CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN NOVELS

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER AS THE FIRST GREAT NOVELIST OF AMERICA

American literature may be said to have made its humble beginning in 1493. The first successful English Colony in North America was founded in Jamestown. Soon there was a string of thirteen such colonies along the Atlantic sea-board. These colonies or settlements grew in isolation, each having little knowledge of the other, for there were no easy and safe means of communication. These early English Colonists came and settled in America for various reasons. There were still others who came lured by the hopes of getting rich quickly and easily exploiting the rich, natural resources, as yet unexplored, of the continent. They were heroic souls, who were undeterred by dangers and difficulties. They had to adapt themselves to unfamiliar climates and crops, to deal with the Red Indians, to chart and survey, clear and plant, and build and improvise. By the end of the colonial period, conditions were less strange and more comfortable. Yet, for the first years, when everything was uncertain, life was reduced to the starkest terms.

William Bradford outlines:

“Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation, they had now no friends to welcome them, no inns to entertain or refresh their weather beaten bodies, no houses or much less towns to repair to,
to seek for succour. Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men? and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. Neither could they, as it were, go up to the top of Pisgarh, to view from this wilderness a more goodly country to feed their hopes; for which wheresoever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward objects. For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a weather-beaten face…….”The Colonial Period” (TWJFC)

The period from 1607-1765 is known as Colonial Period of American Literature, for during this period a number of other colonies were founded all through the continent and they continued to flourish in isolation and with little contact with each other. There was little feeling of nationalism, and these early settlers continued to look to Europe as their home. It was only about the middle of eighteen century that these separate people became aware of each other, gradually began to come closer together, and the upshot was the rise of nationalism and the birth of American nation. During this colonial period, stretching over a period of one hundred and fifty years, the literary output was rather scanty. These early settlers had to wage a relentless war against Nature as well as the Red Indians. They were too busy taming nature, and dodging the arrows of the Red Indians to have much time for reading or writing of literature. Literature is a peace-time activity, and the ‘founding-fathers’ enjoyed little leisure or peace during those early days in their new home.

The earliest American writers were really Europeans writers living in America; and even though they might have left Europe a long time ago, their writing was clearly influenced by European writers, and for the most part, was merely an imitation of European, and in particular English literature. The spirit of nationalism was totally
lacking, but the literature of a people sprung from this feeling of nationalism. They did not feel the urge to create. This urge was felt only after the declaration of Independence, and then the literature in America progressed, and came to its own by the turn of eighteenth century. These early settlers were largely Puritans, who regarded imaginative literature—poetry, novel and drama—as a lie and consequently it was discouraged and looked down upon.

The early colonial literature became a great reservoir of material and inspiration for the nineteenth century. For readers it still provided understanding of those bedrock American experiences which developed the national character and peculiarly American institution. The early colonisers, particularly those who settled round New England, were largely Puritans, and Puritanism exercised considerable influence on the growth of American literature. Marcus Culniffe, an eminent critic writes:

“This early Puritan Literature was heavily weighted, in subject and style, by religious considerations. The best writing was held to be that which best brought home to the average church-member a full awareness of his perilous, probationary status on earth. As the Puritans condemned the images and incense of the Roman church, so in literature they distrusted the highly coloured. A plain style was commended, without unnecessary ornament and without allusions that might pass over the heads of the unlettered.” (TANIT)

Spiritual auto-biographies are closely allied to diaries and they, too, form a large part of this early literature. Puritan habit of introspection and self-analysis imparts intensity to these auto-biographies and makes them gripping in their interest. Jonathan Edward’s Personal Narratives is the best of species. Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography and John Woolman’s Journals are two other great literary works written in this tradition.
These early settlers were Puritans, but they were also explorers and adventurers, and so they also produced a large body of the literature of travel and adventure. Numerous accounts of their difficulties and dangers, as well as of the relentless struggle against heavy odds which they had to wage can be taken into account. These accounts also reveal their pride in their new environment. The greatest work of this type is Cotton Mather’s monumental work *Magnalia Christi American*, published in 1702. It describes the Golden age of Puritanism before its decline. It also shows that much of Puritan literature was not published at the time it was written, but at a much later date, and that colonial literature is not so poor as it had been traditionally made out to be by the anti-Puritans.

It has been questioned whether the literature can be called American literature. But there is no reasonable ground for doubt. A fair survey of the facts will show that literature of this country is distinctive in its thought and feeling. The best works are not an echo of the literature of England, but a new and valuable contribution to the literature of the world. The best of Irving’s writings, the tales of Hawthorne, the *Evangeline* and *Hiawatha* of Longfellow, not to mention many others, are filled with American scenery, American thought, and American character. The literature of America is the youngest of national literatures. Although the beginnings were in the early part of the seventeenth century, it is scarcely more than two generations ago that American literature entered upon a vigorous development. Though there are two great names in the eighteenth century, - those of Franklin and Edwards, - the polite literature really begins with Irving, Bryant, and Cooper, in the first quarter of the nineteen century.
During the nineteenth century, American literature had a remarkable development. In various departments – history, criticism, and poetry. It fairly vied with that of the mother country. Yet the highest literary achievements probably lie in the future. With a territory capable of supporting a population of five hundred millions, the task of the American people was yet half accomplished. Material interests and social problems continued. It may be for a long time, to absorb a large part of the best talent of the land. But after this period of ardent striving and conflict was past, the golden age came, and having time to listen, some Homer or Milton started singing.

No other country seems to present more favourable conditions for the development of a great literature. The most interesting factor in literature is the human element, - the presentation of the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of men. As literature reflects national life, the nature of this element depends upon the culture and experience of the people. Nowhere else has life been more varied and more intense than in America and nowhere else, in the years to come, will it afford richer and more picturesque materials.

American literature is an offshoot of English literature, and shares the life of the parent stock. It uses the same language and its earliest writers were colonists who had received their education in England. The culture of this country is distinctively English in origin and character. The differences are but modifications growing out of the new environment. They own their laws and their religion chiefly to England; and the political independence achieved through the Revolution did not withdraw them from the humanizing influence of English letters.

In recent years, through the importation of French, German, and Russian books, the American literary culture, as in other progressive countries, has become more
cosmopolitan in character. But before that time, the reading was confined almost exclusively to English authors. The great English classics, from Chaucer down, can justly claim as the natural heritage of Europe. The leading movements in the literary history of England have been reflected in America. In many cases a similarity of thought and style may be traced, as between Goldsmith and Irving, Scott and Cooper, Carlyle and Emerson. But this resemblance has not risen from feeble or conscious imitation. It has not interfered with the individuality of our authors, nor impaired the excellence of their works.

The literary history of America may be divided into several periods. The general character of which is more or less sharply defined, though the limits naturally shade into one another by almost imperceptible degrees. The first period, which includes nearly the whole of seventeenth century, may be called the First Colonial Period. The principal productions of this period represents, not American, but English, culture, and are concerned chiefly with a description of the New World, with the story of colonization, or with a discussion of the theological questions that grew out of the great Protestant reformation in Europe. The next period, beginning with the eighteenth century, and extending to the Revolution, may be known as the Second Colonial Period. In the literature of this period, American life is reflected more fully, and two writers, Franklin and Edwards, stand out with great prominence. Then follows what was designated as the Revolutionary Period, extending from the Revolution to the War of 1812. The dominant influence in this period was the establishment of a new and independent government. Here belong the names of Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison and Jay. This was followed by an era of literary bloom, which may be characterized as the First National Period. It covers the time lying between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, and furnishes the beginning of
what is called polite literature, or belles-lettres, in this country. To this period belong
the greatest names of literary history, - Irving, Cooper, Bryant, Hawthorne,
Longfellow, and others. Lastly, the period, which for convenience may be called the
Second national Period. It begins with the Civil War, and exhibits a broad
cosmopolitan tendency. Though it has produced but few writers of pre-eminent
ability, it is characterized by unexampled literary activity, and by great excellence of
literary form.

For most of the twentieth century American historians, writing from the point
of view of Anglo-American conquerors, have relegated the Indian to the historical
dust bin. In a few cases, those bothering to discuss the Red Men do so with negative
adjectives such as savage, wily, or treacherous. According to William Brandon, this
view overlooks the significance of Indian actions and presents only a one-sided
account of the national history. He points out that the aboriginal Americans aided
national development by providing direct help such as food and shelter to
frontiersmen, offering military aid and political alliances against mutual enemies, and
economic cooperation in the fur trade. He notes that the often overlooked Indian
versus Indian conflicts proved frequently more significant in opening new frontier
regions for white settlement than did American diplomacy or military action. Brandon
concludes that until the Indians actions are considered within the mainstream of
American history, little true understanding of them is possible. James Bryce writes:

“Done no more than give a touch of romance or a spice of danger to the
exploration of some regions…..while over the rest of the country the unhappy
aborigines have slunk silently away, scarcely even complaining of the robbery
of lands and the violation of plighted faith.”
In the early 1920’s, as he approached the close of his teaching career, Frederick Jackson Turner summed up the presence of the Indians in the history of eastern America:

Between the beginning of the seventieth century, when the West lay along the Atlantic coast, and in 1850 when it had crossed the Mississippi…the Indians had step by step, in successive wars, been defeated and removed…Indians had influenced white development by this retardation of advance, compelling society to organize & consolidate in order to hold the frontier, training it in military discipline, determining the rate of advance, particularly at the points where the mt. barriers broke down… (SS)

The traditional view of Indians in American history sees them as natural features of land, rather like mountains or rivers or buffalo or troublesome, if colourful, wild varmints, affecting American history only by occasionally impeding the civilizing progress of advancing settlers. This traditional view remains overwhelmingly in evidence even though in recent years a great deal of important work has been done in local and regional Indian history, enhancing the value of basic historical contributions from earlier writers such as George Bird Grinnell, J.P.Dunn, Frederick Webb Hodge, John R. Swanton, James Mooney, and others. Expert testimony of historians and anthropologists in connection with the hundreds of legal cases before the special commission for Indian claims that has been in operation since 1947 is piling up further raw material by the bale for tribal histories.

However, only a very few works have made any serious attempt to outline Indian history with the area of the entire United States or the entire continent, and any serious effect of Indians on American history in general has scarcely been considered. Several anthropological studies have been made of Indian influences on culture, but
historians have not as yet given much shrift on any notion of effective Indian participation in history. Most of history, wrote Bernard De Voto, has been treated as if it were “A function solely of white culture-in spite of the fact that till well into the 19th century the Indians were on the principal determinants of historical events…” (SS)

In disregard of Parkman’s “great example,” said De Voto, “American historians have made shockingly little effort to understand the life, the societies, the cultures, the thinking, and the feeling of Indians, and disastrously little effort to understand how all these affected white men and their societies.” (TWJFC)

Parkman’s example, though, is an example of the kind of befriending that leaves no need of enemies. His Indians are truly wild. They sulk, screech, slay with the mindless gluttony of weasels, and otherwise behave as barbarically as possible, but they hardly ever (if not ever) permit themselves to be seen behaving as reasonable men. A lone camper in the forest is “…no doubt an Indian, ambushed on the bank, watching to kill some passing enemy.” Or the ferocious Iroquois are on conquest bent, “yet it was not alone their homicidal fury that now impelled them to another war. Strange as it may seem, this war was in no small measure one of commercial advantage.” Parkman summed up his judgement of Indians (in his introduction to The Jesuits in North America): “It is obvious that the Indian mind has never seriously occupied itself with any of the higher themes of thought.” (TWJFC)

Parkman’s persistent picture of the Indian as “man, wolf, and devil, all in one,” has undoubtedly been of some consequences in rendering its subject historically ineffective. Painted savages who capered about in indecent clothes, ate nasty foods, and howled unintelligibly every time they came in sight, obviously could not have
been of much more importance than so many grizzly bears to the course of American history.

It may be supposed at any rate that most of the people of the New World’s ancient societies certainly thought of themselves as civilized. Certainly they made a conscious effort to try to live in the right way, toward what their society regarded as right and proper objectives. It would follow that in general their behaviour was a product of the nature of their society, a deliberate behaviour motivated by conscious, deliberate point of view. Such people should be susceptible of full-scale consideration as responsible and effective agents of history. A number of avenues suggest themselves by which the peculiarly Indian behaviour of American Indians may have influenced, directly or indirectly, the main stream of history and the development of United States.

First and most striking is the assistance given by various Indian groups to embryonic colonies of Europeans. Massasoit and his Wampanoags were the salvation of the struggling colony of Plymouth, along with Tisquantum, who was called by Governor Braford a “spetiall instrument sent of God for their good beyond their expectation” and by Sir Ferdinando Gorges one of “the means under God of putting on Foote, and giving life to all our plantations…..” The Wappinger people of Manhattan “preserved” the first Dutch traders “like the apple of their eye” and gave “their Turkish beans and Turkish wheat” when the foreign invaders “sometimes had no victuals.” At Jamestown captain John Smith and his colonists had already fought, that “it pleased God (in our extremity) to move the Indians to bring us Corne, ere it was half ripe, to refresh us, when we rather expected…..they would destroy us…….” Such was the weakness of the colony, said tough Captain Smith, “that had not the
Indians fed us, we directly had starved.....” Indians taught the Jamestown people how to plant corn, and, after the strategic marriage of John Rolfe to Pocahontas, Indians taught the Englishmen how to raise tobacco. This gave the colony a cash crop and its first profit, and the appearance of the eagerly awaited profit entrained vast and enduring consequences.

Commonly, in the earliest days of exploration and colonization, first arrivals were greeted with friendliness rather than with hostility: “.....being of simple faith, the natives evinced for Collomba tenderness and friendship.....” reported a foreign agent at the Spanish court, sending out the first news of Columbus’ discovery. Jacques Cartier landed on an island in the St. Lawrence in 1535 and “met with five men, that were hunting of wild beasts, who as freely and familiarly came to our boats without any fear, as if we had ever been brought up together...one of them took our captain in his arms, and carried him on shore.....” Alvar Nunez Vaca, travelling alone on a sea-shell peddler among Texas coast Indians who had probably never before seen a white man, this being circa 1529: “With my merchandise and trade I went into the interior as far as I pleased.....whenever I went I received fair treatment......”

(Accounts of early explorers furnish almost at random such passages as, “Food was placed before them, and, as the Illinois code of courtesy enjoined, their entertainers conveyed the morsels with their own hands to the lips of these unenviable victims of their hospitality while others rubbed their feet with bear’s grease...” or of the Arkansas: “I cannot tell you the civility and kindness we received from these barbarians......” or among the people of the Hasinai Confederacy: ‘......a tribe than powerful but long since extinct. Nothing could surpass the friendliness of the welcome.....” or among the Sioux, where the old men welcomes a stranger with
caresses and tears. Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca also spoke of weeping in welcome:

“……They have a custom when they meet, or from time to time when they visit, of remaining half an hour before they speak, weeping…..” (LJ)

Castaneda of the buffalo-hunting people of the plains who were to become centuries later the fearsome Apaches, met Coronado in 1541: “They are a gentle people, not cruel faithful in their friendship…..” Said Raleigh’s envoy, Captain Barlow, in 1584 of the Virginia people among whom ill-fated Roanoke was established the following year: “…..most gentle, loving, faithful, void of all guile and treason, and such as live after the manner of the golden age…..” (JFCTAD)

The policy of the various Indian people, in these first meetings between two strange worlds, was obviously a vital factor in the success of colonies and exploration. When in these first relations the Indians became sufficiently opposed to the foreigners, colonies or trading posts or missions could not as a rule survive. But since many colonies and trading posts and missions did survive and prosper, it seems probable that many Indian groups may indeed have welcomed the foreigners with more benevolence than belligerence, particularly during the crucial seasons of first meetings and first founding.

The varying policy in this regard of the various Indian people could scarcely derive from any period from any imposed factor. Manipulation of the simple Indian by the superior Europeans has sometimes been stressed and may have been of moment now and then, but it seems unlikely that it could have often been very weighty in the earlier centuries when the balance of power and consequent occasion for invitation was extravagantly on the side of the Indians. The weightiness of this factor is sometimes questionable even in later times, as in the interesting case of Pierre Vial, a champion frontiersman sent north from Santa Fe in 1805 in the employ
of Spain to stir up the Plains Indians against Lewis and Clark. Vial couldn’t get his own expedition out his own front door, so to speak, being stopped by hostile Indians (apparently Pawnees) at the Arkansas River. He tried again, in vain again, while the inexperienced Lewis and Clark were successfully passing through dozens of Indian nations all the way to the Pacific.

Other factors in early Indian behaviour may have been, at one time or another, desire for trade or for knowledge of new things or fear of new things, domestic political conditions or relations with rival communities, the season of the year, the state of the corn crop, heavenly signs and portents, religious laws, any or all of the multifarious motives that bear on human conduct especially on the group conduct of social and political actions. These factors and these political decisions were of import in history and deserve thorough going study, but the point is also that they all refer to one other prevailing factors that must always be considered. The underlying attitudes and ways of life of the societies making up the Indian world, the attitudes and ideas that shaped the nature of those societies and the character of their people.

If there was a tendency for Indians to welcome foreign invaders with more benevolence than otherwise, this is important. At most it might indicate that the Europeans were invading what was in a sense a higher civilization. At least it is an indication of New World character that appears to deviate considerably from more customary and familiar Old World character. The question as to how much this peculiar Indian behaviour had to do with the health and growth of the nursling colonies and their later careers of conquest takes on still more significance.

When the Indian world was moved to resist, it could become a world most difficult to penetrate and conquer. Scattered bands of Apaches and their even more scattered allies declined to permit secure occupation of their country for more than
two centuries, enduring volumes of epic warfare and several earnest attempts to extermination by Europeans allied with other Indian nations. The Jibaros of Ecuador and Peru drove out Spanish colonists in the sixteenth century and had not accepted colonization of their country yet. In the closing years of the seventeenth century French armies and allied Indians mounted repeated invasions that should have utterly smashed, but did not, the Five Nations Iroquois. In the middle years of the eighteenth century the French staged repeated full scale campaigns against the Chickasaws and were repeatedly defeated. Some Indians conquests of the Aztec state in Mexico requires, even after the capture and death of Moctezuma, a year of desperate campaigning and embattled power diplomacy and the final bitterly fought months-long siege of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec Mexico City, surrounded by the Spaniards and their “numberless” Indian allies. The conquest of Peru required, even after the capture and death of Inca, a long generation of tangled wars to end organized military resistance. The Spaniards were lavishly assisted in these wars by many Indian allies.

Superior European tactics and arms notwithstanding, an intact Indian nation could be a formidable opponent to overthrow by force alone, even with the help of Indian allies. Without such Indian allies, invasions by blunt force were often if not usually disastrous. Such were the first large-scale invasions of Panama, which cost hundreds of Spanish lives and ended in utter defeat until Vasco Nunez de Balboa paved the way to victory with powerful Indian friends. In short, strictly military conquest in the New World was seldom easy, and seemed to have veritable need of Indian help to succeed at all.

If American conquest was this difficult, and since nevertheless it was accomplished, even against ponderous numerical and logistical odds, the existence of factors other than the strictly military world would seem to be implied. Presumptive
among such factors, again, would be attitudes and ideas, fears and desires, foolishness and philosophies, founded upon the peculiar character of the Indian people. The customary pattern of American conquest was for the initial penetration to be made by guile, diplomacy, or in response to open Indian invitation, as has been mentioned. Once pierced or broken, an Indian society, like any other, was naturally more inclined to fall to any sort of warfare. In most such warfare of whatever sort, Indians also played a part, sometimes a major part, as allies leagued with the conquerors.

Indian activity as auxiliaries of various European powers in the European wars against each other was likewise of considerable magnitude, in all the multitude of North American conflicts, great and small, through the war of 1812. Indian activity as trade allies of various colonial powers was sometimes of decisive importance in the course of colonial affairs. It is unlikely that the position of organized Indian communities in these activities was always or even usually one of vassals under the control of their white associates. Too many events testify to the independence of Indian actions.

The French were as a rule extraordinary canny and persuasive in Indian dealings. Edmond Atkin urged practices therein proposing to the British Lords of Trade. His Indian policy of 1755, “the same little ingratiating Arts as the French do…..”, but the catastrophic was waged against them in 1729 by the Natchez, who had been sound friends, damaged the French severely in Louisian. At about the same time, in the Great Lakes country, the French were seriously hurt by the Fox wars. The stubborn neutrality, and sometimes hostility, of the Five Nations Iroquois was a baffling problem to the French in Canada for more than a century. French inability to solve this problem had its effect on the ultimate fate of France in North America.
Spanish traders, missionaries, colonial officials, and soldiers had more experience with Indians than all other Europeans combined, and much more ultimate success than other Europeans in altering Indian manners and ways and yet the Spanish world was rejected by not only the aforementioned Jibaros and Apaches but also by (among many others) the highly cultured Pawnees. The destruction of the Villasur expedition in 1720 by Pawnees was a blow to Spanish dominion of the Plains country east of the Rockies. The Yumas had been sound Spanish friends, but in 1781 (the year of the founding of Los angeles) they destroyed Spanish farms and outposts that had been established at the Yuma towns on the Colorado River, and closed the overland trail to California, thereby rendering more remote and precarious than ever the struggling new California missions and settlements. Another over-land route was not established for commercial caravans until 1830. The Apalachee people of Florida were famous fighters in the sixteenth century days of the earliest Spanish explorers, but accepted, in fact are said to have requested, Spanish missionaries in the seventeenth century. After some 15 years the Apalachees rebelled against mission rule, defeated a Spanish force sent to subdue them, then reversed themselves “apparently through a counterrevolution in the tribe itself” and returned to the Spanish fold.

The Creeks generally refused Spanish overtures, although there were at times strong pro-Spanish factions of the lower Creek towns. Together with allied Indians and, eventually, English slavers and traders from Carolina, the Creeks fought sporadically with the missionized Apalachee, and in a great raiding party of 1704, composed of 50 English volunteers and 1000 Creeks, destroyed the Apalachee missions, permanently impairing Spanish strength in the Southeast.
Creeks welcomed English colonists in Georgia and gave them every assistance; Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws, and some of the Choctaw towns gave alliance to the English on many occasions that was of value to the English and of pronounced effect in the history of the region. Iroquois partiality for the English at critical moments had its effect on the Northeast. But Pontiac’s partiality for the defeated French threw the West into a Turmoil that was ultimately of heavy cost to the British and of some effect on the history of the American Revolution.

Indian policy of the Crown did more than anything else to alienate the borderers from loyalty to the Crown, and led the frontiersmen to throw their weight on the side of sedition in the forthcoming struggle between constituted government and rebellion…. Turbulence on the border continued from 1765 to 1775 when the torch of rebellion was lifted.

Delawares had been dispossessed by fraudulent Shenanigans betwixt Pennsylvania and the Iroquois and land speculators became hard core of the “French” Indians at Fort Duquesne who helped ruin Braddock in 1755. But Delawares in Pennsylvania insisted on the risky peacemaking journey of the Moravian missionary, Christian Post, in 1758, whose success with the quondam French Indians on Ohio was such that Fort Duquesne fell to the English without a fight. Pennsylvania’s inability to catty out the terms of Indian agreements made at this time no doubt contributed a glowing coal or so to Pontiac’s war, as the British government’s efforts to live up to agreements forced by Pontiac’s war provided some sparks for sedition.

“American” Creeks and allied Yuchis and Cherokees bore a fair share of the fighting and the casualties against anti-American “Red Stick” Creeks in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend—the victory that first brought Andrew Jackson national recognition. The determined friendliness of the Northern Shoshonis and the Nez Perces for
Americans from the time Lewis and Clark to Chief Joseph’s gentlemanly was seventy years later was of moments in the settlement of the Northwest. The results of this friendliness are easier to analyze than its origin.

Examples could be added. Many of these Indians actions simply were not fit any interpretation of Europeans controlling the policies and decisions of the Indians with whom they associated. Nor will infinite variety of circumstances bore out easy notions of simple primitive diplomacy- of whites controlling Indian actions.

European tutelage in both warfare and trade were obvious in post-Columbian Indian history, but white efforts to influence Indian polices and decisions could not be reckoned the dominant factors in most such decisions any more than France or Germany could be shown to have controlled historically the policies of each other or even of such light-weight colleagues as the Swiss Confederation.

Accustomed to thinking of the Spanish and “their” Indians, the French and “their’ Indians, and so on-but Indian nations doubtless thought of “their” European business connections and military allies in much the same way, and connived and intrigued to get the support of this or that European community for their own sovereign projects-projects certainly sovereign in their own plans and intentions, at least. Edmond Atkin, England’s superintendent for Indian affairs in the southern colonies, wrote at about the same time, in the 1750’s:

“‘No people in the world understand and pursue their true National Interests, better than the Indians…..in their publick Treaties on People on earth are more open, explicit and Direct. Nor are they excelled by any in the observance of them.” Atkin also recommended “…..above all, to begin with building Forts in their hearts…..after which we may build Forts wherever we please.” (LJ)
The shape of the Indians’ own sovereign thoughts, to repeat, was drawn from the underlying attitudes and ways of life of the Indian world. These attitudes pervade Indian history. Indian attitudes toward war, for instance, naturally had a direct bearing on the outcome of various Indian wars. Most Indian societies appeared to look to other matters than war as the chiefer objectives of their organization, and in the midst of war could give fighting a back seat to religious ceremonies, or, like classic Greeks, could be swayed in their battle strategy by omens. White communities were usually organized much more effectively for sustained war. War in the Old World definition seems, on the best evidence, to have been an almost unknown concept in the untouched Indian world of North America. There is little indication of whole countries being overrun by war. The raids that were called wars usually involved fraction of the available fighting men and those only briefly. Utterly defeated nations were assimilated rather than annihilated….Military forces based on Indian attitudes toward organization of war could not usually maintain strength in the field over a long period. Thus a clear-cut Indian victory could only come from a clear-cut knockout. A decision on points would mean a negotiated truce, at which the Indian armies would melt away home, leaving the Europeans to interpret and enforce the truce terms as they saw fit-this was quite often the upshot in Indian wars with Europeans.

Indian attitudes toward land ownership were of momentous effect on relations with Europeans. The control of specific territories by communities or families was a familiar concept to many Indian societies, but private ownership or private buying and selling of land was outside most Indians’ experience. Above all, the common European ambition to own a landed personal estate as the most desired symbol of success was to most Indian people as incomprehensible as would have been ambition
to own the sky. The free and easy Indian land policies that were for centuries a central issue of Indian “troubles” are related to such basic attitudes.

Indian influence on the movement of frontiers is another example of direct Indian participation in American historical processes. Very few if any frontiers, especially before 1800, were opened without the prior consent, if not the invitation, of at least some of the Indian peoples concerned. The Ohio River country of eastern Tennessee and parts of present West Virginia and Kentucky was largely uninhabited by the Indians, and regarded as an open domain, not under the control of any Indian nation, until shattered remnants of Delawares, Shawnees, Hurons, Kickapoos, and others drifted into the region during the eighteenth century. It is not surprising that this country became a political football for these Indians refugee groups and for powerful nations in the background as Six Nations (now including Tuscaroras) Iroquois and the Cherokee. Indian political maneuvers carried out for Indian objectives were vital in opening this no man’s land to white settlement- the earliest trans-Appalachian English settlement. The progress of North American frontiers, particularly in their earlier phases, was very possibly as much the result of Indian policies and attitudes as of white policies and pressures. Direct influences gradually diminished, obviously, with each passing century, although areas of some importance still appear in the 19th century, as witness the Shoshoni and Nez Perce.

Direct white contact was not always the agency responsible for the shattering or transformation of Indian nations in the path of the white frontiers. A major aspect of the movement of frontiers was the purely Indian shock wave running ahead of the actual white frontiers, sometimes many years and many hundreds of miles ahead. Indian groups in contact with the Europeans, stimulated by revolutionizing ideas and tools and weapons, hurdled themselves into conflict or revolutionizing trade with
other Indian groups who may never have seen white men. The resultant disruptions affected the subsequent movement of white frontiers. The earliest frontiers did not move in response to European settlement, but as a result of the military or commercial aggressions of Indian nations who, in effect, had the bomb first—which is to say, who were in touch with Europeans. There were, in other words, two network of frontiers, one strictly Indians, the other, often profoundly influenced by the kinetics of the first, European. The far-reaching conquests of the Iroquois and the farther reaching consequences there from are a familiar example of this Indian frontier in operation.

Further, the Indian-versus-Indian frontier was amenable to still more delicate divisions, such as the horse frontier and the gun frontier, both travelling without benefit of white companionship. The horse frontier rolled across the West from New Mexico far in advance of most white traders and sometimes as much as a century and a half in advance of tangible white frontiers, reaching the Northern Shoshonis in the 1690’s or even earlier. Shoshonis horsemen were terrorizing their earthbound Blackfoot enemies by the 1730’s. The gun frontier, moving from the east, reached the Great Plains at about the same time. The convulsions of these several Indian-versus-Indian frontiers sent reverberations rolling in all directions, changing in myriad ways the setting and course of American history.

Indian involvement in the movement of these strictly Indians frontiers could scarcely have been passive. Obviously these frontiers moved only because Indians moved them. The whys and wherefores of the Indian actions concerned in this process become therefore of importance. The negative Indian attitude toward private property and toward competition for gain was subject of remark by countless witnesses, summed up in a concentrated understatement by Alexis de Tocqueville: “At the
period when Europeans came among them the natives of North America were ignorant of the values of riches…..”

This Indian attitude was so foreign to Europeans that Europeans could not credit it even while they reported it. Indian societies socialist in character and governed, as a rule, by councils were described in terms of kingship and feudalism by the majority of authorities until the pioneer American anthropologists, Lewis Henry Morgan, and Bandelier, his prophet, exploded that point of view in the late nineteenth century. “All the grand terminology of the Old World, created under despotic and monarchical institutions,” Morgan wrote, “…..to decorate particular men and classes of men, has been lavished…..upon plain Indians sachems and war-chiefs, without perceiving that thereby the poor Indian was grievously wronged, for he had not invented such institutions nor formed such a society as these terms imply.”

The basic difference between the Indians and European worlds may have been in the attitude toward property. The European way of life (with some notable exceptions) was basically one of individual competition for the acquisition of property, to the point that it would probably be more correct to describe white frontier expansionists as property-hungry rather than land-hungry, thus encompassing the powerful forces of land and mineral speculation as well as the humble settlers willing to be contented with small land holdings for the time being.

The basic Indian attitude (with some notable exceptions) seems to have learned more often toward cooperation in the use of property in common, rather than competition to acquire private property. This would have helped create an appearance of classless freedom in Indian life, along with an apparent lack of striving and an emphasis on the nonmaterial satisfactions that would result from a prevailing interest in matters other than work for profit. It might be said, in sum, that the Indian world
was devoted to living while in European world was devoted to getting. This may well be the essence of the Indian world and the Indian image.

This essence has been an incalculable force in American history, and was at the same time the structural weakness that made inevitable the collapse of the Indian world when it came into general conflict with a materialistic civilization. The essential difference has been a principal obstacle throughout the centuries in keeping the white and Indian worlds from direct communication, from direct understanding of each other. The word most often used by whites to describe Indians was “indolent.” They would not work hard and thriftily because they simply were not sufficiently interested in acquiring property and nursing its increase—scandalous, but the Indian’s gods were at other altars. This essence of the Indian image, rendering the Indian incomprehensible but colouring him free, wrought changes in soul and outlook of modern man while keeping the Indian himself, and his place in the historical process of such change, beyond the pale of understanding.

The important point is that the Indian world may really have been a genuine, influential civilization worth taking seriously in American history. It may really have been a civilization so firmly committed to its strange attitudes that it nourished its own conquerors and abetted its own conquest. It may really have been a civilization so incomprehensibly foreign to Europeans that Europeans could not recognize its existence even while in mortal embrace with it, somewhat as the case of the “dark planets” imagined by Alferd North Whitehead that move on a scale of space and time so radically different from own as to be undetectable to sense and instruments. And finally it may have been a civilization affecting not only the past of America but still the future. Within this still-unexplored civilization, said Pierre Teilhard de Chardin “some general and fundamental laws in human development are certainly hiding…..”
From the collision of this New World civilization with the Old, the modern world and particularly modern America was born. Without the Indian side of that story its history is only half written.

American literature begins with the orally transmitted myths, legends, tales and lyrics (always songs) of Indian cultures. There was no written literature among the more than 500 different Indian languages and tribal cultures that existed in North America before the first Europeans arrived. As a result, Native American oral literature is quite diverse. Tribes maintained their own religions-worshipping gods, animals, plants or sacred persons. Systems of government ranged from democracies to councils of elders to theocracies. These tribal variations enter into the oral literature as well.

Still, it is possible to make a few generalizations. Indian stories, for example, glow with reverence for nature as a spiritual as well as physical mother. Nature is alive and endowed with spiritual forces. Main characters may be animals or plants, often totems associated with a tribe, group, or individual. The closest to the Indian sense of holiness in later American literature is Ralph Waldo Emerson’s transcendental “Over-Soul,” which pervades all of life.

Examples of almost every oral genre can be found in American Indian literature: lyrics, chants, myths, fairy tales, humorous, incantations, riddles, proverbs, epics, and legendary histories. Accounts of migrations and ancestors abound, as do vision or healing songs and tricksters’ tales. Certain creation stories are particularly popular. In one well-known creation story, told with variations among many tribes, a turtle holds up the world. In a Cheyenne version, the creator, Maheo, has four chances to fashion the world from a watery universe. He sends four water birds diving to try to bring up earth from the bottom. The snow goose, loon, and mallard soar high into the shy and
sweep down in a dive, but cannot reach bottom but the little coot, who cannot fly, succeeds in bringing up some mud in his bill. Only one creature, humble Grandmother Turtle, in the right shape to support the mud world Maheo shapes on her shell—hence the Indian name for America, “Turtle Island.”

The songs of poetry, like the narratives, ranged from the sacred to the light and humorous. There were lullabies, war chants, love songs, and special songs for children’s games, gambling, various chores, magic, or dance ceremonials. Generally clear imagery and subtle mood were associated with Japanese haiku or Eastern-influenced imagistic poetry. A Chippewa song runs:

A loon I thought it was
But it was
My love’s
Splashing oar.

Vision songs, often very short, are another distinctive form. Appearing in dreams or visions, sometimes with no warning, they may be healing, hunting, or love songs. Often they are personal, as in this Modoc song:

I
the song
I walk here.

Indian oral tradition and its relation to American literature as a whole is one of the richest and least explored topics in American studies. The Indian contribution to America is greater than is often believed. The hundreds of Indian words in everyday American English include “canoe”, “tobacco”, “potato”, “moccasin”, “moose”, “persimmon”, “raccoon”, “tomahawk”, and “totem”. Contemporary Native American writing also contains works of great beauty.
American novelist, essayist, historian, travel writer, and satirist James Fenimore Cooper, who created a uniquely American myth of the pioneer with his historical romances, is considered the first major American novelist best known for his tales of frontier adventures. He also developed sea fiction and established the United States as a major force in world literature. Frequently referred to in the nineteenth century criticism as “the American Scott,” Cooper is still more highly regarded in Europe than in his own country. Though most American critics admit his historical importance, Cooper is often dismissed as an artist because of his crude style. And despite praise from such writers as D.H. Lawrence, as well as a recent increase in Cooper scholarship.

Cooper, was born in Burlington, New Jersey, as the son of Quakers, Judge William Cooper and Elisabeth Fenimore Cooper. His father was a representative of the 4th and 6th Congress, and he attained wealth by developing virgin land. He moved with his family in 1970 to Cooperstown, New York, a town founded by his father. The wilderness influenced Cooper throughout his writing career and he has been praised for his depictions of the American landscape. James Fenimore Cooper spent his youth partly on the family estate on Otsego Lake. He was educated in the village school at Cooperstown, and in 1800-02 in the household of the rector of St. Peter’s.

Cooper entered the Navy in 1805 after being expelled from Yale for misconduct. He served for six years, later using his experiences to write such factually accurate sea tales as *The Pilot* and *The Red Rover*. In response to a challenge from his wife that he would write better novel than one she was reading, he began his literary career with *Precaution* (1820), a weak imitation of Jane Austen. Although this novel was largely ignored, his next, *The Spy* (1821), was based on Sir Walter Scott’s *Waverly series*, and this adventure tale about the American Revolution, met with astounding success.
and established Cooper as the most prominent American writer of his time. Scoot inspired Cooper to draw stereotypes of light and dark, good and evil, and dichotomized the female into fair and pure, dark and tainted.

Cooper is most widely renowned for the *Leatherstocking Tales*, a series of five novels which centre around the woodsman Natty Bumppo. Cooper’s most enduring character, Bumppo has become a national legend. Critics consider most of Cooper’s other characters, especially the women, stilted and superficial. In 1823 appeared *The Pioneers*, and started his *Leatherstocking series*. They depicted the adventures of Natty Bumppo, also called Leatherstocking or Hawkeye, and his Indian companion Chingachgook. The novels were not written in the chronological order. They included such classics as *The Deerslayer* (1841), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Pathfinder* (1840), and *The Prairie* (1827).

Cooper left United States for Europe in 1826, and stayed for seven years. There, he both defended American democracy and developed a sympathy for the aristocratic point of view. The conflict between these two philosophies which Cooper tried to reconcile in his writing, contributed to the decline of his reputation both at home and abroad. A sensitive man, Cooper responded to attacks in the press with libel suits. Though he won most of them, critics never quite forgave him for his counterattack.

When Cooper returned home he at once set about instructing his fellow Americans. Though he continued to be defender of America, his belief, henceforth frequently expressed, that a landed aristocratic class was needed to maintain standards in education, government, and the arts, was anathema to the Jacksonian democrats. *Beginning with his Letter to his Countrymen* (1834), Cooper was for the rest of his life in constant controversy with editors and critics. Though he won his libel suits against defamatory with editors and reduced the critics of his History of the Navy of the
United States of America (1839) to a grumbling silence, he was never again popular. Yet much of his best work, produced at incredible speed, was done during these years: *The American Democrat* (1838), an admirable defence and critique of social order; the remaining novels in the *Leatherstocking* group; and three novels of purpose dealing with the *Anti-rent War in New York State* (1839-1846). In these, Cooper’s sympathy with his class generates a swiftly moving story. The novels, of which *Satanstoe* (1845) is the best, cover the period of settlement in northern New York from the time of the granting of the parents to the struggle of the tenant farmers to change the condition of feudal tenure by which the descendents of the patentees still ruled.

Cooper had many many qualities. He knew how to make judicious use of history in fiction, and though his familiarity with the terrain he describes, with frontier conditions, and with life on shipboard, he is able to write as one having authority. A few of his main characters—Natty Bumppo, Chingachggok, Harvey Birch—are, as one says, immortal, but equally memorable are a number of his minor characters, which present a wide range of American types from the first contented slave in American fiction (*Caesar*, in *The Spy*) to Newcome, the close-dealing Yankee in *The Chainbearer*. Even the most sophisticated American, if his blood is red, can be thrilled by the Pilot’s handling of the frigate in the storm or the desperate race against time on the ice floes, in *Satanstoe*, or in the siege of the Blockhouse in *Wyandotte*.

After writing several political-oriented travel books, Cooper returned to fiction, completing the *Leatherstocking Tales* with *The Pathfinder; or, The Inland Sea* and *The Deerslayer; or, The First Warpath* often considered his finest works. The *Littlepage Trilogy*, a defence of landed aristocracy, sprang from the *Anti-Rent* conflict, which pitted the landowners of New York against rebellious squatters. In his
last few novels, particularly *The Carter; or, Vulcan’s Peak* and *The Ways of the Hour*, Cooper turned to more religious and aristocratic themes, defending his notion that democracy could survive only if privileges were granted to gentry.

He died at Cooperstown, on September 14, 1851 leaving behind a vast and varied body of work. Current study of Cooper concentrates on his social and political views, while his detractors ignore him. Yet his status as the first important American novelist ensures him a place in literary history.

Cooper deserves the honor of being the most national of writers. He was less influenced by foreign models and foreign subjects than any of his great contemporaries. The works upon which his fame chiefly rests are thoroughly American. He was the first fully to grasp and treat the stores of materials to be found in the natural scenery, early history, and pioneer life of this Republic. He was at home alike on land and sea and in his narrations he spoke from the fullness of his own observation and experience, and gave pictures of those early days which will grow interest as they are removed farther by the lapse of time. He opened a new vein of thought. It was largely owing to this freshness of subject and treatment that his works attained an extraordinary popularity, not alone in this country but also in Europe. They came as a revelation to the Old World, which had grown tired of well-worn themes. They were eagerly seized upon, and translated into nearly every European tongue, and even into some of the languages of the Orient. No other writer has been so extensively read.

Cooper’s early environment was aristocratic, and the impressions he received from it resulted in his settled belief that the democratic maxim “that ‘one man is as good as another’ is true in neither nature, revealed morals, or political theory.” His father, William Cooper, acquired in 1785 a patent of thousands of acres on the
headwaters of the Susquehanna in New York State. Here, after the family’s removal from New Jersey in 1790, he ruled the 40,000 souls holding land under him an English lord of the manor. In the frontier village of Cooperstown the future novelist mingled with the prototypes of the characters in his *Leatherstocking Tales*.

This series of stories, which has obtained the name of *The Leatherstocking Tales*, has been written in a very desultory and inartificial manner. The order in which the several books appeared was essentially different from that in which they would have been presented to the world, had the regular course of their incidents been consulted. In *The Pioneers*, the first of the series written, the Leatherstocking is represented as already old, and driven from his early haunts in the forests, by the sound of the axe and the smoke of the settler. The next book *The Last of the Mohicans*, in the order of publication, carried the readers back to much earlier period in the history of the hero, representing him as middle-aged, and in the fullest vigor of manhood. In *The Prairie*, his career terminates, and he is laid in his grave. There, it was originally the intention to leave him, in the expectation that, as in the case of the human mass, he would soon be forgotten. But a latent regard for this character induced the author to resuscitate him in *The Pathfinder*, a book that was not long after succeeded by *The Deerslayer*, thus completing the series as it now exists.

While the five books that have been written were originally published in the order just mentioned, that of the incidents insomuch as they are connected with the career of their principal character, is, as has been stated, very different. Taking the life of the Leatherstocking as a guide, *The Deerslayer* should have been the opening book, for in that work he is seen emerging into manhood. To be succeeded by *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Pathfinder*, *The Pioneers*, and *The Prairie*. This arrangement embraces the order of events, though far from being that in which the books at first
appeared. *The Pioneers* was published in 1822; *The Deerslayer* in 1841; making the interval between them nineteen years. Whether these progressive years have had a tendency to lessen the value of the last-named book, by lessening the native fire of the author, or of adding somewhat in the way of improved taste and a more matured judgement, is for the others to decide. If anything from the pen of the writer of these romances as at all to outlive himself, it is, unquestionable, the series of *The Leatherstocking Tales*. To say this not to predict a very lasting reputation for the series itself, but simply to express the belief it will outlast any, or all, of the works from the same hand.

The author has often been asked if he had any original in his mind for the character of Leatherstocking. In a physical sense, different individuals known to the writer in early life certainly presented themselves as models, through his recollections but in a moral sense this man of forest is purely a creation. The idea of delineating a character that possessed little of civilization but its highest principles as they are exhibited in the uneducated, and all of savage life that is not incompatible with these great rules of conduct, is perhaps natural to the situation in which Natty is placed. He is too proud of his origin to sink into the condition of the wild Indian, and too much a man of woods not to imbibe as much as at all desirable from his friends and companions. In a moral point of view it was the intention to illustrate the effect of seed scattered by the wayside. To use his own language, his “gifts” were “white gifts,” and he was not disposed to bring on them discredit. On the other hand, removed from nearly all temptations of civilized life, placed in the best associations of that which deemed savage, and favourably disposed by nature to improve such advantages, it appeared to the writer that his hero was a fit subject to represent the better qualities of both conditions, without pushing either to extremes.
There was no violent stretch of the imaginations, perhaps, in supposing one of civilized associations in childhood retaining many of his earliest lessons amid the scenes of the forest. Had these early impressions, however, not been sustained by continued though casual connection with men of his own color, if nor of his own caste, all our information goes to show he would soon have lost every trace of his origin. It is believed that sufficient attention was paid to the particular circumstances in which this individual was placed, to justify the picture of his qualities that has been drawn. The Delawares early attracted the attention of the missionaries, and were a tribe unusually influenced by their precepts and example. In many instances they became Christians, and cases occurred in which their subsequent lives gave proof of the efficacy of the great moral changes that had taken place within them.

A leading character in a work of fiction has a fair right to the aid which can be obtained from a poetical view of the subject. It is in this view, rather than in one more strictly circumstantial, that Leatherstocking has been drawn. The imagination has no great task in portraying to itself a being removed from the every-day inducements to err which abound in civilized life, while he retains the best and simplest of his early impressions, who sees God in forest, hears him in the winds, bows to him in the firmament that o’ercanopies all, submits to his sway in a humble belief of his justice and mercy-in a word, a being who finds the impress of the Deity in all works of nature, without any of the bolts produced by the expedients, and passion, and mistakes of man. This is the most that has been attempted in the character of Leatherstocking. Had this been done without any of the drawbacks of humanity, the picture would have been in all probability, more pleasing than just. In order to preserve the vraisemblable (verisimilitude), therefore, traits derived from the prejudices, tastes, and even the weaknesses of his youth, have been mixed up with these higher qualities and
longings, in a way, it is hoped, to represent a reasonable picture of human nature, without offering to the spectator a “monster of goodness.”

It has been objected to these books that they give a more favourable picture of red man that he deserves. The writer apprehends that much of his objection arises from the habits of those who have made it. One of his critics, on the appearance of the first work in which Indian character was portrayed, objected that “its characters were Indians of the school of Heckewelder, rather than of school of nature.” These words quite probably contain the substance of the true answer to the objection. Heckewelder was an ardent, benevolent missionary, bent on the good of the red men, and seeing in him one who had the soul, reason, and characteristics of a fellow-being. The critic is understood to have been a very distinguished agent of the government, one very familiar with Indians, as they are seen at the councils to treat for the sale of their lands, where little or none of their domestic qualities come in play, and where, indeed, their evil passions are known to have the fullest scope. As just would it be to draw conclusions of the general state of American society from the scenes of the capital, as to suppose that the negotiating of one of these treaties is a fair picture of Indian life.

It is the privilege of all writers of fiction, more particularly when their works aspire to the elevation of romances. To present the beau-ideal (ideal of beauty) of their characters to the reader. This it is which constitutes poetry, and to suppose that the red man is to be represented only in the squalid misery or in the degraded moral state that certainly more or less belongs to his condition, is, apprehended, taking a very narrow view of an author’s privileges. Such criticism would have deprived the world of even Homer.