

Beyond the Sentimental Heroine — Cooper's Women from *The Pioneers* to *The Deerslayer* —

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I

And do you so delight in violence and bloodshed?—I had thought better of *you*, Deerslayer—believed you one, who could find his happiness in a quiet domestic home, with an attached and loving wife, ready to study your wishes, and healthy and dutiful children Do you really love war, Deerslayer, better than the hearth, and the affections? (*Deerslayer* 539; italics in original)

In the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, when what is characteristic to America had not yet been established, writers in the United States were seen adapting European models in literature. Responding to the contemporary reader's taste, those early authors were following the literary convention of highly influential seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British novels. Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky states that they were "thoroughly dependent on the modes, styles, rhythms, and structures of the English language" found in those works owing to America's cultural subservience to Britain.¹ As a consequence, it might seem that what American writers produced at that time were mere imitations of older British forms. At the same time, however, they were actually in pursuit of a new form and configuration of the novel, which should be "uniquely American" (Baym, "Melodramas" 79).

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) among others was struggling about how he could create "Americanness" in his work and was groping for his own characterization that would differ from European models. He then took up the materials which seemed to him characteristic of his country, such as the American forest, and romantically described historical events and the realities of the fluctuating society of America of the age. In this respect, there is no doubt that Cooper was greatly influenced by Sir Walter Scott in Britain.² Cooper significantly found new form that is "suited to the open, expansive, American landscapes" (Rubin-Dorsky 21). In other words, what is notable in Cooper is, to borrow from Michael T. Gilmore, the "Americanization of the historical romance" (58) along with the invention of the heroic figure

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of American myth, known as what R. W. B. Lewis called the "American Adam."

The series of the five novels by Cooper, called the "Leatherstocking Tales," center on a certain phase of the life of the main character, Natty Bumppo.³ The tales occur in the wilderness, an exclusively male adventurous world.⁴ That world is filled with, in one of Cooper's female characters' words from the passage at the beginning of this paper, "violence and bloodshed." This is probably what makes Leslie A. Fiedler define Cooper as "a writer for children, more specifically for boys" (181), and Fiedler mainly deals with the male protagonist who is "bonded" with his Indian partner.⁵ One might feel accordingly that prominent women in this "world without women" can hardly be recognized;⁶ nevertheless, whether the author's chief concern was to produce the American male hero or not, we find distinctive female characters, too. As we have already seen in the statement cited above from *The Deerslayer*, Judith Hutter notably mentions to Natty "domestic home" in comparison to the "war." This can be an illustrative example for the bifurcation of literary culture of the period, namely "the novel of female domesticity and the novel of masculine adventure and camaraderie" (Gilmore 51). We may notice here that Cooper in effect was conscious, if only vaguely, of the domestic novel as well, which was closely related with the female and contained a sentimental element.⁷ Cooper might have also been concerned about female characters in women's novels.

Cooper scholars have tended to deal with those females as the crucial elements for the male discourse. Fiedler, in his treatment of Cooper's women, applies the pattern of binary oppositional characters which constantly appears in American fiction, namely "the passionate brunette and the sinless blonde" (200) or the "Fair Maiden" and the "Dark Lady" (296). Fiedler suggests that this contrast should be well exemplified by the Hutter sisters in Cooper's 1841 *The Deerslayer* (297). Fiedler thus tries to simply divide Cooper's women into those two categories in terms of their characterization. What Fiedler seems to emphasize is that Cooper is the first author who "permits the contrast its symbolic significance," and that the paired ladies "had come into existence for purely decorative purposes" and then "they were adapted to symbolic ones" (296).

It is true that Cooper has been praised for his creation of the American hero in the wilderness, and that that world seemingly excludes women; nevertheless, in the Leatherstocking Saga, especially in *The Deerslayer*, the last of the entire series, women characters too seem to play active and important, if not central, roles in the story, as Nina Baym rightly puts it ("Putting" 35). Moreover, this particular novel "make[s] white women more important than the earlier books" and "give[s] them much more active roles and create[s] important American Indian women characters" ("Putting" 35). I will here attempt to shed some new light on those women whose vital importance has been ignored by many critics until recently.⁸ This paper will examine Cooper's representations of female characters mainly in *The Deerslayer*, with special focus on one notable woman, Judith Hutter. By comparing with women in the first Leatherstocking story, *The Pioneers*, I will further explore Cooper's concept of women. What I would like to demonstrate is that Cooper's women

cannot necessarily be explained only by referring to that oppositional structure or categorization of characters presented by the early romance and that they are not invented for, in Fielder's words, such "decorative" or "symbolic" purposes as to be subordinately added to the "male world."

II

Before examining the important roles of women in *The Deerslayer*, let us first look briefly at how women are described in *The Pioneers*. It is notable in the novel that Elizabeth Temple behaves courageously and powerfully even in the face of danger. Encountering a panther in the hills, Elizabeth without hesitation stays with and tries to protect her friend, Louisa Grant, who is frozen by the terror. In such a critical situation, Elizabeth, terrified as she is, never flinches before the approaching enemy. At that very moment Natty appears to shoot and kill the panther; as a result the girls' lives are saved. This episode makes it clear that Elizabeth is powerful and mentally strong in contrast to her helpless friend. Another example occurs when Elizabeth is involved in a mountain fire. She tells Oliver Edwards to leave her and save himself and Indian John (Chingachgook): "neither you nor John must be sacrificed to my safety" (*Pioneers* 408). Surrounded by fire, she is resigned to her fate: "We must die; yes—yes—we must die—it is the will of God, and let us endeavour to submit like his own children" (*Pioneers* 411). Elizabeth here reveals the strength of her will. Nevertheless, here again our hero Natty appears and rescues Elizabeth from the imminent danger.

One also finds that there is an occasion in which Elizabeth tries to save Natty in turn. Fully understanding the dire predicament in which Natty and his Indian friend have been caught, she makes every effort to help them out of it. When Natty is arrested on a charge of hunting deer out of season, she visits him in prison and procures his release by paying a fine for him. She is also willing to provide him with gunpowder so that he can go back to the forest safely with it. Despite her attempts to save him, she is in reality more often saved, after all.

We have seen that Elizabeth gives priority to others' safety over her own and takes action for the sake of others, sacrificing herself. She even faces her death courageously. Those admirable attributes seem to be indeed emphatically demonstrated; yet, in fact, as long as she always ends up being saved by a powerful man, she seems to assume the role of the feeble whom men believe they should protect. Natty called "Deerslayer" is, for example, willing to defend the two girls against the invading Indians, saying: "it is the duty of the strong to take care of the weak . . ." (*Deerslayer* 86). As Joyce W. Warren puts it, Deerslayer thinks that "nature intended men to protect women" (94). Warren remarks that "[i]n Cooper's novel it is improper for a woman to act for herself because this would be a sign of concern for self, which Cooper considers unfeminine" (95). Regarding self-sacrifice as feminine may be the product of the nineteenth-century notion of how women were supposed to behave. On the other hand, Cooper's description portrays Harry March, who always considers himself first, as vulgar and

narrow-minded. Although critics have tried to connect unselfishness with “womanliness,” Cooper thus seems to prefer that quality in such a man as Deerslayer, too.

Now we may turn to a closer examination of Judith in *The Deerslayer*. She seems similar to Elizabeth in displaying the courage and the selflessness in her actions. Judith is never afraid of guns and we are told she has shot a deer before. Judith also manages a canoe with “great dexterity,” and in fact she is better at paddling than quite a few young men (*Deerslayer* 349). In consequence, with Hetty’s help, Judith easily beats the Indians who have been in chase. In another instance, Judith protects herself by pushing an Indian into the water. Furthermore, finding that Deerslayer has been in the hands of the Hurons, Judith plans by herself to get him released. She tries to deceive the Indians by daring to go into their encampment disguised as a grand lady dressed in magnificent clothing, and demands his return.

To be sure, Judith shares the quality of Elizabeth’s selflessness; nevertheless, major emphasis seems to be laid on Judith’s independence as well as her intellect here. We can say that Judith is less dependent than Elizabeth because the latter is protected and frequently saved by the strong man. On the contrary, Judith is a woman who tries to overcome her own difficulties by herself. While Elizabeth finally marries a man she really loves, Judith does not. In this regard too, we may also suppose that Elizabeth is more dependent on men. (This point of the marriage will be taken up in detail later.)

The quality of unselfishness is given to Hetty as well as her quick-witted sister. Though “half-witted” or just because she is so, Hetty is also seen to try to behave only for the sake of others. She recklessly goes to the Huron camp on her own, without paying attention to the awaiting danger, in order to help rescue her father and Harry, whom she much admires, just like Judith did for Deerslayer. Hetty takes daring actions from more innocent motives than her sister, though they might sometimes cause some unexpected troubles. Hetty, for instance, finally ruins Judith’s rescue plan mentioned above by her exclamation of identification of her sister in disguise. At the same time Hetty is even respectfully treated by the Indians who believe that the feeble-minded are under the special protection of the “Great Spirit” (*Deerslayer* 181). Besides, Hetty frequently visits her mother’s grave to mourn her and holds loyalty toward Tom Hutter even after finding out about his background. Her affection is therefore displayed as a quality to make her exquisitely attractive.

Cooper devoted a whole page to a detailed description of Hetty’s desirable attributes by nature, such as pureness, innocence, affection, and modesty (*Deerslayer* 66). Hetty seems to be actually given more traits to be admired than Judith. Warren remarks that Cooper preferred Hetty, in the sense that the former is fragile and childish (93). The ideal womanhood of Cooper or the nineteenth-century ideal, “Angel in the House,” might be explicit here.⁹ As Cooper himself admitted, Hetty was “the favorite female character” and would attract his readers as well (Warren 93). This seems to offer a striking contrast with Judith, whose heartlessness might be implied in the fact that she has never visited the lake where her mother

lies. Judith, however, surely attracts the readers in a different way from Hetty and is in effect provided with a more important role, as to be seen in the following chapters.

For the moment, let us look at Cooper's portrayal of the Indian society in *The Pioneers*. Natty tells that Indian men consult squaws (Indian women) when they are in trouble and the squaws always give them good advice (*Pioneers* 196). Women's power remains in this ancient matriarchal society. Women have considerable influence over the society, if only behind the scenes. This is well exemplified by Chingachgook's betrothed, Wah-tah-Wah ("Hist"), in *The Deerslayer*. In the camp where she is a prisoner, she functions as an interpreter, connecting a white girl and the Indian tribal chief. She also plans with Chingachgook to help rescue Deerslayer from the Hurons. Thus in the novel one witnesses the Indian women taking actions as actively as the white women.

III

On reading Cooper's novels, one often finds that it is overwhelmingly the young unmarried women who assume active roles in the main plot of the story. In *The Pioneers*, older women such as Remarkable Pettibone, a domestic servant of the Temples, are excluded from the narrative. It also seems that they are not provided with any sympathy in the depiction. The middle-aged Remarkable is portrayed as having "a tall, meager, shapeless figure, sharp features, and a somewhat acute expression of her physiognomy" (*Pioneers* 62). It further states that her "teeth were mostly gone The skin of her nose was drawn tightly over the member, to hang in larger wrinkles in her cheeks and about her mouth. . ." (*Pioneers* 62).

In contrast, beauty is emphasized in Elizabeth, who is "just entering upon womanhood" (*Pioneers* 18). Besides describing her as having "animated jet-black eyes" and "cheeks burning with roses" (*Pioneers* 18/66), she is elaborately rendered with such adjectives as fair and spotless. Her countenance is "inert and composed" and "soft, benevolent, and attractive" (*Pioneers* 66). Her beauty is radiant enough to literally overwhelm the servant. The point is that Elizabeth is described as being impressively full of liveliness and brightness, making a striking contrast with Remarkable. We also remind ourselves that throughout *The Deerslayer* Judith's distinguished "handsomeness" and youthfulness is emphatically admired. There is obviously not the least resemblance between the beauty of the young girls and ugliness of the older women. In addition, it is the same way in the Indian women. The aged "hag" from *The Deerslayer* exhibits a sharp contrast to Hist. As her name "Shebear" and other images of ferocious animals applied to her surely suggest, she seems to be rendered even more "grotesque" than the white old woman (Warren 102).

It is useful to consider at this point what Cooper wrote concerning the beauty of women:

Beauty among the women of the aboriginal Americans, before they have become exposed to the hardships of wives and mothers, is by no means uncommon. In this particular, the original owners of the country were not unlike their more civilized successors, nature appearing to have bestowed that delicacy of mien and outline that

forms so great a charm in the youthful female, but of which they are so early deprived; and that, too, as much by the habits of domestic life, as from any other cause. (*Deerslayer* 174-75; italics in original)

It is said here that young women are beautiful but that the beauty is lost after marriage and childbirth. In this statement Indian women are referred to, yet at the same time it significantly implies that it is also the case with white women, though those in a lower class.

Warren asserts that "Cooper seldom portrayed mature women as serious characters, as he did mature men" and "traits that may be charming in a young girl are ridiculous in an older woman" (102). Warren then concludes that "most of the mature women in Cooper's novels are grotesques" (102). One might assume that only the young women play central roles and are presented as beautiful because there underlies such a strong fixed idea that old women are too "grotesque" to deserve to be treated properly like the young ones. What is to be noted here, however, is that even though they are physically unattractive and seemingly marginalized in the story, the older white women often make significant social statements about, for example, problems of the class differences between the master and the servant of the household.¹⁰

One might also argue that Cooper cannot permit his young heroines to raise such an issue, which would lead their beauty into ruin, and that therefore it might be less problematic for Cooper to make those who have already been left out of the scope of the ideal womanhood state social injustice. It is probable that Cooper preferred his women to remain not only young and beautiful but ingenuous, simple, and innocent as a child. Still, on the other hand, we find that young girls make radical statements quite often as well. In this sense young girls and older ones alike play important roles in the story.

At the same time, one notices that characters of the wife and mother are absent from the beginning in Cooper's novels, as can be found in other contemporary author's works.¹¹ Elizabeth, in *The Pioneers*, has lost her mother about four years prior to the start of the story. The mother's death is not plainly documented; she is instead frequently recollected and missed not only by her husband and her daughter but by all the servants in the household. Interestingly, Louisa Grant has no mother either, though we are not offered any details. Above all, *The Deerslayer* seems to provide the absence of the mother figure with a certain significance. Mrs. Hutter, or especially the fact of her interment is repeatedly referred to throughout the novel as if to make us keep that in mind. We should note that she mysteriously lays buried in the bottom of the lake. As stated by one of the characters, the way and the reason of her burial had frequently been "a matter of discussion between the rude beings of that region" (*Deerslayer* 145).

One might plausibly argue that it was better for the author to bury her before it was too late than to make her live longer with much "grotesqueness." Nevertheless, here seems to be what is more important for further consideration. Mrs. Hutter was buried by her husband under the water, which seems to embody the narrative world of *The Deerslayer*, that is the

“world without women.” To put it another way, it seems that a mother or a woman is buried deeply or silenced in the male-controlling text, as is characteristic of nineteenth-century American fiction. It does not mean, however, that the mother, if rendered invisible, has no power over the narrative in Cooper’s tale.

Despite her absence, the mother of the Hutter sisters is frequently given importance in the course of the story. They naturally inherit some physical attributes from the mother, as is suggested particularly in the description of Judith. Not only that, they are greatly influenced by the mother in manners and education. According to Hetty, the mother “knew so much and taught [them] so much” unlike their father, who “knows very little about books, and . . . can barely read the bible” (*Deerslayer* 312). The two daughters are indebted to the mother for the marked proficiency in the use of language (*Deerslayer* 144-45). Even though she is not alive, she seems to be present in her daughters’ minds.

What is of more significance is that in a discursive level “her memory animates the novel’s action,” as Stephanie A. Smith mentions (5). By finding and reading the letters which have been hidden in Tom’s chest, Judith is trying to unearth her mother’s secret past life before marriage. Judith, who was, significantly, named after her mother, is assigned to a critical role in keeping the story of *The Deerslayer* going. She reveals the “buried” past of the mother as well as that of the “father,” who turns out to be a former pirate. We may state that Judith attempts to carry out the mother’s desire which has remained unfulfilled, the desire for assuming the central role as the “subject” rather than the “object” in the narrative.

Furthermore, with her remarked intellect inherited from her mother, Judith also sees through the plot of her “father.” Judith joins the discussion between Deerslayer and his friend and tries to help them arrange a plan to rescue Hist. It is notable that she among them knows that Hutter and Harry when awakened will wish to invade the Indian camp for scalps and probably would upset Chingachgook’s plan. On another occasion, Judith tries to urge others to execute her own plot to rescue Deerslayer without her “father” knowing. Elizabeth in *The Pioneers*, on the other hand, seems to be completely excluded from her father’s plot from the outset. Judge Marmaduke Temple secretly talks with his cousin, Richard Jones, and his lawyer about the “bad news” they received, whereas Elizabeth is not informed of the truth in the men’s plot at all (*Pioneers* 278). Being only curious about what the subject of their discussion is, all that she can do is to attempt to explore the truth and to help us, the readers, to unravel the mysteries.

While presenting a notion of how women were supposed to behave in the eighteenth-and nineteenth-century society, Cooper significantly made his women take major actions and make important statements. It is notable indeed that Judith assumes a crucial role in the narrative in place of the dead mother, who was buried deeply both literally and figuratively.

IV

We come now to the point at which it is necessary to deal more carefully with the burial of

women in the male text. As is made clear mainly by Judith's actions in the latter part of the novel, Mrs. Hutter, before marrying Tom, had given birth to another man's children, known as the Hutter girls now. That is to say, Tom Hutter is not the biological father of Judith and Hetty. Their mother had presumably been seduced and deserted by a man; this plot seems to rely upon the conventional romantic love-plot of the sentimental novel.¹²

Mrs. Hutter is, as Smith writes, deeply buried because of the social shame caused by promiscuity, the two illegitimate daughters, and her subsequent marriage to another man (5). The point is that Mrs. Hutter was buried not only because she is just a woman to be silenced in a male-dominated text but because she has committed sexual "misconduct" from the societal point of view of that period. Following the ideal womanhood or "the nineteenth century perception of women as moral guardians" (Gilmore 60), such a morally "tainted" woman had to be excluded from the male "authentic" discourse. As stated previously, women should be spotless like the "Angel in the House."

As regards this "misconduct," Judith is exactly following her mother's destiny. It is hinted throughout *The Deerslayer* that Judith had intimate relationships with several officers, which has only resulted in painful experiences for her. Especially to Cooper's contemporaries, Judith must have been more closely associated with an "evil" image of sexual flirtatiousness than present-day readers can imagine. We may notice that Cooper did not offer a realistic depiction of the women's sexual promiscuity but only implied what happens.

Let us at this point look at Natty's attitude toward women, especially Judith. He has never held more than affection for any women and wants to marry nobody else but nature, his only "sweetheart." He actually refuses Judith's proposal of marriage probably because he is afraid of being trapped into the world of civilization through marriage. At the same time however, considering how often he has heard Harry talk about Judith's past, we can also suppose, as Judith herself is worried, that that might have affected the way Natty thinks, leading him to not even seriously contemplate marrying a woman with an "impure" history. We may appropriately ascribe Natty's firm refusal to marry Judith to his state as a man of the forest who is always after freedom.

Certainly, it was one of Cooper's designs to render Natty more attractive than any other characters in the novel. Natty is a noble child of the forest who admires nature, opposed to civilization. Only apparently, Natty would rather "feel more curiosity about the feeble-witted sister" who admires nature as sincerely as he does (*Deerslayer* 30). In order to keep him as a perfect and spotless character, Cooper would not allow Natty to marry a woman with impurity, if he should marry at all. We may also suppose that Cooper intended not to marry Judith to any man for her own sake as one of his deliberate strategies in his narrative.

Additionally however, Natty and Judith in a similar fashion insist that a human being be judged in terms of qualities instead of physical appearances. Natty is not so exclusively attracted to Judith's beauty as Harry is, and Judith is not so attracted to Harry's handsomeness as Hetty. In this regard, the contrast not only between the Hutter sisters but

between Harry and Natty is brought into clear relief. It seems that presenting the characters, male and female, in oppositional pairs is characteristic of Cooper.

Judith seems similar to Mrs. Hutter with regard to her intimacy with men, but she does not follow her mother's fate so far as marriage is concerned. In other words, Judith does not make a wife in the exact sense of the word. Judith repulses Harry's proposal of marriage because she does not love anyone other than Natty. Her proposal to Natty is likewise decidedly rejected. It is merely hinted at the very end of the novel that Judith lives in England thereafter as a mistress of Captain Warley, with whom she had an intimate relationship earlier (*Deerslayer* 548).

It is Hetty who literally follows her mother to the grave. She is pitilessly killed by a shot from an army and is afterwards buried near her mother, without becoming a wife or a mother. She is deeply mourned without any "shame" which both her mother and her sister are supposed to bear. A conversation between the Hutter sisters displays that Hetty feels affection for the handsome Harry, who has been rejected by Judith. Thus, neither Judith nor Hetty is married to a man she really loves.

In the interestingly intricate relationships between the men and women in *The Deerslayer*, the only couple that is united happily in marriage is the Indian couple, namely Chingachgook and Hist. In *The Pioneers* on the other hand, Elizabeth is married to Edwards at the end. It is indicated in the story that Louisa will be married to an appropriate man in the future as well. Thus Cooper granted his heroines of *The Pioneers* the happy ending of marriage, which must have given the readers secure feelings in the end. Noticeably, the convention of the sentimental myth or sentimental love is manifest here.

The Deerslayer remarkably rejects this plot of marriage. Judith, we discover, actually wanted to marry once but is rejected eventually. We may assume, on the one hand, that this rejection helps bring about her ruin as a mistress and that on the other, it contributes to the change of her way of thinking and maybe her spiritual renewal. In this sense, Judith makes us foresee those women who pursue a new way of life: the "New Woman."¹³ This type of character will appear in American fiction one after another from the late nineteenth to the twentieth century. They desire emancipation from the system of marriage which has bound women to the domain of the house, deny the assumed role of wife and mother, and attempt to acquire their own autonomy, being independent of men socially and economically. Being free from institutional marriage and becoming a mistress, though she may be seen to depend on a man in this state, Judith can be said to represent the "New Woman."

At the end of *The Deerslayer*, interestingly enough, the "father" is buried into the water as well. We may presume that Judith buries him after everyone else in the family has been buried.¹⁴ She does so partially in revenge for his burial of her own mother. Judith feels released for some reason when she discovers that Tom is not her real father. As she confesses later in the novel, she has never cared deeply for him in her life (*Deerslayer* 357). It is of significance that Judith is not buried even though she has similar promiscuous conduct to

her mother's, which enables her to assume the leading role as a protagonist in the story. Having buried the man, she has to start narrative on her own.

It is worth while paying attention to how Cooper made a white woman state distinctly an opinion which may involve feminist thinking. Here we remind ourselves of Elizabeth among male hunters: "I find," says she, "that the old Christmas sport of shooting the turkey is yet in use among you. I feel inclined to try my chance for a bird. . ." (*Pioneers* 186). To the young hunter who exclaims "Is this a sport for a lady" (186), Elizabeth goes on to say: "If it be inhuman, the sin is not confined to one sex only. But I have my humour as well as others . . ." (187). She challenges the tradition of the sport which permits exclusive male participation, and insists that women be given the same opportunity as men. It is outstanding that Cooper's woman raises the feminist issue as early as the eighteenth century by asserting the equality of men and women.

Through Judith, too, feminist consciousness is also manifested. We read: "it was impossible for one of her quick intellect not to perceive how hollow was the association between superior and inferior, and that she was regarded as the play thing of an idle hour, rather than as an equal and a friend, by even the best intentioned and least designing of her scarlet-clad admirers" (*Deerslayer* 161). According to the narrator of the story, Judith has found this hard to bear. It should be noted that it is the male narrator who speaks for her sake. We may find a male feminist point of view here as well.

In depicting Hist, Cooper explains about the tribe of Indians "who habitually treat their women as the attendants and servitors of the warriors" (*Deerslayer* 174). In his discussion on the Indian society, he is found to be discussing the white society, too. It seems that by making comments on the Indian culture he tries to evade the direct critique of the white culture to which he belongs. In consequence, the male degrading treatment of women is taken up as a considerable problem in general and also seems to be criticized.

Elizabeth's statement cited above would have been too radical at that time. In spite of being described as intelligent, however, Elizabeth does not know "the troubles of this life" according to Louisa (*Pioneers* 305). Telling Elizabeth about how she once suffered poverty, Louisa says to her that Elizabeth does not understand the differences of the way of life between the rich and the poor. Elizabeth here seems to be oblivious to the realities of life; her feministic behavior therefore might sound rather idealistic.

It seems that Elizabeth usually speaks indirectly and modestly, carefully avoiding a public display of her feelings. For instance, she tries to behave coolly toward Edwards on purpose even though she holds much affection for him. Judith, on the contrary, always talks with directness and frankness. Not only does she dare to ask Natty to marry her, admitting her love for him, Judith also makes incisive comments to Harry directly, though we cannot sometimes help doubting to what degree she speaks from her heart. In this regard, Judith appears at least more distant from the nineteenth-century image of an ideal woman than Elizabeth. Even though Elizabeth seems to possess certain characteristics in common with

Judith in terms of how they speak and behave, Judith is represented more realistically. She has more substance than the ephemeral Elizabeth. It should also be surprising for Louisa to make such a critical comment to Elizabeth if one thinks she is merely the typical "fair" lady in opposition to Elizabeth. We thus find that the contrasting image model of Cooper's paired women which most critics have preferred is not functioning properly.

We have found that Cooper's novels do not lack distinguished heroines at all. Cooper, in his pursuit of the "Americanness," did try to create a "new" type of female character which would be differentiated from those heroines as the allegorical embodiment of a certain idea, or the creation for moral purposes who can be found in the British romance. What is more significant for us than the well-known mythic hero in the adventurous, wild world is Cooper's female characters; those attempts of Cooper to create the "uniquely American" is explicit in his representation of women, too. That is nowhere better exemplified than in his portrait of Judith Hutter from the last Leatherstocking tale. She plays an essential role to the story and notably leads the narrative in place of her buried yet powerfully influential mother, after burying her "father." As one of the forerunners of the "New Woman" in American fiction, Judith also challenges the cult of the ideal womanhood of the age. She speaks of her concern about domestic home in comparison to war as seen at the outset of this paper, yet she cannot find her happiness in the domesticity; in this regard she seems to exist in between the domestic world and adventurous one. Although she might only appear to be at once unattractive and attractive, she is actually given the realistic description as a flesh and blood individual; at the same time we cannot deny that she is rendered as a profound character, not one that can easily fall into a specific category in the literary convention. She thus goes beyond the categories which the sentimental tradition of the domestic fiction has projected upon women and may be said to become a very "uniquely American" character. Moreover, the text of *The Deerslayer* itself rejects the sentimental love-marriage plot; not only that, it contributes to the reconsideration of the paradigm that women should be confined in domesticity and marginalized, only added decoratively in the white male-controlling narrative.

Notes

¹ Rubin-Dorsky 11. He comments that there was in reality no "early American novel" of the period and explains the reasons for its absence.

² See, for example, Chase 15 and Gilmore 57.

³ The five books in chronological order are: *The Deerslayer* (1841), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Pathfinder* (1840), *The Pioneers* (1823), and *The Prairie* (1827). This order does not follow the protagonist's age as a sequence of the narrative. For the more detailed discussion, see Fiedler 192-94.

⁴ Examples of the critics who regard Cooper's world as "masculine" are Fiedler, Gilmore, and Douglas. Boone discusses Cooper's novels as the "male quest novel" (226-41).

⁵ For "male-bonding," see also Greiner 29-47.

⁶ It has been remarked that the quest of "Americanness" is closely related to the masculine. Fetterley also points out the equation between "masculinity" and "Americanness" parallel to the fusion between "male" and "American writer" (18). See also Baym, "Melodramas" 79.

⁷ See Smith for domestic sentimentality.

⁸ It is noteworthy that Greiner and Baym (in "Putting") are concerned about women characters and gender relations in Cooper.

⁹ For the concept of this womanhood, see Gilbert and Gubar 17-27.

¹⁰ Remarkable, for instance, says that because "it's a free country," she is entitled to call the young girl by her given name though she is her master's daughter (*Pioneers* 176).

¹¹ Smith takes notice of the absence of maternity in the nineteenth-century American fiction. She remarks that mother is often lost or killed off in the narrative of the American literature of the period (4-5).

¹² For further explanation of love and marriage in sentimental discourse, see Fiedler 45-47 and Boone 226-30.

¹³ See especially the third chapter of Showalter.

¹⁴ There is actually another member of the family who was buried in the lake, as related by Hetty, that is her brother (*Deerslayer* 179).

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