* takes place at the beginning of the French
and Indian war, but the adventures it records are only indirectly associated with that
struggle. The novel opens, as so often with Cooper, with a vision of the American
forest:

> Whatever may be the changes produced by man, the eternal round of the
> seasons is unbroken. Summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, return in their
> stated order with a sublime precision, affording to man one of the noblest of
> all the occasions he enjoys of proving the high powers of his far-reaching
> mind, in compassing the laws that control their exact uniformity, and in
> calculating their never-ending revolutions. Centuries of summer suns had
> warmed the tops of the same noble oaks and pines, sending their heats even to
> the tenacious roots, when voices were heard calling to each other, in the
> depths of a forest, of which the leafy surface lay bathed in the brilliant light of
> a cloudless day in June, while the trunks of the trees rose in gloomy grandeur
> in the shades beneath. The calls were in different tones, evidently proceeding
> from two men who had lost their way, and were searching in different
> directions for their path. (DS, 23)

Deerslayer has lived with, and been educated by, the Delawares, a tribe of
Indians. Among the Delawares his special friend has been the handsome and noble
young chief, Chingachgook, betrothe to the Delaware maiden, Wah-ta!Wah. Before the story opens, Wah-ta!-Wah, coveted for her beauty by many young braves, has been kidnapped by Briarthorne, a traitor to his tribe, and carried into the western wilderness where a hunting expeditions of Hurons, or Mingoes, are encamped on the shores of Lake Otsego, which goes under the name of the Glimmerglass. The Hurons, friendly to the French, have travelled this far from Canada, and , in their present encampment trespassing, on English territory, although the remoteness of the spot enables them to do so with impunity. Chingachgook, learning that Wah-ta!-Wah has been carried here, makes an engagement with his friend, Deerslayer, to undertake the rescue of his betrothed- and the two are to meet, at a certain time, by a certain rock, on the shores of the Glimmerglass. It is while travelling to keep this meeting that Deerslayer meets Hurry Harry in the wilderness. They two have known each other before, and as Hurry is also headed for the Glimmerglass, the two join forces. The purpose of Hurry’s expedition is to visit a family that lives in this isolated spot and they Tom Hutter and his daughters, the beautiful Judith and her feeble minded sister, Hetty. Despite Judith’s reputed indiscretions with the officers of an English garrison a day’s march away in the wilderness. Hurry is infatuated with Judith’s beauty and wishes to marry her. The Hutter family (with the exception of poor Hetty, who becomes a bore) is very well done. Tom Hutter, has withdrawn into the wilderness because of a price on his head for piracy. For the sake of security against Indian attacks Tom Hutter has built a log house, referred to as the Castle, on piles near the middle of the lake; and for additional security and convenience, he has constructed a large flat-bottomed boat, called the ark, in which he and his daughters live during summer. The ark and the castle, with occasional sojourns on the lake shore, become the crowded action that follows.
The Hurons have just learned to the outbreak of hostilities between the French and the English, and as adherents of the former, they are reluctant to break up their summer encampment without bearing away, as trophies of their trip into enemy country, the scalps of the whites on the Glimmerglass. They are met half-way in their desire by Hutter and Hurry, who desire Indian scalps to collect the bounty the British colonial government has placed on that commodity. The action is complicated by the arrival of Chingachgook, who, from more honourable motives, joins in the scalping expeditions of the white men.

Tom Hutter and Hurry Harry are not simple cases of moral depravity. Their villainy, which, is confined to a habit of scalping Indians, is strictly legal, and encouraged by the government, and Cooper is fully aware of all their implications for American society. For if Hurry and Tom Hutter are not the Americans of the new age, they seem to have their relations with them. Their impressiveness in the book, however, springs from the concrete richness with which they are realized. They are before, not only as superbly solid physical embodiments of the American wilderness-man, but the nature of the violent, if narrow, action is exactly calculated to illuminate the restricted stage of their moral consciousness. In an early dialogue between Deerslayer and Hurry on the subject of Indians, Hurry’s mental processes—a picture so typical of a pattern that is to become representative of one line of American rationalizing that in Hurry there is artistic progenitor of Senator McCarran’s racial ideal:

“I look upon the red-men to be quite as human as we are ourselves, Hurry. They have their gifts, and their religion, it’s true; but that makes no difference in the end, when each will be judged according to his deeds, and not according to his skin.”
“That’s downright missionary, and will find little favour up in this part of the
country, where the Moravians don’t congregate. Now, skin makes the man.
This is reason; else how are people to judge each other. The skin is put on,
over all, in order that when a creatur’, or a mortal, is fairly seen, you may
know at once what to make of him. You know a bear from a hog, by his skin,
and a grey squirrel from a black.”

“True, Hurry,” said the other looking back and smiling; “nevertheless, they are
both squirrels.”

“Who denies it? But you’ll not say that a red man and a white man are both
Injins?”

“No; but I do say they are both men. men of different races and colours, and
having different gifts and traditions, but, in the main, with the same natur’.
Both have souls; and both will be held accountable for their deeds in this life.”
(DS, 72)

Hurry is one of those theorists who believe in the inferiority of all the human
race who are not white. His notions on the subject are not clear, nor are his definitions
at all well settled but his options are none the less dogmatical or fierce. His
conscience accuses him of sundry lawless acts against the Indians, and he has found it
an exceedingly easy mode of quieting it, by putting the whole family of red men,
incontinently, without the category of human rights. Nothing angers him sooner than
to deny his proposition, more especially if the denial are accompanied by a show of
plausible argument; and he did not listen to his companion’s remarks with much
composure of either manner or feeling.

In Hurry Harry and his moral vision of life there is an early representative of a
type that was to become a dominant element in American civilization as it moved
along towards the Gilded Age—a type that could supplant moral motives by motives of commercial expediency, and pretend, even to itself, that the substitution had never been made. Cooper’s perceptions in creating Hurry Harry are profound and accurate. Although he does not perceptibly wince at the idea of scalping Indian children for the bounty, he is a pattern of the forthright, impulsive, attractive young American. Much of the genius is shown in the way he effectively suggests the squalid reality behind the romantic figure of the woods. And it is well to bear in mind that this brand of American romanticism was partly cultivated in Cooper’s day for the sake of putting some colour of attractive decorum on the crimes of the American wilderness, without which the expansion of the frontier would have notably lagged, or so it seemed. The delicacy of Cooper’s distinctions is poised and precise. If he gives the dark side of Hurry, he never identifies him with the overt criminality of old Tom Hutter, the ex-pirate:

But neither of these two rude beings, so ruthless in all that touches the rights and interests of the red man, though possessing veins of human feeling on other matters, was much actuated by any other desire than a heartless longing for profit. Hurry had felt angered at his sufferings, when first liberated, it is true, but that emotion had soon disappeared in a habitual love of gold, which he sought with the reckless avidity of a needy spendthrift, rather than with the ceaseless longings of a miser. In short, the motive that urged them both so soon to go against the Hurons, was an habitual contempt of their enemy, acting on the unceasing cupidity of prodigality. The additional chances of success, however, had their place in their place in the formation of the second enterprise. It was known that a large portion of the warriors—perhaps all—were encamped for the night, abreast of the castle, and it was hoped that the scalps
of helpless victims would be the consequence. To confess the truth, Hutter in particular—he who had just left two daughters behind him, expected to find few but women and children in the camp. This fact had been but slightly alluded to in his communications with Hurry, and with Chingachgook it had been kept entirely out of view. (DS, 142)

Hurry Harry is the portent of how things are to go in America. Hurry is a woodsman, but his relation with the wilderness is opposed to Deerslayer’s. His true roots are in the settlements, and the wilderness exists for him essentially as a business that he may make periodic visits to civilization with his pockets jingling. Hurry is an indication of how things will be, Deerslayer of how they might have been. Deerslayer exists on a different level of the imagination than Hurry. He is essentially a poetic evocation, and his conception inevitably incorporates an element of myth in so far as myth may be defined as the incarnation of racial aspiration and memory. His vision of life is best summed up in his speech:

As for farms, they have their uses, and there’s them that like to pass their lives on ‘em; but, what comfort can a man look for in a clearin’ that he can’t find in double quantities in the forest? If air, and room, and light, are a little craved, the wind-rows and the streams will furnish ‘em, or here are the lakes for such as have bigger longings in that way; but where are you to find your shades, and laughing springs, and leaping brooks, and venerable trees, a thousand years old, in a clearin’? you don’t find them, but you find their disabled trunks, marking the ‘arth like head-stones in a graveyard? It seems to me that the people who live in such places, must be always thinkin’ of their own ends, and of natural decay; and that, too, not of decay that is brought about by time and natur’, but the decay that follows waste and violence. Then as to churches,
they are good, I suppose, else wouldn’t good men uphold ‘em. But they are not altogether necessary. They call ‘em the temples of the Lord; but Judith, the whole ‘arth is a temple of the Lord to such as have right minds. Moreover, all is contradiction in the settlements, while all is concord in the woods. Forts and churches almost always go together, and yet they’re downright contradictions; churches being for peace, and forts for war. (DS, 243)

Tolerance is a somewhat imprecise word to use in a decision such as the present one, but tolerance is nothing more than intelligence and sensitive understanding-perception deep enough to find the substantial likeness under the shadows of division. If there is a poetry of tolerance, Deerslayer is its expression. It is what radically distinguishes him from the more characteristically American Hurry Harry. The following exchange between them may seem to add little to a quotation. Deerslayer plays his role and is justified:

“God made us all, white, black and red; and, no doubt, had his own wise intentions in colouring us differently. Still, he made us, in the main, much the same in feelings; though I’ll not deny he gave each race its gifts. A white man’s gifts are christianized, while a red-skin’s are more for the wilderness. Thus, it would be great offence for the white man to scalp the dead; whereas it’s a signal virtue in an Indian. Then ag’in a white man can’t amboosh women and children in war, while a red-skin may. Tis is a cruel work, I’ll allow; but for them it’s lawful work, while for us it would be grievous work”

“That depends on your inimy. As for scalping, or even skinning a savage, I look upon them pretty much the same as cutting off the ears of wolves, for the bounty, or stripping a bear of its hide. And then you’re out significantly, as to
taking the poll of a redskin in hand, seeing that the very Colony has offered a bounty. (DS, 72)

The mere statement of Deerslayer’s tolerance, as it comes out in passages of dialogue as the one here quoted, does an injustice to the living figure of Deerslayer as it exists in the novel. The whole action is animated by Deerslayer’s vision. It takes firm control of the action, elevating it above plot mechanics into the realm of life and moral form. Closely related to, and growing out of this tolerant understanding of life is a reverence for life itself. Though filled with adventures, life goes on.

Dramatically, Natty, a captive of the Hurons, is released on his honour for a period of twenty four hours, but at the end of that time is obligated to return to captivity with the almost certain knowledge that he will be put to torture and death. Natty keeps the terms of his promise to the letter, although to do so appears madness to his companions, Deerslayer’s life, is moulded in the imagination with the firm spiritual contours, of the saint. It reveals, Natty’s vision of life to us as a passionate dedication to truth – and truth, not as that pragmatical nothingness it was to become in American life, but as a religious conception. To Hurry Harry’s argument against his returning to the Hurons (“What’s an Injin or a word passed, or a furlough taken from the creatures like them, that have neither souls nor names?”). Deerslayer replies:

“If they’ve got neither souls nor names, you and I have both, Harry March, and one is accountable for the other. This furlough is not, as you seem to think, altogether a matter between me and the Mingoes, seeing it is a solemn bargain between me and God. He who thinks that he can say what he pleases, in his distress, and that ‘twill all pass for nothing, because “tis uttered in the forest, and into red men’s ears, knows little of his situation, and hopes, and
wants. The words are said to the ears of the Almighty. The air is his breath and
the light of the sun is little more than a glance of his eye.” (DS, 322)

The conflict established between Hurray and Natty characterizes all of their
subsequent relations. Hurry, travels to the Glimmerglass, the wilderness lake to claim
Judith Hutter as his bride. Enamored by her beauty, he has little regard for her
substance. His is troubled by her flirtations with officers of a British garrison, but he
regards her nonetheless as a prize to be won and displayed in the settlements. Hurry,
approaches his courtship in the same ruthless manner in which he gathers his furs. If
Judith has married in his absence, he will kill her husband and introduce her to “the
pleasures of widowhood. When Natty challenges the morality of such an act, Hurry
ridicules his scruples:

“If and inimy crosses my path” he asks, “will I not beat him out of it! Look at
me – am I a man like to let any sneaking, crawling, skin trader get the better of
me……. And if a man should be found dead in the woods, who is there to say
who slew him, even admitting the Colony took the matter in hand and made a
stir about it?” (DS 221)

Natty is also on a matrimonial mission, but rather than pursuing his own
interests, he has come into the region to help Chingachgook recover. Hist, his
kidnapped lover. While Hurry’s quest is governed by Judith’s beauty, Natty rejects so
shallow a guide. “I would think no more of such a women,” he cautions Hurry, “but
turn my mind altogether to the forest; that will not deceive you, being ordered and
ruled by a hand that never wavers” (DS, 333)

The manner in which Hurry and Natty pursue their objectives further clarifies
their opposition. Hurry agrees to join Tom Hutter, Judith’s step-father, in a scalping
expedition against the Hurons, because the British pay a bounty for Indian scalps, and
because Hutter offers to exchange Judith for Hurry’s assistance in the hunt. But Natty is convinced neither by Tom’s argument that British policy sanctions scalping as a legitimate act of war nor by his contention that killing an Indian is a matter no more serious than trapping a beaver or shooting a deer. The scalp bounties are in Natty’s judgement a bad business. “When the Colony’s laws, or even the King’s laws, run a’gain the laws of God,” he tells Tom, “they get to be onlawful, and ought not to be obeyed” Moreover, Natty maintains, Indians share a common human nature and may be slain only in open and generous warefare. Hurry and Tom are contemptuous of Natty’s morality and attribute his resistance to his youth and his Moravian training. They demonstrate their manhood by ambushing women and children, while Natty preserves his virtue by killing his first brave in just and honourable battle.

Hurry continues to transgress the limits of both Indians and white convention. He violates Indian codes of honor by seeking scalps for profit rather than glory and denies the restraints of his own tradition by shooting women in the back and by refusing to observe a Huron flag of truce. He scorns Natty’s decision to redeem a pledge he has given the Hurons as the act of a madman or a fool and argues that he is not bound to deal fairly with the Indians because they have neither souls nor names. When Tom is killed and the security of his floating cabin is imperiled, Hurry abandons Hutter’s daughters and returns to the garrison. He is, human enough to follow human nature, and see the folly of one man’s fighting a whole tribe. By contrast, every aspect of Natty’s conduct is governed by a rigorous morality. He fights only in accordance with his gifts and consistently resists the urgings of self-interest. Captured and then released on a furlough by the Hurons, he returns to their camp at the appointed hour even though the he knows that to do so will result in torture and death. He tells the incredulous Hurry that A bargain is a bargain, though it is made
with a vagabond. His “word” demands that he honor the terms of his leave. Nor are Judith’s professions of love sufficient to tempt him to abandon his principles. Despite her beauty and her effort to share the Glimmerglass with him, Natty rejects her as an inappropriate bride whose moral weakness and settlement inclinations are inconsistent with the demand of his nature. In any case, he warns, a marriage between them would be an unequal one. He is too rude and ignorant for Judith, and although vanity is natural, such hubris on his part surpasses reason.

The British soldiers of the novel practice a less crude but equally malignant villainy. Preying on the women for the frontier, they toast the pleasures of bachelorhood and celebrate their reputation as a regiment of merry rakes. Only once they involve in an activity other than seduction. A detachment under the command of Captain Warley attacks the Huron camp where Natty is held prisoner. They release him from bondage, but do so in a needlessly brutal fashion with Cooper contrasts both with Natty’s self-discipline and with the more limited and tradition-bound violence of Indians. Sweeping into the encampment, Warley’s troops indulge themselves in wanton bloodshed. “All of the women”, Cooper reports, “and some of the Huron girls, had fallen by the bayonet, either in the confusion of the melee, or from the difficulty of distinguishing the sexes, where the dress was so simple. Much the greater portion of the braves suffered on the spot. A few had escaped, however, two of three had been unharmed. As for the wounded, the bayonet saved the surgeon much trouble”.

Warley’s callous response to his carnage is as disturbing as the violence he sponsors. He is indifferent to the burial of the battle’s victims, preferring “attendance on Miss Judith Hutter” to service “on a point of the lake, however romantic the position of brilliant the victory”. He extends only cursory attention to his own wounded and jests that a soldier with terminal stomach wound will find the taking of nourishment “rather
inconvenient”. His principle concerns are lost sleep from “being up two nights de suite” and his plans for parading Judith at the fort.

Like mythic discourse, which characteristically deals with origins, *The Deerslayer* centers on the question of beginnings. Its setting, of course, suggests an American genesis. “The hand of man”, Cooper writes, “had never yet defaced or deformed any part of the native scene”. “Not a tree,” Natty remarks, has been “disturbed even by redskin hand, as I can discover, but everything left in the ordering of the Lord”. All of *The Deerslayer’s* characters are themselves involved in an adventure for a beginning. Natty and Chingachgook are on their first warpath. Tom Hutter has settled at the Glimmerlass to escape his history. Judith hopes to launch a new destiny by marrying Natty. The officers of the British garrison are the agents of Europe’s search for a New World. Extending the Adamic metaphor of *The Pathfinder*, Cooper sets *The Deerslayer* in a virgin wilderness free from “dangerous serpents”.

There Judith longs for a protector “to turn this place into a Garden of Eden” and tempts Natty with a sexual initiation which will compromise his innocence.

That enticement is the latest in a series of tests which challenge Natty’s immunity to human weakness. He resists Hurry and Tom’s urgings to join their bounty hunt, refuses a Huron offer to spare his life if he will agree to marry a squaw and join their tribe, and reject Judith’s plea to default on his promise to return to the Huron camp. By overcoming each of these temptations, Natty earns the title and becomes worthy of embracing his wilderness bride. The mythic aspect of Natty’s trials is an obvious ones. When Natty kills his first Indian, he acts as a national archetype. Natty is fired on from ambush, he refuses to take advantage of his foe and permits him to rearm. Insisting that the war is not needfully massacre. He attempts to reason with the Indian and avoids bloodshed. Only when the brave fires a second
time, does Natty takes his life. He then cradles the dying Indian in his arms and assures him that his principles prohibit him from taking his scalp. “White I was born,” he tells him, “and white I will die, clinging to color to the last, even though the King’s Majesty, his governors, and all his councils, both at home and in the colonies, forget where they come from and where they hope to go”. In acknowledgment of that virtue, the dying Indian gives Natty his benediction and names him “Hawk-eye.” Such, “was the commencement of a career in forest exploits that afterward rendered this man, in his way, and under the limits of his habits and opportunities as renowned as many a hero whose name has adorned the pages of works more celebrated than legends simple as ours can ever become”. (DS, 401)

The sobriety of Cooper’s men are more consistent with their natures. Each of Natty’s Indian names define an aspect of his identity. He has been called Straight-tongue because he does not lie. Pigeon because he is quick of foot, Lap-ear because he partakes the sagacity of the hound, and Deerslayer because he can keep a wigwam in ven’son. The name – Hawk-eye- is a measure of his marksmanship and moral precision. “Hurry Skurry” epitomizes Harry March’s reckless manner, just as “The Muskrat” defines Tom Hutter’s bestial nature. Chingachgook is called the big Serpent because of his wisdom, and prudence, and cunning. Judith’s name, the wild rose,” establishes her beauty and her lack of discipline, while the drooping lilly suggests Hetty’s mental weakness.

The discrepancy between these two forms of naming to invalidate the prospect of self-determination is employed. As the settlements expand, new names replace those chosen by the Indians and trappers. As soon as Glimmerglass is mapped, it acquires a new title which Natty fears will be less “reasonable and resembling”. He mourns that change because “christenings always fortell waste and destruction”.
There is, a bond between naming and destruction which transcends the inevitable process of wilderness clearing. The names the settlers have traditionally imposed on the forests are drawn from Europe. Whether those titles bear the prefix “new” or whether they honor a monarch or a military hero, they suggest the weight of history. The characters’ surnames imply a similar burden. Natty and Chingachgook have earned wilderness titles, but they also have family names which restrict their freedom. Chingachgook is the line of Uncas and is as a result bound by the demands of that heritage. Natty is limited by the imperatives of the Bumppo’s. He cannot fully embrace the ways of his adopted tribe but must preserve the traditions of his race and family. Although he hopes to “live and die” with the Delawares, he must “strive to do a paleface’s duty in a redskin society”. Judith’s situation is even more difficult. Natty does not marry her because she is too highly born; the officers of the garrison regard her “as the plaything of an idle hour rather than as an equal and a friend”. She attempts to free herself from the limits of her heritage by arguing that because her true father is unknown to her, she is “Judith and Judith only”. But her declaration of independence is futile. Judith is, as her duplication of her mother’s fate implies, bound by her nature.

Thus the Indians try to prove their existence by sometimes accepting the hostility and sometimes reacting severely which makes them hostile and the consequences become more fatal. They go against their own tribe, and become revengeful. According to Existential Philosophy since individuals possess free will, they are responsible for their own actions. Existentialists focus on the very being of humanity its constant and anguished struggle to exist. But sometimes the hostile universe entails anxiety and suffering. The Indians in The Deerslayer have to face the same anxiety and suffering and have to pay the price of living in the world which they
think that it is their own and are unable to accept that the whites have snatched it from them. Thus their life becomes adventurous and they have to face many difficulties.