

Why do Elizabeth and Oliver get married? :
the meaning of marriage in *The Pioneers*

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Introduction

The beginning of love from a casual meeting. That may be an accident or a sudden injury. So many people long for these situations and have pleasure in imagining that. Even under the present-day 21st century time, a lot of dramas, novels, and movies which deal with love affairs put emphasis on the triggering of plot by chance. *The Pioneers* (1823)¹ which James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) wrote is a historical romance, featuring the early American Romanticism. This novel also uses the factor of accident which is important to interpret the whole story. Of course, it does not follow that *The Pioneers* is a love romance. Cooper represents his historical judge in this work from the point of historian and novelist at one time. Cooper reflects the social condition of those days as in his best-seller book *The Spy* (1821).

I did not mention about love between men and women accidentally and meaninglessly. In this work, young couple named Oliver Edwards and Elizabeth Temple, get married and their marriage is thought to be important for the understanding of this work. Kay House says “Cooper himself seems to have had little interest in the affairs of such lovers” (22) and concludes the factor of love is a secondary thing. But I must be opposed to this idea. Love between Elizabeth and Oliver must be an essential factor, and without that, I don't think I can develop

the persuasive discussion of *The Pioneers*. The marriage between Elizabeth and Oliver is never a secondly element, but it has a great concern with the theme of this work.

Singe Wegener studies *The Pioneers* from the point of marriage between them and makes comments like this.

. . . in the end Cooper's merger of the model gentleman, Oliver Edwards, to the lady, Elizabeth Temple, seems his only solution for role models of the new democratic America. (7)

Wegener makes their marriage have something of a meaning, but he does not clarify about the " role models of the new democratic America ". In order to answer this question, I want to think about the reason why Elizabeth and Oliver must get married. What meaning does their marriage have in the text?

1. The conflicts between old values and new values

The main character in this work is Natty Bumpoo. He is a mixed-race hunter and has a rifle which is a fruit of civilization. In this sense, he cannot be explained that he lives perfectly in the old society and an aboriginal American, but it is clear that he puts emphasis on the old values and the past. The opening chapter shows Natty who complains about

the diminishing game from clearing and betterments.

“ Ah! The game is becoming hard to find, indeed, Judge, with your clearing and betterments, ” said the old hunter, with a kind of compelled resignation.

“ The time has been, when I have shot thirteen deer, without counting the fa'ns, standing in the door of my hut. . . (22)

This is an utterance which explains about the interference for his hunting, namely his occupation, by the change of time. He is compelled to move forward and forward by the irresistible new society's power, though his principle is old values. The expression “ a kind of compelled resignation ” shows this circumstance clearly. Natty is a hero who is squeezed by the new power that “ might often makes right here ” (22). Also his name Natty associates a discontent feeling, that is to say, nattering, which must show Natty's complain on the contemporary days. There often occur conflicts between old values, as it were, Natty's values, and new values. For example, Natty suffers from a disadvantage caused by his deer hunting in the prohibited season. The Judge Temple's occupation is a representative of law, and he is also a representative of new society. The law keeps people's right and the law also binds people's freedom at the same time. As for Natty, the latter is true of him. Originally, about the game in the forest, there

is no seasonal distinction that people can hunt or cannot. As a hunter, Natty gets his animal when he finds that. This is the natural rule under which Natty has lived. Law restriction of prohibited season has a great influence on Natty's identity in itself as a hunter. The circumstance that a hunter cannot get animals freely is the proof of Natty's inconvenience.

Eric Cheyfitz explains that “ Natty Bumpoo and Judge Temple stand upon the same ground and ground their argument in the same term, legal ” (81). This explanation can be a proof in the way of hunting difference between Natty and people in the new society whose representative is Judge Temple. Both of their aim is the same in the meaning that people get animals to acquire food for them. This is a natural law that human has been doing beyond the difference of time and space. In this respect, they stand on the same ground, but the difference of nature about hunting is very big. Natty kills only a bird in order to get food. He tells that unnecessary and futile killing is “ wicked ” (247) and “ the Lord won't see the waste of his creatures for nothing ” (246), so that he complains about the way of hunting by new comers. The hunting by new comers is nothing but a slaughter for Natty. Natty pays respect even for the animals as food and thinks that animals are “ made for use, and not to destroy ” (248).

The difference of hunting is also true of fish catching. New comers use a fishing net and get fishes in big quantity

as if “ lost as food ” (265), eventually killing a massive of fishes. Judge Temple laughs at Natty who gets a fish by a lance because he thinks Natty’s way of fishing seems to him a “ shame ” (265). Replying to this laughter, Natty says, “ I wouldn’t be helping to such a sinful kind of fishing ” (265), and rejects eating the fishes people in new world get. Natty finds a profound spirituality in games, but people in new society think games as only materials. This scene clarifies the difference between Natty and new world.

How Cooper judges about the difference of hunting? At least from the point of Old Testament, Cooper is more sympathetic to the side of Natty than to the side of new people. Old Testament says that sometimes killing is pardoned, but murdering is prohibited. In order to get food or make tools, killing is sometimes pardoned, although not always, but murdering deliberately in advance is not pardoned. It is clear that the way of Natty’s hunting explains about killing, and the way of new society’s explains about murdering. Judge Temple says to Natty in the bird hunting scene, like “ Thou sayest well ” (248), but in the following scene of fishing, Temple’s this utterance turns out to be a superficial and fake one. Temple can be thought to be a superficial snob sometimes ², and his attitude toward hunting shows his appearance and reality at the same time, which can be equal to Cooper’s thought on the old society and new society. Cooper clearly agrees with old

society. Judge Temple seems to be a gentleman, but in reality he is a man of hypocrisy and snobbism. Cooper expresses his criticism toward new society in the difference of hunting between the old and new society.

This is not the only part which shows the comparison between old and new society. In chapter 1, Natty says, "That dog is more to be trusted than many a Christian man; for he never forgets a friend, and loves the hand that gives him bread" (22). This is an ironical expression toward Christian. This casual utterance is an important opening for criticism. When Cooper wrote *The Pioneers*, those days were more strong Christian-oriented society and the time of the work has a strong Christian element. Judge Temple is a Quaker, that is a Christian. What do these Christian do toward Natty? It is an action of betrayal which Natty calls that dogs don't do. New people don't behave like Christians because their immoral conducts are not improper for Christians.

In chapter 28, Elizabeth and Louisa walk in the forest together. They rejected Oliver's offer that he would go with them. The reason why they rejected Oliver's offer is explained as extremely natural in this chapter's beginning.

Male attendants, on such excursions, were thought to be altogether unnecessary, for none were ever known to offer an insult to a female who respected

herself. (302)

In this scene, it seems that the reason why Elizabeth rejects Edward's kindness is a awkward conversation between them. But as the quotation shows, she explains that she doesn't need companions because of her self-respect. This is clear from the point of omniscience. These sentences say that there is a tendency at this area that people pay respect toward what should be respected. In this chapter, Natty rescues Elizabeth and Louisa by two bullets from a fierce panther. The passage implies that people respect for what should be respected, but how about in reality?

Also in this point as in Judge Temple's character, there seems to be a hidden meaning. Natty is put on trial for the violence and resist to domiciliary visit to Hiram Doolittle in chapter 33. We can see that these two crimes are unreasonable for trail. The violence case against Hiram Doolittle is only a behavior by an old man of seventy years old, as like Natty "took him little roughly by the shoulders" (364). Innocence is judged about this violence, but there is certainly a hypocritical attitude under the name of law to punish a guileless man. It is certainly dishonor only to put people on trial. Natty is judged for the rejection to domicile searching. We can see here the betrayal and immoral conducts under the name of law. The treatment against Natty who never understands the

law is fine of 100 dollars and imprisonment for one month in the jail.

Natty desperately appeals to “reason” (37), not to law saying like “Talk [talk] not to me of law” (370). As he explains by himself, he rescued Judge Temple’s daughter, and even Judge Temple himself when he was a boy by giving foods and fur, as it were, Natty is a benefactor for Judge Temple. Natty is a person of kindness and sympathy for him from the bottom of his heart. It does naturally follow that readers have sympathy for Natty rather than for Judge Temple who emphasizes law. The passage explains that people respect for what should be respected in this area, but if we think about the treatment of Natty who is a benefactor, these passage of respects for what should be respected seems to be hypocritical.

The treatment toward Natty who is a man of virtue is like anti-Christ behavior of immorality in light of Christianity.³ Natty’s explanation like, “That [that] dog is more to be trusted than many a Christian man; for he never forgets a friend, and lives the hand that gives him bread” (22) turns out to be a foreboding in this trial scene. Although Temple is a Christian, he forgets his friend of Natty and requites kindness with ingratitude as a means of trial. The new power whose representative is Judge Temple who does immoral action under the face of law can be explained as William Decker says. He says that “*The Pioneers* illustrates the contradiction between

principle and practice” (Decker 5). From the explanation above, it is clear that in this work the new power oppresses the old one, and there are conflicts between the new power and the old power.

2. Elizabeth as a rescuer

As mentioned above, there is a form that new power oppresses the old power or the new power exploits the old one.⁴ But Cooper prepares for a rescue for this conflict between them. The time when Cooper lived was an exclusive age for women in politics, historical field, and in the literature field. Shirley Samuels points out this, referring to Cooper’s work.

The political and historical exclusion of women as writers and readers may relate to the novel’s representation of women as characters, and, beyond that, the novel’s elimination of women, and women bodies, from the sphere of history and its making.
(101)

Like this, Samuels emphasizes the periphery role of women in literature, but I think that we never neglect the role of women in Cooper’s literature. For example, in *The Spy*, women play roles to represent a Cooper’s historical concepts by their

behavior and their marriage. Also in this novel, there is a distinction about characterization between pro-America and pro-England. By this trait, we can say that this work represents the social conditions of those days. In *The Pioneers*, we never neglect a role of Elizabeth. Here, I want to pay attention to the Elizabeth's role as a rescuer.

In chapter 17, Natty, Billy Kirby, Oliver, and Brom who is an owner of turkey enjoy shooting of a turkey. Kirby and Oliver fail to shoot the turkey, and Natty's gun turns out to be a misfire. People conclude that "A[a] snap good as fire" (195), but close reading clarifies the injustice of this conclusion. Between Natty and Kirby, there is "a jealous rivalry" (191), and in order to dissolve it, they compete with each other "on the point of skill with the rifle" (191). Kirby's fire and Natty's misfire are never considered on the same ground. Misfire can not make clear the skill of rifle. This competition is clearly contrary to the "Fair[fair] play" (193) which Brom repeats. This is something of an ironical setting. Elizabeth inspires Natty to participate in the match once again by her giving a one shilling to Natty. Her behavior is based on a faith of Natty's skill of rifle and she wants Natty to settle the match by the rule of true fair play. Eventually Natty excellently shoots the mark of turkey and wins the competition. Natty says that "I was her deputy in the matter" (198), so that he claims that she should get the turkey. But she rejects

his proposal only to say that she wanted “ to see an exhibition of the far-famed skill of Leather-stocking ” (199).

In this shooting scene, she plays a role to rescue Natty from an unfair treatment, and eventually Natty saves his honor. Furthermore, she returns respect to Natty by the behavior of rejection of the game Natty has got. Natty says he did the shooting as a proxy for Elizabeth so that she should take the turkey. Elizabeth answers this Natty's gentle offer by the same respectful action of rejection. That is to say, the rejection of game means the respect for Natty that gentle behavior must be answered by the respect. In this scene, as Elizabeth does, gentle behavior is answered by respectful behavior. Elizabeth plays a relieving role for an “ old Leather-stocking ” (193) who liked to fall in a dishonor. Elizabeth's action means that the game brought by honor should be taken as a mark of honor. Elizabeth is a savior here.

Elizabeth's role of savior is not only this action. Natty is like to be imposed on the fine as a result of deer-shooting, but Elizabeth says that “ Leather-stocking, has now become my friend ” (343) and promises to Oliver to take over Natty's fine, declaring “ no harm shall follow ” (343). She repays an obligation of life saving to Natty, and now she offers to aid Natty from more the feeling as a friend than the feeling of obligation for Natty. This sentiment is clear contrast with Judge Temple's sentiment. Judge Temple says, “ I have never

been so fortunate as to secure his esteem, for to me he has been uniformly repulsive ” (345). Temple’s statement is more a personal feeling than an official feeling. Elizabeth and Judge Temple have a clear difference. Certainly Temple explains that “ his [Natty’s] former conduct shall not aggravate ” (345), but the statement explaining about a lack of respect comes first and the statement about a nature of penalty comes secondly. This is a proof of mix of public matters with private matters. Judge Temple sticks to the principle of law, but we can see through the hidden tangled private feelings. Actually, he forgets Natty’s rescue of his daughter and says like, “ it is now out of my power to avert it ” (344), giving up an aid for Natty. This utterance is originated from Natty’s attitude toward Judge, that is Natty’s rude behavior to him. This is clear from the reality that Judge Temple emphasizes his own honor and respect.

Elizabeth’s behavior is different from that of Judge Temple in the sense that even if Elizabeth may fall in a disadvantage, she repays her kindness to Natty considerately. She acknowledges that she doesn’t understand Natty perfectly, but she asks Oliver like, “ Do[do] not let the old man experience unnecessary uneasiness ” (346), showing affection for Natty as a friend. She has in fact love for Oliver, but she admits her powerlessness honestly, asking him to find a “ warmer friends ” (346). Even if her love is obstructed by her

powerlessness and even if Natty can not be helped as she hopes, she shows her true and sincere feeling for Natty. She wants to rescue Natty, but she may not have that power. This feeling brings about an utterance to Oliver whom she loves that he should find a “warmer friend” (346). She never tells a lie even to the man whom she loves and tells him a true nature of her own powerlessness. This behavior may result in the danger of losing love, but Elizabeth promises that she helps Natty as a friend. This utterance of aiding Natty is nothing but a true sentiment.

Her spiritual function of aid, as of her love for Natty as a friend, or as of the function to keep the honor for Natty, has already appeared in Chapter 1 symbolically. In chapter 1, Judge Temple and Oliver compete with each other about the possession of the dead deer⁵ especially from the point of honor. Finally it turns out that the deer was shot by Oliver and it is Oliver's game, but Judge Temple insistently wants the possession of the deer by money more than regarding Oliver's injury. Oliver lives a poor life, so that Judge Temple's proposal of 100 dollars is very attractive and necessary bargaining condition for Oliver. Still, Oliver rejects his proposal of 100 dollars saying, “Excuse[excuse] me; I have need of the venison” (25). Oliver's appearance is “as if with inward shame at his own weakness” (25) and turns his face flush. Arrogant Judge Temple is “lowering his voice” (25) and “entreat[s]” (25), but Oliver continues to reject and show his

anger at this point. Here is far less calm and mild scene. Elizabeth appears in this scene of chapter 1, and suggests like this. “ you [You] would not pain my father so much ” (25-6). Hearing this suggestion, Oliver’s attitude changes for the better as these.

Whether his wound became more painful, or there was something irresistible in the voice and manner of the fair pleader for her father’s feeling, we know not, but the distance of the young man’s manner was sensibly softened by this appeal, . . . (26)

At first, Oliver has forgot his pain from an excitement, but the existence of Elizabeth makes him remember his pain and his attitude is softening eventually. This Elizabeth’s role is softener of tense conflict between Oliver and Judge Temple at this spot. She plays a role of dissolver of conflict for both of them, as it were, she is a mental aid for both of them. In this way, Elizabeth’s role of rescue is implied in chapter 1 already.

It does follow that Elizabeth is a savior of mentality, such as an aid to keep honor or a helper in return for an obligation in this work. The role of mental savior is in fact represented in chapter 35 as a concrete action to help Oliver and Natty escape from pursuers by proposing a cart wit to make

move oxen.

As mentioned above, it is clear that Elizabeth aids for the old values which is against the new values and she plays a role of aid. Her functions are these: the keeper of honor for Natty, aid of love as a friend for a benefactor, dissolver of conflict between Judge Temple and Oliver in chapter 1 as a symbolic factor, and a concrete role of help for an escape. They are the proof of Elizabeth's role of savior. Elizabeth plays a role of aid in this work.

Conclusion

Indeed, the urge to root out vestiges of the culture and society of the Old World became so intense over the years that a communicator like the eldest Henry James was led to identify democracy itself with a program of denial and destruction. (13)

R. W. Lewis writes in his work, *The American Adam* (1959)⁶ like this and explains about the American literature in 19th century. He uses the words " case against the past " (13) and develops his argument. Does his argument true of Cooper's *The Pioneers*? Cooper's former work *The Spy* writes about a shaking values between pro-America and pro-England at the time of Independence war. *The Spy* was written in the time that American

at last began to feel a past longing for an old world of England, so that the publish of this work occurred. William Kelly writes about Cooper's literature as " an insightful meditation on the duality of American consciousness " (43). Certainly, also in *The Pioneers* Cooper explains about a conflict between the new power and the old power and it seems that Cooper implies a kind of yearn and pity on the past, though he expects the coming future. He doesn't praise a new age with perfect agreement in his works. As a historian, Cooper seems to make his works reflect his historical judge.

In my paper, I explained about the situation that new power exploits the old values. Natty, as a representative of an old power brings about kinds of conflicts, and he himself is suffering from a disadvantage of a new power. In part 2 of my paper, I pay attention to a heroine named Elizabeth and show a role of savior. Elizabeth is a aid for an old power against a new power, and she has a side of helper for an old society.

Here, I want to answer a question of my paper that why Oliver and Elizabeth get married. A marriage between Oliver and Elizabeth make Judge Temple and Oliver reconcile eventually. Oliver comes to possess Elizabeth's ground, so that love of them make recover an honor and property for Oliver who is a victim of a new power and he finally dissolves a conflict with an old power. Furthermore, their marriage is done in September, and this season is in autumn. This work has a structure of

a season from winter in chapter 1 to the autumn in the final chapter. The final of early winter is not an arbitrary setting Cooper makes. Autumn is a season when kinds of fruits and grains bear fruit, as it were, a prolific season. This implies a expectation for a new age. Also, their marriage may expect a child-birth. Oliver who is suffering from a new society gets married with Elizabeth who is in new society but is a savior for an old society. Their marriage implies a new life and new age. Oliver and Elizabeth get married and it represents a reconciliation between old values and new values. Now it is clear what their marriage implies. That is a Cooper's thought on history: a reconciliation between old powers and new powers. Cooper thinks that we have to have a new age, respecting an old age. It is not the rejection of the past, but that is Cooper's historical judge that we have to progress inheriting from the past. In order to show this conclusion, Oliver and Elizabeth's marriage is necessary. Their marriage is a lesson that the present is connected to the past and also the past and the present are connected to the future. Their marriage is an expression of this ideal.⁷

I didn't show in this paper about the image of the title *The Pioneers* as an opening image, but an exploitation of the age and final Natty's going in the woods can be considered in the same direction. It is possible that Natty himself is a front leader of the pioneers. The final sentence " the foremost

in that band of Pioneers, who are opening the way for the march of the nation across the continent ” (456) is a fully implying conclusion for this work’s ending.

Notes

1. In this paper, the reference to *The Pioneers* is based on

The Pioneers by James Fenimore Cooper, ed. Donald A. Ringe.

2. For example, in chapter 1, he competes with Oliver about a possession of the dead deer. He clings to a word “honor” and tries to solve the problem by money. we can say that his action is far from a true gentleman, on the contrary it is an action of snobbism. He stole a property from an old friend, using a chance of war as an action of thief at a fire. This shows his unfitness for a name of old and good family. He is actually a man of snobbism. He is in a position brought by an upstart chance. It is not brought by a natural old social rule and respect by others. We can detect his upstart nature in many parts of this work.

3. In Christianity, especially in Calvinism, moral is highly valued in addition with belief in the Bible. Moral action is true of God’s providence, so that we have to be “good citizen”. This is one of the tradition of Calvinism. Betrayal is of course immoral action, so that we can find Cooper’s irony that he is improper for a sincere Christian in this point. The idea of “good citizen” is a tradition from the age of early American writers, such as Jonathan Edwards, Increase Mather, and so on.

4. There is also a structure that an old power is exploited by

a new power in other works, it is perhaps interesting to connect this trait to his biographical data. Cooper's father is William Cooper, and natural hope to overcome father and conflict between father and son can be read in the conflict between an old power and a new power. *The Pioneers* can be read in a optimistic reading that time progresses forgetting the past and the old values in contrary with my paper. But there is certainly a love for father, love for the old values which can not be wiped out fully. The reading that time progresses overcoming the old values, but certainly with a longing for the past, can be connected to the nature description which should disappear gradually in *The Pioneers*.

5. Deers sometimes have association with Christianity and the Holy Cross. In the fine art of the Middle Ages, deers are drawn as animals which quench their thirst in the river in heaven. By this action, this animal is thought to be an animal to quench one's religious thirst for faith and Baptism. Also traditionally, horn of the deer is associated with the Holy Cross. It is possible that this function of deer and Judge Temple's desire to get this animal by the power of money are related. That is to say, the representative of faith can be got by the power of money which Judge Temple has emphasis on. This scene can be read as a secularization of faith and pettiness by money. Money plays a role of secularization

in the process of modernization. For example, the works of Mark Twain shows such traits of secularization especially in his gilded age point of view.

6. This book was published more than 50 years ago, but it has still influence on the present-day study. It deals with the literature of 19th century literature, but it can also apply to the works of 20th century. For example, when people talk about women works such as *My Antonia*, Lewis' s attitude against the past can apply to the longing for the past. Or if we pay attention to the publishing date of 1959, it is possible that we can connect the date with social background of those days and relate them to the works of the present-day literature.

7. This conclusion is based on the analysis of *The House of the Seven Gables* which is one of the representatives of American Romanticism by Hawthorne. Although the age of Hawthorne is later years than that of Cooper, Cooper' s works can have effect on Hawthorne' s literature. There are some relations between Cooper as a historian and Hawthorne who wrote skeptical attitude on history.

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