TOPOGRAPHICAL POETRY IN AMERICA, 1783-1812

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ABSTRACT

TOPOGRAPHICAL POETRY IN AMERICA, 1783-1812

by Eugene L. Huddleston

Based on a compilation of 187 topographical poems from early American books and magazines, this study surveys the genre during a period when Americans were attempting to create a national literature in the absence of a long-standing native tradition. Claims of literary nationality generally led American poets to seek originality in external nature, which easily found a place within contemporary British critical theory widely accepted as universally valid. Looking abroad for motifs and forms and to their own country for material, they produced an imitative poetry displaying an incongruity between convention and experience, between form and content, that led to its subsequent neglect as belles lettres. Of the many modes of English nature poetry that Americans imitated, the topographical genre--by definition demanding indigenous subject matter--well reveals how they achieved originality within the limited meaning given the term. Although by the close of the eighteenth century, a gradual increase in subjectivity had broadened the definition of "local" poetry, most poets in America as in England found their models in the tradition

established by Denham's Cooper's Hill, Pope's Windsor Forest, and Dyer's Grongar Hill.

For subjects, American poets, like their English counterparts, surveyed prospects from their favorite hill, flattered the owners of picturesque estates, memorialized towns and regions, recounted their travels, and advertised the beauties of rivers and waterfalls. Although some of the poems suggest the poet using the external world as a mirror for his thoughts and feelings, the majority rest on neoclassic premises that art imitate universal Nature and that it please and instruct an audience. Common motifs and conventions from early and mid-eighteenth century English poetry occur with overwhelming frequency--namely prospect-pieces, the rural retirement motif, historical matter, overt moralizing, ruin-pieces, prophecies of future glory, praise of commerce,and descriptive catalogues. Occurring less often are those associated with the English Romantic period: the personal address, childhood reminiscences, Weltschmerz, and enthusiasm for sublime scenery.

Conclusions to this study concern effects of the English tradition upon treatment of native materials. The frontier west of the Appalachians exerted little influence on the language, form, and content of poetry written about the region. Instead of developing new voices to match the new land, poets resorted to stereotyped responses that characterized poetry of the seaboard, an area exhibiting a

balance between art and nature that accorded well with the current vogue of the picturesque in English poetry. Though unable to cast aside worn conventions in delineating American nature, they achieved a degree of originality by freely using American place names and by describing native flora and fauna; contrary to an impression often imparted, Philip Freneau was not alone in detailing nature distinctively American. The prevalence of the rural retirement theme, by far the most popular convention borrowed from English poetry, demonstrates how much Americans were committed to ideals of cultural primitivism; yet the desire for simplicity existed side by side with prophecies of future national glory, an indication that ideas of primitivism and progress had become inextricably interwoven in early America. A gradual sentimentalizing of the rural retirement motif and an increasingly lachrymose response to natural scenery give evidence of the influence of sensibility, a popular mode of eighteenth-century thought and feeling. In England the cult of sensibility helped prepare for the great Romantics; in America it led to the sentimentality of the "Fireside" poets, whose inheritance also included the genteel language, picturesque subject matter, and superficial didacticism so typical of topographical poetry of the early national period.

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By

Eugene L. Huddleston

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PREFACE

> And such in time (if right the Muse descries)
> Shall this wide realm with tow'ry cities rise.
> The spacious Delaware through future song,
> Shall roll in deathless majesty along;
> Each grove and mountain shall be sacred made,
> As now is Cooper's Hill and Windsor's shade.[1]

After the Treaty of Paris, American poets increasingly found that the depiction of native scenery offered the best means of asserting cultural independence. Paradoxically adopting motifs and styles from English poetry, they described the grandeur as well as the quiet beauty of nature distinctively American. Rude mountains, the inspirers of sublime emotions, vied for attention with peaceful streams and cultivated fields, the abode of Contentment and similar gentle virtues. Following the turmoil of the War of 1812, topographical poetry increased astoundingly as the Western movement brought reports of ever newer and grander scenery and as the English Romantic movement gained status in America. Poems of Places, a collection edited by Henry W. Longfellow, shows that by 1877 few prominent natural features--East, West, North, and South--remained unsung.[2] In the twentieth century many

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[1]from _____Evans, "Progress of Science," New England Quarterly Magazine, I (1802), 286.

[2]Four of the thirty-one volumes (Boston, 1877) are devoted to the four principal geographical regions of the United States.

regional poets have continued to celebrate their native countryside still clinging to poetic forms and attitudes toward nature made popular in the nineteenth century. And even those poets who have followed the main stream of American poetry toward radically new imagery and attitudes continue to write poems delineating specific places in America.

By choosing Paterson, New Jersey, as the subject of a long poem,[3] William Carlos Williams showed that modern poets, like their eighteenth-century predecessors, still look for subject matter in familiar local settings possessing scenic interest and rich historical associations:

> Paterson had a history, an important colonial history. It had, besides, a river--the Passaic, and the Falls. . . . The Falls were spectacular; the river was a symbol handed to me. I began to write the beginning, about the stream above the Falls. I read everything I could gather, finding fascinating documentary evidence in a volume published by the Historical Society of Paterson, Here were all the facts I could ask for, details exploited by no one.[4]

Dr. Williams' statement that no one had exploited details of his subject is, in a sense, mistaken; for Passaic Falls at Paterson had been the subject of more poems than any other natural feature in America between the Revolution and the War of 1812.[5] The most ambitious of these, Samuel

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[3]Paterson, 1946-1950.

[4]William Carlos Williams, I Wanted to Write a Poem: The Autobiography of the Works of a Poet, reported and edited by Edith Heal (Boston, 1958), p. 72.

[5]See the checklist of topographical poems appended to this paper.

Low's "On the Falls of the Passaick" (1800), is radically different, both in form and substance, from Paterson. Yet the use of the same material by poets so separated by time illustrates that "loco-descriptive" poetry will continue to be written as long as artists, writing "in the American grain," base their creations on places, people, and scenes they know best.

Despite the importance of the subject, scholars have paid scant heed to topographical poetry in the formative years between the establishment of the Republic and the War of 1812.[6] The need for a study was apparent when I began this work three years ago and became even more apparent upon publication late in 1964 of Howard Mumford Jones's O Strange New World and Leo Marx's The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America. The distinguished authors of these studies of American culture both stress the significance of the landscape as shaper and symbol of American aspirations. Aside from its contributions to the history of American ideas, topographical poetry of the early national period reveals the artistic failures and accomplishments of men seriously engaged in creating, not historical documents, but living literature. One of the chief problems in belles lettres was how to

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[6]"Topographical" throughout includes didactic-descriptive poems and nature lyrics with localized settings.

achieve a national literature against the absence of native tradition and in the face of strong English tradition. A study of topographical poetry, a genre which by its very nature demands originality in selection of materials, should clarify somewhat the complex issues of imitation and originality that plagued writers of this period.

The appended checklist of topographical poetry published in America from 1783 through 1811 constitutes the basis of my study. Although Robert A. Aubin included American poems in his checklist in Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England (1936), he places them indiscriminately among the multitude of English poems which are his primary concern; and, more importantly, he does not exhaust the possibilities within the period treated by this study.[7] At the time he compiled his list, Aubin lacked access to rare material on microfilm, microcards, and microprints; the availability of such material now infinitely simplified my own compilation. Notwithstanding relatively easy access to material, I was faced with some delicate decisions regarding inclusions. I have eliminated newspapers and almanacs altogether because the practical difficulty of getting to all of them outweighed their probable value as

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[7]Aubin's checklist, which embraces a span of some 200 years, includes many American poems not in my list; but of the 187 poems which I have found within the dates 1783-1812, Aubin includes only 51.

sources for topographical poetry. I have also excluded poems in the genre known to be written in this period yet not published until after 1811 or not published at all. The criterion for inclusion was publication of the poem in an American book or magazine between 1783 and 1812. I thus include some works first published before 1783 but reprinted during the period, and I include poems written by Englishmen if such poems concern American landscape and if they were published in America during the period.

Within this scope I have tried to be thorough. The most rewarding source of new material, the American Periodical Series, involved practically a frame by frame search through eighty rolls of microfilm. In seeking poems from books, I checked numerous bibliographies, including Oscar Wegelin's Early American Poetry, John C. Frank's "Early American Poetry to 1820: A List of Works in the New York Public Library," and Shaw and Shoemaker's American Bibliography. Of necessity, I examined firsthand a large number of possible sources, only a relatively small number of which actually contained topographical poems.

Besides standard publication data for both original entries and republications, the checklist has features that I hope will prove useful. All items are grouped by similar subject matter into seven main sections; within each section poems of known authorship are listed alphabetically

and the remainder follow chronologically.[8] There was good reason for not alphabetizing all entries: of the 187 poems in the list 83 are either anonymous, pseudonymous, or initialed. Most of the pseudonymous poems were signed with garish names suggesting influence of the Della Cruscan fad (Carlos, Matilda), Neoclassic pastoral conventions (Palemon, Damon), and possibly the sentimental novel (Maria, Irene). For the reader's convenience in tracing poems of known authorship, I have included with the checklist an alphabetical author index.

Additional features with each entry include standard abbreviation of the American state to identify the setting; an asterisk, if the poem is also found in R. A. Aubin's checklist; and a keyed symbol giving information on verse forms. For poems that by their titles do not seem to belong in the topographical genre, I provide a brief annotation to justify their inclusion. The most complex information derives from a series of alphabetical symbols keyed to a list of themes and conventions at the head of the checklist. Practically all major studies of eighteenth-century descriptive poetry--including those by R. A. Aubin, Dwight L. Durling, and C. V. Deane--agree basically upon

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[8]Under two of the main headings, I have used subheadings to show the particular natural features in America that interested poets the most.

characteristic features of the poetry they deal with, and my own close study of poems in the checklist confirms the aptness of their analyses. However, in adapting their categories--concerned primarily with English poetry--I have let my own judgment determine the ones which seem particularly relevant to American topographical poetry.

The text of this study is built upon the plan and features of the checklist. Basically, I try to place topographical poetry in the wider perspective of American nature verse of the late eighteenth century and then to describe, analyze, and evaluate the American uses of the genre against its English background. Specifically, Chapter I examines reasons for the great quantity and low quality of American nature verse of the period, and Chapter II shows the relationship of the topographical genre to the other kinds of nature verse then in vogue. Chapter III surveys the seven divisions of topographical poetry in the same order that they appear in the checklist, and Chapter IV, through the detailed analysis of a single poem, deals with specific questions of literary value that Chapter III, organized as a topical survey, could not do. The motifs and conventions which were only briefly identified in the checklist receive detailed treatment in Chapters V and VI. Chapter V treats the ones generally associated with neoclassic poetry and Chapter VI those in which elements

of feeling, or sensibility, signal a shift to Romantic theory. Chapter VII, in evaluating the chief trends in American topographical poetry, examines the claims of tradition against the originality called for by the newness of the physical environment.

In bringing this work to completion, I am chiefly indebted to Professor Norman S. Grabo. While chairman of my guidance committee in the initial stages of research, he gave encouragement when it was most needed, and his own interest in the project stimulated mine. After leaving East Lansing for new duties at the University of California, he continued to guide me with thoroughness and tact through each chapter. An adviser in the best sense, he let me find my own solutions to problems rather than imposing his own, and I am forever grateful to him for so freely giving of his time and energy. My debt also extends to Professor Russel Nye, whose timely advice and kind consideration of my needs proved of inestimable value in the final stages of the dissertation.

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I. THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURE IN EARLY AMERICAN POETRY

Except for the poems of Philip Freneau and a number of the Connecticut Wits, literary historians have largely overlooked poetry from the end of the American Revolution to the first efforts of William Cullen Bryant after the War of 1812.[1] In 1934 Harry Hayden Clark observed that the years from 1787 to 1800 had been "relatively neglected by those who are reinterpreting American literary history," and Russel Nye, twenty-six years later, could still say that literature of the early national period had been "treated in most literary histories as a sort of blank space."[2] Yet there was a great amount of literary activity between Freneau and Bryant, a large part of which was the production of nature poetry. Only one who has searched out the columns of original poetry in magazines such as the Port Folio or who has paged through some of the decaying leather-bound volumes of native verse can appreciate the great number of nature poems which no one now reads.

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[1]The only detailed study of the poetry of this period to appear in recent years is Mary Dexter Bates, "Columbia's Bards: A Study of American Verse from 1783 through 1799" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 1954).

[2]"Factors to be Investigated in American Literary History from 1787 to 1800," English Journal, XXIII (June, 1934), 481; and The Cultural Life of the New Nation (New York, 1960), p. 251.

In accounting for this large body of verse, one must look both to the cultural ties of the new country with its parent and to circumstances of art, life, and culture in America fostering an awareness of the external world as God had created it. In Great Britain the increase in nature poems was concomitant with a "return to nature" that became recognizable as a decisive movement from about 1750 onwards.[3] Its ideological basis was deism, which insisted upon the beauty, harmony, and design of universal nature, and its greatest impetus derived from the influence of the third Earl of Shaftesbury, whose "moral sense" philosophy gave intellectual respectability to the promptings of the heart and thus prepared the way for the cult of sensibility, by which men became increasingly aware of the power of nature to minister to their spiritual needs.[4] A new regard for the out-of-doors was apparent not only in poetry but in landscape gardening, landscape painting, and travel literature.[5] Tastes in America could not help being affected by these trends, for what Englishmen read, Americans read:

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[3]C. V. Deane, Aspects of Eighteenth Century Nature Poetry (Oxford, 1935), p. 1.

[4]See Cecil A. Moore, "The Return to Nature in English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century," Studies in Philology, XIV (1917), 243-291.

[5]Deane, Aspects, p. 1.

> Goldsmith's Deserted Village, first issued in Philadelphia in 1771, required twelve American editions and many imports before 1800. Still more popular was Thomson's sweetly tranquil depiction of the countryside in The Seasons. . . . From Thomson to the pensive Elegy in a Country Churchyard and the more mournful "Graveyard Poets" was but a step, and a step easily taken by many readers who bought the eight American editions of Young's Night Thoughts and the twelve of Blair's The Grave, along with many copies imported from England.[6]

The appetite of American readers for poetry in which external nature figured prominently could not be appeased simply by the best English writers; they wanted scenes set closer to home, and native bards began to supply this need in astonishing quantity.

Besides the stimulus provided by the new poetry of nature, a number of circumstances go beyond direct influences of particular literary works or genres in accounting for the American "return to nature." Some of these are simply concomitants of, and others more precisely reasons for, the relatively large body of nature verse to appear around the turn of the century, but all in some way touch upon its development. Foremost among them was the predominantly rural economy of early America. Agrarian idealism readily developed in a new, rich country where land was virtually free for the taking. The vogue for simplicity--based on the assumption that God made the country and man the town--was so pronounced that themes of cultural primitivism show up everywhere in the

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[6]James D. Hart, The Popular Book (New York, 1950), p. 28. Other best selling English poets in the period 1783-1812 were William Cowper, Robert Burns, Lord Byron, and Walter Scott; see F. L. Mott, Golden Multitudes (New York, 1947), p. 305.

literature of the period.[7] An imported English poem, Robert Bloomfield's The Farmer's Boy (1800), which laments the disappearance of simple rural virtues, enjoyed phenomenal popularity, and numerous native poems such as Freneau's "The Bergen Planter" and Thomas James's "The Country Meeting" developed the ever popular theme of rural contentment. Of all the early literature of rural simplicity, Crèvecoeur's Letters from an American Farmer (1782) best presents the vision of an agricultural society where life close to nature fosters virtue, freedom, and contentment.

> Primitive nature is to Crèvecoeur a never-failing source of wonder and beauty. . . . Like Shaftesbury, he marvels at the perfect order and symmetry of the world-machine, Nature. In this unspoiled environment lives the typical American farmer, fortunate in his economic independence, in his snug, comfortable house, in his wholesome country sports of husking bees and sleighing, and in the affections of his family hearth.[8]

The urge to simplicity was but one aspect of agrarian idealism; another was the belief that America's future glory was guaranteed, in large part, by the richness, variety, and grandeur of the virgin land. Men's imaginations were so taken with the potential of American nature that from the beginning the vision of America as an earthly Paradise or "Garden of the World" became the chief image defining the promise of American life, a promise so grand that the "sublime" rhetoric of the

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[7]M. F. Heiser, "The Decline of Neoclassicism, 1801-1848," Transitions in American Literary History, ed. Harry Hayden Clark (Durham, North Carolina, 1953), pp. 125-26.

[8]Walter Fuller Taylor, A History of American Letters (Boston, 1936), p. 27.

time hardly seemed to do it justice.[9] To many, America offered the glory of the New Jerusalem of Revelation.

> For here great nature with a bolder hand,
> Roll'd the broad stream and heaved the lifted land;
> And here, from finisht earth, triumphant trod,
> The last ascending steps of her creating God.[10]

The quest for the millenium in America motivated all manner of men--from orthodox Puritans believing in the imminent Second Coming to "pantisocrats" like Southey and Coleridge, who in 1794, under the advice of an American realtor, chose the Susquehanna Valley as the site for their stillborn Utopian experiment.[11] Even as the dream of Edenic perfection motivated men of diverse interests, so did it embrace diverse ideas--from the urge for rural simplicity to the urge for commercial wealth. So compounded, the dream often manifested itself in peculiar combinations of primitivism and progress. Numerous visionary poems, such as Freneau's "The Rising Glory of America," sang of America's future in terms of the past:

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[9]For the source of the "Garden of the World" as a poetic idea see Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), pp. 123-32.

[10]From Joel Barlow, The Columbiad (1809), I, 39.

[11]The American editor Joseph Dennie, opposed to "Jacobism" in any form, referred to Pantisocracy as a "wild scheme" that "hair-brained young men" had formed "for migrating to the woods of Pennsylvania, where they proposed to fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden age." See Port Folio, n.s. II (1806) 105; quoted in H. Lloyd Flewelling, "Literary Criticism in American Magazines, 1783-1820" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1931), p. 117.

A new Jerusalem sent down from heav'n
Shall grace our happy earth, perhaps this land,
Whose virgin bosom shall then receive, tho' late,
Myriads of saints with their almighty king,
To live and reign on earth a thousand years
Thence call'd Millennium. Paradise anew
Shall flourish, by no second Adam lost.
No dang'rous tree or deathful fruit shall grow,
No tempting serpent to allure the soul,
From native innocence; a Canaan here
Another Canaan shall excel the old,
. . . . . .
Another Jordan's stream shall glide along
And Siloah's brook in circling eddies flow,
Groves shall adorn their verdant banks, on which
The happy people free from second death
Shall find secure repose. . . .[12]

Another circumstance of American life making for nature poetry was a growing awareness during the early national period of the wealth of natural resources and the geographical homogeneity of the virgin continent. The Louisiana Purchase, coupled with President Jefferson's strong scientific curiosity in the continent lying to the West, led to government-sponsored expeditions that stimulated popular interest in indigenous American nature. Lewis and Clark's exciting journey up the Missouri and over the mountains to the Pacific was celebrated by Joel Barlow in a poem "On the Discoveries of Captain Lewis," which he enclosed in a letter to President Jefferson on January 12, 1807.[13] In it the great American rivers stretching in a belt from east to west--the Potomac,

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[12]Philip Freneau and H. H. Brackenridge, "The Rising Glory of America," first pub. 1772. Quoted from text in Poems of Philip Freneau, ed. Fred Lewis Pattee (Princeton, New Jersey, 1902), I, 80-81.

[13]Leon Howard, The Connecticut Wits (Chicago, 1943), p. 331.

Ohio, Missouri, and Columbia--symbolize the foreordained unity of America:

> These four brother floods, like a garland of flowers,
> Shall entwine all our states in a band,
> Conform and confederate their wide-spreading powers,
> And their wealth and their wisdom expand.[14]

Nature and Nature's God had so pre-eminently blessed the American continent that soon patriotic pride engendered by the geographical blessings would take definite form in the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. Meanwhile, the writers of the Federalist Papers took advantage of the unity of American nature in arguing for federalism:

> It has often given me [Publius] pleasure to observe, that independent America was not composed of detached and distant territories, but that one connected, fertile, wide-spreading country was the portion of our western sons of liberty. Providence has in a particular manner blessed it with a variety of soils and productions, and watered it with innumerable streams, for the delight and accommodation of its inhabitants. A succession of navigable waters forms a kind of chain round its borders . . . while the most noble rivers in the world, running at convenient distances, present them with highways for the easy communication of friendly aids, and the mutual transportation and exchange of their various commodities.[15]

The power of grand American scenery to inspire sublime emotions had an important influence on the emerging national literature, for the sheer bigness of America could awe even the most sedate and unimaginative citizen. Across the wide Missouri were ocean-like prairies and beyond them mountains

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[14]Joel Barlow, "On the Discoveries of Captain Lewis," American Register, or General Repository, I (1807), 198-99.

[15]The Federalist, Letter No. 2 (by John Jay), first pub. 1787. Quoted from Selections from the Federalist, ed. William Bennett Munro (Cambridge, Mass., 1914), p. 20.

so vast the Alps suffered in comparison. But these were not well known in the early national period; for most people, the East still typified American nature. Extensive virgin forests, precipices, cataracts, and broad rivers--often as in the Hudson Valley in conveniently close proximity--presented unrivaled scenes of grandeur. The developing penchant for bigness, a well known trait of the national temperament, seemed justified in light of European attacks on the inferiority of American nature, and the characteristically American tall tale, anticipated by Franklin's story of the whale which leaped Niagara Falls, was an inevitable development of the vogue for bigness. Not only could Americans overcompensate for their feelings of cultural inferiority by humorous exaggeration, but also, through the grandeur of American nature, they could produce a body of sublime poetry second to none, for in literary theory of the time "sublime" was a key critical desideratum.[16] From Roger Wolcott to Walt Whitman many American writers felt that sublime subjects alone would produce sublime literature, a critical assumption that Professor Benjamin Spencer has labeled the "topographical

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[16]The great popularity in American Colleges of Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) immeasurably contributed to the frequency with which this term was bandied by American poets and critics. Blair "thought of sublimity as a quality of things rather than of expression," and he found its basis in "vastness, awfulness, or solemnity," qualities which American nature abundantly possessed. See William Charvat, The Origins of American Critical Thought, 1810-1835 (Philadelphia, 1936), p. 46. For the popularity of Blair and other Scotch rhetoricians and critics in America, see Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York, 1943), p. 236.

fallacy."[17] Because the nation lacked a well-documented historical tradition to serve as a literary stimulus, many shared the belief of David Humphreys that sublime American scenery would in itself sufficiently inspire the loftiest song:

> What tho' no splendid spoils of other times
> Invite the curious to these western climes:
> No virtuoso, with fantastic aim,
> Here hunts the shadow of departed fame:
> No piles of rubbish his attention call,
> Nor mystic obelisk, or storied wall:
> No ruin'd statues claim the long research;
> . . . . . .
> Yet here I rove untrodden scenes among,
> Catch inspiration for my rising song;
> See nature's grandeur awfully unfold;
> And, wrapt in thought, her works sublime behold:
> For here vast wilds which human foot ne'er trod,
> Are marked with footsteps of a present God:
> His forming hand, on nature's broadest scale,
> O'er mountains mountains pil'd and scoop'd the vale;
> Made sea-like streams in deeper channels run,
> And roll'd thro' brighter heav'ns his genial sun.[18]

Important strides in the natural sciences during the eighteenth century made educated Americans desirous of uncovering the secrets of nature within their own country.[19] Many eminent Americans and Europeans held membership in the American Philosophical Society, and nearly all major American cities had their own natural history associations.

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[17] The Quest for Nationality: An American Literary Campaign (Syracuse, New York, 1957), p. 13.

[18] David Humphreys, "A Poem on the Happiness of America," American Museum, I (1787), 250.

[19] Russel Nye, in Cultural Life of the New Nation (p. 56), notes that "a faith in science. . .permeated the thinking of all ranks and classes of Americans during the years 1776-1820."

The American continent offered a fertile new field for geographers, geologists, and especially botanists and zoologists, who were busily occupied in naming and classifying the bewildering variety of native flora and fauna. Compared to other natural sciences, botany was in an advanced stage of development, due largely to the brilliant work of the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus. Increased interest in the Linnaean method of systematic classification had literary significance, for the writings of American naturalists "created new material and more original, particular, and rich imagery for poetry."[20] Two early naturalists were themselves literary men: the botanist William Bartram in prose and the ornithologist Alexander Wilson in poetry.

The kinship of the "sister arts" poetry and painting, an accepted aesthetic premise of the eighteenth century, suggests that trends and developments in American art had a bearing on nature poetry. Although there was no important landscape painter in America until well after the War of 1812, engraved or lithographed "views" of American buildings, bridges, and landscapes multiplied with the increase of native printing soon after the Revolutionary War.[21] Besides being sold separately and in portfolios, such prints appeared in almost every issue of most of the prominent magazines,

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[20]M. F. Heiser, "The Decline of Neoclassicism, Transitions, p. 157.

[21]Oliver W. Larkin, Art and Life in America (New York, 1949), p. 113.

generally accompanied by detailed prose descriptions. The Port Folio, somewhat tardily entering the field, featured its first landscape engraving, a sketch of Buttermilk Falls, in the issue of February, 1809. With it was an invitation to "the artist and amateur to furnish us with Sketches and accompanying descriptions" and an assertion that "our country affords an inexhaustible abundance [of scenery] . . . which, for picturesque effect, cannot be surpassed in any part of the world." The picturesque, with its companion pleasures the sublime and beautiful, was all the rage.[22] Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, and Salvator Rosa, as supreme masters of this mode of painting, dominated landscape style, both in Europe and America, until well into the nineteenth century.[23] The vogue of the picturesque extended even to "do-it-yourself" magazine articles. A contrivance described in the Columbian Magazine in 1789, intended to produce a "varied landscape," was basically a picture frame with fixed foreground and background painted on different surfaces. The middle ground was mounted at both ends of the frame on rollers and, by means of a key, could be "changed at

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[22]By picturesque eighteenth-century aestheticians generally meant whatever is characterized by variety, intricacy, and freedom from constraint. A Grecian temple is beautiful, but a moss-grown Gothic ruin is picturesque. This, in essence, is the definition supported by Uvedale Price, whose An Essay on the Picturesque was reviewed in the American Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal, II (May-August, 1795).

[23]Larkin, Art and Life in America, p. 135.

pleasure, some objects disappearing at every turn, and others coming into view."[24]

The most complex circumstance affecting American nature poetry was the controversy over literary nationalism. After the Revolutionary War most Americans wanted to be as independent of England in literature as in politics, but few agreed on how cultural independence could best be achieved. How much of the English heritage should be rejected and how much retained? Specifically, could traditional themes and forms be adapted to American materials and was such adaptation desirable? The complex issues of imitation and originality that such questions raised provided the material for a continuing literary debate that dates from this period.

During the period 1783-1812 the critical positions on originality were based largely on the Neoclassic postulate that "good sense is the same in all ages, and that a 'new thought' is merely a fresh and lively statement of this good sense."[25] Through his skill in couplets, Alexander Pope had molded the dictates of "universal Nature" into clichés of Neoclassic criticism:

> Those Rules of old discover'd, not devis'd,
> Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz'd;
> . . . . . .

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[24]John Peal, "The Varied Landscape," Columbian Magazine, III (July, 1789), 416.

[25]Spencer, Quest for Nationality, p. 35.

> True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;
> Something, whose truth convinc'd at sight we find,
> That gives us back the image of our mind.

Many influential Americans, such as Colonel John Parke and Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, still held to the early eighteenth-century position, which Pope so well represented, that since "Nature" was everywhere the same (nature in the sense of the universal and immutable in thought, feeling, and taste) there was little reason even to raise the issue of "originality."[26] An even greater number of Americans subscribed to the theories of the Scotch rhetorician Lord Kames, whose postulate of a standard of taste common to the species did little to deter Neoclassic strictures against originality.[27] Hugh Blair, the other popular arbiter of the Scottish "Common Sense" school, also believed taste had the same foundation in all nations, but "in his dictum that a good poet will eschew foreign scenes and exhibit the landscape peculiar to his own country, he encouraged a kind of indigenous reference which Kames scarcely seemed to sanction."[28] Yet because most American writers shared the belief of Dr.

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[26]For statements by Parke and Waterhouse against "originality," see Spencer, p. 35.

[27]Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism (1762) appeared in at least nine American editions between 1796 and 1835. See Charvat, The Origins of American Critical Thought, p. 30. For evidence of Kames's influence before 1796, see Leon Howard, "The Late Eighteenth Century," Transitions in American Literary History, p. 69.

[28]Spencer, Quest for Nationality, p. 34.

Elihu Smith that a universal taste reflected in belles lettres united mankind, they would of necessity--even in treating strictly American material--choose forms, themes, and language which men of taste everywhere recognized as correct.[29]

Whatever tended to uphold the status quo in belles lettres, whether literary theory or social and political forces, worked against the establishment of a native literature. Such a conservative force was the concept of a Republic of Letters uniting all urbane men of letters in an invisible state whose purpose was to maintain intellectual and literary order.[30] In the political sphere it was analogous to Federalism, which also upheld the order implicit in the laws of universal nature. These intellectual "aristocrats" believed that literary standards of elegance and correctness depended on keeping "revolutionary frenzy" from invading the

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[29] Ibid., p. 37. M. F. Heiser (Transitions, p. 143) states that "romantic" criticism in America did not really begin until 1816 in the pages of the North American Review, and Spencer (p. 35) points out that although "the associationist psychology of Locke and Hartley left its mark on Thomas Odiorne [an American poet of the late eighteenth century,]. . . he did not trace its implications . . . so explicitly as did Bryant and later authors who read the associationist Alison. In fact, Alison's influence, like that of A. W. Schlegel, Herder, and Madame de Staël, with their espousal of the organically national as opposed to the neoclassical universal in art, was scarcely to be felt until after 1815."

[30] See Lewis P. Simpson, "Federalism and the Crisis of Literary Order," American Literature, XXXII (November, 1960), 253-66.

Republic. Many held the attitude of the Anglican Rev. Jacob Duché that democracy threatened a breakdown of literary order. In 1772 he wrote:

> The poorest labourer upon the shore of Delaware thinks himself entitled to deliver his sentiments in matters of religion or politics with as much freedom as the gentlemen or the scholar. Indeed, there is less distinction among the citizens of Philadelphia, than among those of any civilized city in the world. Riches give none. For every man expects one day or another to be upon a footing with his wealthiest neighbor. . . . Such is the prevailing taste for books of every kind, that almost every man is a reader; and by pronouncing sentence, right or wrong, upon the various publications that come in his way, puts himself upon a level, in point of knowledge, with their several authors.[31]

Against the background of a conservative literary temper, American writers sought the originality which the quest for nationality demanded, not in new themes or forms but in native American material. Some, like James Hillhouse, believed that American scenery was a sufficient source of this material:

> Vast, solitary and sublime, pressing on the mind the symbols of creative power, rather than mementoes of departed human pride, our scenery carries the thoughts more immediately up to those ultimate conceptions which should be bound, like the holy gems of divination on the breast of superior genius. It may stamp our poetry with the image of its own virgin grandeur. . . .[32]

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[31]Quoted in Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The Colonial Experience (New York, 1958), p. 316.

[32]James A. Hillhouse, On Some of the Considerations which should influence an Epic or a Tragic Writer in the Choice of an Era (New Haven, 1826), pp. 31-32. Quoted in William Ellery Sedgwick, "The Materials for an American Literature: A Critical Problem of the Early Nineteenth Century," Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature XVII (1935), 158. This view had been expressed as early as 1803 in American periodicals. See H. Lloyd Flewelling, "Literary Criticism in American Magazines," p. 137.

Others, like John Bristed, thought that nature alone was inadequate:

> The aspect of nature in the United States presents magnificence and beauty in all profusion; but hill and dale, and wood and stream are not alone sufficient to breathe the inspiration of poetry, unless seconded by the habits and manners, the feelings, taste and character of the inhabitants.[33]

Yet those who looked to American society for material generally found too much uniformity in American life for a literature of manners. James Fennimore Cooper and James Hillhouse saw the United States as a classless society with little of the social conflict that made British or European society literarily useful.[34] Neither did native history supply the shortcomings; America lacked a legendary past, "about which associations of heroism or terror or fantasy had clustered to form a common fund of allusion."[35] Lacking a past, Americans tried to create it. A contributor to the American Museum suggested that the Garden of Eden had existed at "the juncture of the Mississippi and St. Lawrence Rivers," and he reasserted the claim that the North American Indians were descended from the Jews.[36] Although the Indian, aided by his reputation as the Noble Savage, finally became the

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[33]John Bristed, America and her Resources (London, 1818), p. 355. Quoted in Sedgwick, "The Materials for an American Literature," p. 142.

[34]Nye, Cultural Life, p. 245.

[35]Spencer, Quest, p. 69.

[36]Anon., "Some Conjectures Respecting the First Peopling of America," American Museum, X (1791), 261-64.

chief resource in the search for antiquarian material, he was not accorded this honor in the early national period, probably because he was still too much a symbol of opposition to American progress.[37] Despite such efforts to create a usable past, the American experience was still too new and unique to be related to traditional literary themes. American scenery, however, easily found a place within the tradition and critical dicta of eighteenth-century English poetry, and most writers finally turned to its unsurpassed grandeur as giving the most promise of originality within the limited meaning assigned the term.

Of the circumstances hitherto discussed as affecting American nature poetry, the controversy over literary nationalism best helps to account for the relatively large number of poems celebrating American nature and to explain why they have not been studied in the continuing revaluation of American literature. Critics and historians have ignored this poetry largely because of its "excessive yet narrow and modish adulation of current English literary fashions which could have little relevance to the temper of American life."[38] Even Philip Freneau, the most highly regarded writer of the period,

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[37]Spencer, Quest, pp. 51-52. John Bristed in America and her Resources (1818) dismissed Indians as "miserable barbarians." See Sedgwick, "The Materials for an American Literature," p. 142.

[38]Spencer, Quest, p. 18.

> . . . undervalued his own artistic originality and failed to follow its guidance. Other poets, to a lesser degree, failed in the same way; and American verse of the late eighteenth century is full of anticipations of something new which somehow did not quite come off.[39]

An unusually acute analysis of the debilitating effect of imitation on American poetry was made by a writer who was himself a part of the times. Samuel Cooper Thacher wrote in 1805:

> The common charge against us of poverty of genius is least easily eluded when we are told that America has never yet produced a poet of more than second rate excellence. We can account pretty well for not having any rivals to the philosophers and scholars of Europe; but poetry has no necessary alliance with opulence and refinement. Its fullest and richest tones have often been heard where science never raised her voice, and refinement never imprinted her footsteps. The birthplace of the original poet has often been where, as in our country, nature appears in all her rudeness, where the mountains rise in their unsubdued and gigantick elevations, the cataracts fall without mechanical precipitation, and the rivers roll without artificial meanders. The only reason that I can think of, without admitting the justice of the charge, is that our writers import the style and imagery of the poets of England, as much as our merchants do its wares. The new appearances of nature in our country, one would think, ought to have extended the limits of an art confessedly imitative. But our poets have been contented with attempting to revive the lilies and roses of Europe, all whose leaves are withered, and all whose fragrance is exhausted by having been so long plucked. . . . When we are farther advanced in refinement, we shall have poetry of as much beauty as any that has recently appeared in Europe; but whilst we continue to receive our riches by inheritance, and not to produce them by our vigour, we shall not be able to boast of any imperishable name. . . .[40]

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[39] Howard, "The Late Eighteenth Century: An Age of Contradictions," in Transitions, p. 86.

[40] Samuel Cooper Thacher, "An Original American Poetry," Monthly Anthology and Boston Review, II (September, 1805), 460-61; quoted in Lewis P. Simpson, (ed.), The Federalist Literary Mind (N. p., 1962), p. 154.

The "confessedly imitative" state of American poetry of the early national period resulted in a discrepancy between form and content, intention and effect, that has been the bane of modern critics attempting to place this poetry within the context of an American literature. Professor Henry Nash Smith has observed that the incongruity between convention and experience

> . . . is evident at every level of artistic endeavor: not only in Daniel Bryan's Miltonic epic about Daniel Boone, which introduces councils in heaven and hell to prepare for the hero's struggle against the Cherokees in Kentucky, but in William Cullen Bryant's search for historical associations on the Illinois prairies and Washington Irving's discovery of rocks in Oklahoma resembling Moorish castles.[41]

One cannot easily explain away the contradictions of American poetry of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, poetry which was "original in intent yet imitative in effect, romantic in substance yet neoclassic in form.[42]

Although slavish imitation has generally been advanced as the chief reason for the insipid poetry of the period, other forces were also at work. For one, belletristic writing "faltered because it lacked the motivating power of social approval."[43] The "mercenary spirit" of Americans early concerned with getting and spending led most American writers to

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[41]"Origins of a Native American Literary Tradition," in The American Writer and the European Tradition, ed. Margaret Denny and William H. Gilman (Minneapolis, 1950) p. 65.

[42]Howard, "The Late Eighteenth Century," p. 53.

[43]Spencer, Quest, p. 68.

blame the retarded national literature on an unfavorable social milieu.[44] Professor Leon Howard has evaluated the prevailing utilitarianism in accounting for the superficiality of the literary productions of David Humphreys and his contemporaries:

> Their country was already beginning to hurtle toward its place in the world, and they had to keep up with it, for their United States contained no cultural eddies into which an educated, well-informed, and energetic man might retire while his literary talent settled at its proper balance. . . . The times and circumstances encouraged belletristic activity that was seven-eighths, if not wholly, superficial in its results. For a poet to suspend the motion of his human blood in an uncertain effort to attain Wordsworthian harmony and depth was uneconomical, unpatriotic, unthinkable.[45]

The raw stage of development of American culture also served to retard the growth of an American literature. In the jargon of twentieth-century social scientists the United States was an "underdeveloped nation" and its people were in general "culturally deprived." Joseph Dennie, in the Farmer's Museum of February 18, 1799, defended reprinting articles from British periodicals on the grounds that American society was uncouth:

> Every man . . . must be sensible from the newness of our country, from the deficienty of our seminaries, from the comparative paucity of books, and from the almost total want of patronage, that many literary articles can be furnished in perfection, only from Europe . . . .[46]

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[44] Ibid., p. 64. A reviewer in the Port Folio (1804) observed that "the man of trade frowns on the efforts of imagination." See Flewelling, "Literary Criticism in American Magazines," p. 136.

[45] The Connecticut Wits, p. 269.

[46] Quoted in Harold Milton Ellis, Joseph Dennie and His Circle ("Bulletin of the University of Texas," Studies in English no. 3, July 15, 1935), pp. 100-101.

Other reasons advanced for the lack of vitality in American letters include party factionalism, which diverted the energies of men such as Freneau, and the absence of copyright protection.[47]

Whatever were the causes that kept a great national literature from developing, there was certainly no lack of determination on the part of American writers. Many must have felt the frustration that Hugh Henry Brackenridge gave expression to as he read Sir Walter Scott's "The Lady of the Lake" on the banks of the Ohio. "Cut off from romantick base," he cannot find the inspiration to honor his homeland as Scott had done:

> It can't be said that such a dale
> Where deeds were done, is where I dwell;
> Or that I vegetate among
> The hills which once were hills of song.
> Here neighbouring to the savage tread
> Inglorious I must bend my head,
> And think of something else than fame;
> Though in my bosom burns the flame
> That in a happier age and clime
> Might have attempted lofty rhyme.[48]

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[47]Spencer, Quest, p. 66.

[48]An Epistle to Walter Scott. Written at Pittsburgh. . . Sept. 9th, 1811, on reading "The Lady of the Lake."

II. MAJOR INFLUENCES IN EARLY AMERICAN NATURE VERSE

The influence of English poetry worked so strongly upon American verse that a modern reader, handed a miscellany of late eighteenth-century verse, often cannot determine the national origin of its poems from either their form or their subject. Although as early as 1789 Timothy Dwight and John Fenno had attacked the literary servility of their country, the critical climate of American periodicals before 1815 was so conservative that only the standard Augustan and a few "pre-Romantic" authors were held up as worthy of emulation.[1] Critics generally denounced Wordsworth's "simplicity" as "infantile" or "silly," for in 1800 it was not the bard of Grasmere who had become their idol but the recluse of Olney, William Cowper.[2] Because the common reader used the standard English poets as touchstones for judging the efforts of unknown American writers, editors usually selected for publication poems which came closest to mirroring the style and performance of such greats as Milton, Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Goldsmith, Burns, and Cowper, as well as lesser luminaries

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[1]Flewelling, "Literary Criticism in American Magazines," pp. 87 and 252.

[2]The Port Folio, the Monthly Anthology and Boston Review, and the Literary Magazine, and American Register, which often disagreed over the relative merits of contemporary British writers, were in complete accord on the excellence of Cowper. See Flewelling, p. 103.

from Cowley to Collins to Erasmus Darwin.[3]

In diction and versification American practice adhered closely to British. With the popularity of Lord Kames in America, it was natural for poets to embrace his theory that the imagination has its own distinctive vocabulary and that the lofty is the only true poetic style.[4] Besides believing that periphrasis "hath a happy effect in preventing the familiarity of proper names," he upheld the naturalness of personification and the apostrophe; he supported elevated diction over common, such as "imperious ocean" over "stormy ocean"; and he defended inversion as contributing to the force and elevation of poetic language.[5] He did, however, acknowledge that abstract and general terms "are not well adapted to poetry, because they suggest not any image."[6] His views on prosody were dictated by the principle that subject should determine form: by his standard both rhyme and blank

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[3]Lyon N. Richardson, A History of Early American Magazines (New York, 1931), p. 7.

[4]For an evaluation and summary of Lord Kames's theory of poetic diction, see Ernest Lee Tuveson, The Imagination as a Means of Grace (Berkeley, 1960), pp. 156-57. An interesting sidelight of Kames's influence on American critics is provided by a letter to the editor of the Monthly Magazine (1800, III, 185): "It vexes me, Sir, every month to find your critic measuring our American productions by rules precisely such as Tooke, Harris, Kaimes [sic], Blair, or Lowth would have applied to British efforts of genius." See Flewelling, p. 178.

[5]Henry Home, Lord Kames, Elements of Criticism (Philadelphia, n. d.), pp. 157-96 passim.

[6]Ibid., p. 186.

verse were suitable for "elevated" subjects, although for "any severe or serious passion" rhyme produces a "dissonance between the subject and the melody."[7] Kames had little to say about metrics; but Thomas Jefferson, who, it seems, could hold forth on any subject, recognized only three kinds of meter--iambic, trochaic, and anapestic--and he dogmatically disallowed any variation from the letter of the law: "The English poet . . . must so arrange his words that their established accents shall fall regularly in one of these three orders."[8] In practice, of course, one finds American poets using the verse forms and meters of their favorite British authors, with whatever variation their practice allowed. The heroic couplet, the octosyllabic couplet (varied frequently by batches of seven-stress lines), the ballad stanza and other arrangements of the quatrain, blank verse, odes, and occasional sonnets--all were used in poetry published in America between 1783 and 1812.

For subject matter American poets looked most often to external nature as best meeting their needs, and eighteenth-

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[7] Ibid., pp. 158-59.

[8] In a letter of 1789, which turned into a virtual prosodic essay, Jefferson explained the principles of English versification to his French acquaintance, M. de Chastellux. According to Paul Fussell, Jr., Jefferson's conservative and restrictive views represent those of the common reader of the time. The English poet Shenstone and, to a lesser extent, Collins and Gray, supply the bulk of the many quotations used in the letter. See Theory of Prosody in Eighteenth-Century England (New London, Connecticut, 1954), pp. 29-30.

century English verse gave them numerous guides to follow. They could imitate individual poems, such as well known productions of Thomson, Pope, or Shenstone, or they could use the conventions or motifs associated with particular schools or genres. If one reads enough American nature poetry of this period, patterns emerge in which the influence of certain poets and types of poems can be detected more frequently than others. Standing out as pervasive influences are Pomfret's "The Choice" and poems with similar themes; Macpherson's Ossianic poems; Thomson's The Seasons; Neoclassic pastoral poetry; the Graveyard School; and topographical poetry.

In light of the vogue for simplicity so characteristic of eighteenth-century America, the pervasiveness of verse praising rural contentment is hardly surprising. As a Neoclassic literary theme, the retirement urge can be traced to Pomfret's "The Choice" (1700), a poem whose popularity elicited from Dr. Samuel Johnson the remark that "perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused. . . ."[9] Its widespread acceptance in America resulted in many imitations, the first--William Livingston's "Philosophic Solitude"--published in 1747 and reprinted at least twice later in the

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[9]Samuel Johnson, "Life of Pomfret," Lives of the English Poets (London, 1955), I, 211.

century.[10] Benjamin Church's "The Choice" (1757), the other important imitation, closely follows Pomfret in setting forth the pleasures open to a country gentleman of taste and means. It represents the Horatian ideal of nothing to excess--neither too much time alone nor too many friends, neither too much studying nor too much quaffing.

> No needless Show my modest Dome should claim,
> Neat and genteel without, within the same;
> Decently furnish'd to content and please,
> Sufficient for Necessity, and Ease. . . .

Of the many imitations of Pomfret's poem, undoubtedly one of the worst is "A Poor Buck's Wish":

> A snug retreat, few miles from town,
> That friends on Sunday nights come down;--
> A library of books well chose,
> Of sentimental verse or prose,
> A hardy, steady useful steed,
> Which might upon the common feed.[11]

Despite the prevalence of rural-retirement poems in England, their popularity in America was little short of phenomenal.[12] Besides numerous verses on solitude, beginning

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[10]Edwin T. Bowden, "Benjamin Church's Choice and American Colonial Poetry," New England Quarterly, XXXII (June, 1959), 171. The incongruity of the retreat urge in early America has often been noted. Typical is the remark in CHAL, I, 162: "Though dwelling in a small American town, he [Livingston] sighs for solitude as longingly as he might have done in a world capital."

[11]Anon., "A Poor Buck's Wish," Effusions of Female Fancy (New York, 1790), p. 43.

[12]Prominent among eighteenth-century English poems of rural retirement that Americans could draw from are Pope's "Ode to Solitude," Lady Winchilsea's "Petition for an Absolute Retreat," Matthew Green's "The Spleen," and Thomas Parnell's "Health" and "A Hymn to Contentment." Far from being confined to the eighteenth century, the theme appears in Charles Cotton's "The Retirement" (1676), Sidney's

like Pope's "Happy the man . . .," one finds in periodicals of the period such constantly recurring titles as "The Choice," "On Retirement," or "To Content." Although the place of retirement was usually a country estate, poets more democratically inclined chose a humble "cottage of content" or a still humbler woodland cell to which a stoical hermit, poor in worldly possessions, has fled to escape "fierce Ambition" or "pale Discontent."[13] As late as 1812 the well-worn retirement urge was given expression by a writer who, as the discriminating editor of the Port Folio, should have known better. Joseph Dennie's eulogy to his father contains one stanza in which the distinguished editor pleaded:

Arcadia, and Spencer's Sixth book of The Fairie Queen, among a host of others. As an aspect of cultural primitivism, the theme reflects a fundamental tendency of man to seek security in an ever simpler mode of life. Professor A. O. Lovejoy states, "Civilized man has been almost continuously subject to moods of revolt against civilization, which in some sense is, indeed, profoundly contrary to his nature; and in the serious preachers of primitivism this revolt has been chronic and intense. But the belief in the superiority of the simple life of 'nature' has been the manifestation sometimes of a hedonistic, sometimes of a rigoristic and even ascetic, conception of the nature of the good, and sometimes of a mixture of both." See preface to Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore, 1934), p. xiv.

[13]For the retirement theme in estate poems, see Chapter III; for examples of less ostentatious places of retreat, see Anon., "The Cottage of Content, American Museum, XI (1792), app. i, 21, and Anon., "Beautiful Lines Composed in a Hermitage," Massachusetts Magazine, I (May, 1789), 116.

Teach me, thou venerable bower,
Cool Meditation's quiet seat,
The generous scorn of mushroom power,
The silent grandeur of retreat.[14]

The vogue of Ossian in America, which had important ramifications for American nature poetry, reflected the enormous popularity abroad of James Macpherson's "translation" of the poems of the Celtic bard. Although introduced to America in 1766, the prose poems received relatively meager attention until after the Revolutionary War, when versifications and imitations began to appear in American periodicals;[15] in 1790 the first American edition of the poems was published, after which for several years they "became the subject of continuous discussion and imitation."[16] Thomas Jefferson was one of those who early reacted warmly to the Ossianic blend of remoteness, melancholy, and grandeur:

> These pieces have been, and will, I think, during my lifetime, continue to be to me the sources of daily pleasures. The tender and sublime emotions of the mind were never before so wrought up by human hand. I am not ashamed to own that I think this rude bard of the north the greatest poet that has ever existed.[17]

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[14]Joseph Dennie, [no title], Port Folio, VII (January, 1812), 97.

[15]Richardson, History of Early American Magazines, p. 292.

[16]F. I. Carpenter, "The Vogue of Ossian in America," American Literature, II (January, 1931), 409. Among poets of the 1790's who versified Macpherson's translations were John Blair Linn, William Munford, Josias Lyndon Arnold, Joseph Brown Ladd, and Jonathan Mitchell Sewall.

[17]From a letter by Jefferson to Charles Macpherson of Edinburgh, Scotland, February 25, 1773. Quoted in Carpenter, p. 407.

No other literary work of the mid or late eighteenth century offers better evidence of the growth of the cult of sensibility and the developing taste for the sublime in nature. In harmony with these trends was the backdrop in the poems of mountains, crags, caves, and tombs in mist, as well as the sad songs of separated kindred and laments over the dead:

> Arise winds of autumn, arise; blow along the heath! streams of the mountains roar! roar, tempests, in the groves of my oaks! walk through broken clouds, O moon! show thy pale face, at intervals! bring to my mind the night, when all my children fell; when Arindal the mighty fell; when Daura the lovely failed![18]

Such "sublime" poetry found a ready audience in America where the search for material for a national literature had made both poet and critic aware of the possibilities of sublime nature in their own country. Possessing even wilder and more sombre scenery than Scotland, America would produce an even grander poetry, for it was commonly believed that the production of sublime poetry required only sublime subject matter. Likewise, Ossian and his imitators and versifiers were popular because Americans wanted to put their own past to literary use, and Macpherson, in successfully resurrecting the past of his own country, offered them inspiration.[19]

Through <u>The Seasons</u>, James Thomson left an indelible impression upon American nature poetry of the late eighteenth century. Yet the many poems bearing his stamp generally have

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[18]<u>Fingal</u> (1762).

[19]Howard, "The Late Eighteenth Century," p. 82.

been judged failures: "To read one is to know all, with their. . . conventional and generalized descriptions of scenery that might as well be English as American."[20] Even though this evaluation cannot be disputed, The Seasons made important contributions to descriptive poetry, mainly in revealing how the everchanging moods of nature often could be delineated more effectively in words than in actual landscape painting:

> Now, by the cool declining Year condens'd,
> Descend the copious Exhalations, check'd
> As up the middle Sky unseen they stole,
> And roll the doubling Fogs around the Hill.
> No more the Mountain, horrid, vast, sublime,
> Who pours a Sweep of Rivers from his Sides,
> And high between contending Kingdoms rears
> The rocky long Division, fills the View
> With great Variety; but in a Night
> Of gathering Vapour, from the baffled Sense,
> Sinks dark and dreary. Thence expanding far,
> The huge Dusk, gradual, swallows up the Plain.
> Vanish the Woods. The dim-seen River seems
> Sullen, and slow, to rowl the misty Wave.
> Even in the Height of Noon oppprest, the Sun
> Sheds weak, and blunt, his wide-refracted Ray;
> Whence glaring oft, with many a broaden'd Orb,
> He frights the Nations. Indistinct on Earth,
> Seen thro' the turbid Air, beyond the Life,
> Objects appear; and, wilder'd, o'er the Waste
> The Shepherd stalks gigantic. Till at last
> Wreath'd dun around, in deeper Circles still
> Successive closing, sits the general Fog
> Unbounded o'er the World; and, mingling thick,
> A formless grey Confusion covers all.[21]

Thomson's pictorial technique has been the subject

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[20]Samuel Marion Tucker, "The Beginnings of Verse, 1610-1808," Cambridge History of American Literature (New York, 1917), I, 163.

[21]"Autumn" (1730), lines 715-739.

of critical dispute. Some have compared his method to specific painters or paintings; others believe that "it is a misunderstanding to argue . . . that verbal and visual organization are interchangeable."[22] The very fact that critics dispute his debt to landscape painting is some indication of how far he had carried objective description toward stronger and richer imagery than had ever been known in descriptive poetry. But because his "pictures" serve as "ideal representations" good "for any year or for all years" and because he describes the "genus rather than the individual,"[23] poets who slavishly followed him could add nothing to his technique that he had not already perfected. Furthermore, in attempting to instruct as well as to please his readers, Thomson encouraged his followers to fill their poems with excessive moralizing and tiresome didactic episodes.

The adulation expressed by the young Joseph Dennie in his "Panegyrick on Thomson" (1789) illustrates the qualities in The Seasons that followers of Thomson admired, and it further suggests their perversions of his technique that resulted in superficiality and sterility. After summoning his "youthful muse" to "hail the master of the rural song," the fledgling poet reviews how Thomson had renewed man's

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[22]Ralph Cohen, The Art of Discrimination: Thomson's The Seasons and the Language of Criticism (Berkeley, 1964), p. 247.

[23]Dwight L. Durling, Georgic Tradition in English Poetry (New York, 1935), p. 56, 123.

interest in nature. Man had long been "foe to Nature's simple charms," and "with eye averted scarcely deign'd to view/ The scenes enchanting, which her pencil form'd." Then the goddess Nature

> . . . call'd her favourite son,
> To him her pencil, and her landscape gave,
> And bade him paint anew the sylvan scene.
> The bard obey'd; with softened tints retouch'd,
> Great Nature's work. . . .

When Nature viewed what he had accomplished, she "own'd herself outdone." The panegyric is concluded with characteristic praise of the power of Thomson's "moral page" to "improve the heart."[24]

Following the publication of the first American edition of The Seasons in 1777, numerous imitations began to appear in periodicals.[25] One of the better of these, the anonymous "A Winter-Piece" (1789), begins:

> Now winter rules the year, and wing'd with frost,
> The piercing northwest flies--Upon the plain,
> And on the neighb'ring hills, the leafless trees
> Stand rueful. . . .[26]

One of the worst, "Winter" (1788), closes as does Thomson's "Winter," heralding the approach of spring, but here all similarity ends: "Hail, fairest season! hail, thou charming

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[24] [Joseph Dennie], "Panegyrick on Thomson," Massachusetts Magazine, I (February, 1789), 361.

[25] There were at least ten other editions before 1815. See G. H. Orians in Transitions, p. 222, and CHAL, I, 163.

[26] D. F. [anon.], "A Winter-Piece," American Museum, VI (December, 1789), 484.

spring,/ Come, lovely virgin, to our longing arms... . ."[27] During the last decade of the century American poets were busy recasting Thomson into countless verses on the seasons, months, and days, as well as other phases of nature such as thunderstorms. Among the most ambitious imitations in length were Samuel Low's Winter Displayed (1784 and 1800), John Hayes' "A Description of the Seasons" (1807), and John D. McKinnon's four seasonal poems descriptive of scenery in New York state and of winter life in the city.[28]

If Thomson's The Seasons was the greatest single influence on American nature poetry, the greatest collective influence was the pastoral genre. Although pastoral poetry admits of varying definitions, the theories of the pastoral expounded by neoclassic English critics guided most Americans in their practice of the genre. In Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England, J. E. Congleton calls John Newbery's The Art of Poetry Made Easy (1746) "the nadir of neoclassic pastoral theory."[29] but this bit of doggerel, which sums up the principles of the pastoral in its most restrictive form, illustrates the formula many American poets followed:

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[27]Aspasio [pseud.], "Winter," American Magazine, I (November, 1788), 872.

[28]Being among the relatively few poems strongly influenced by Thomson to describe specifically named localities, McKinnon's poems (the titles of which are contained in the appended checklist) rank as important specimens of American topographical poetry.

[29](Gainesville, Florida, 1952), p. 111.

> The Pastoral, which sings of happy Swains
> And harmless Nymphs that haunt the Woods and Plains,
> Should through the Whole discover ev'ry where
> Their old Simplicity and Pious Air;
> And in the Characters of Maids and Youth,
> Unpractis'd Plainness, Innocence, and Truth.
> Each Pastoral a little Plot must own,
> Which, as it must be simple, must be one:
> . . . . . .
> Its Style must still be natural and clear,
> And Elegance in ev'ry Part appear:
> Its humble Method nothing has of Fierce,
> But hates the Rattling of a lofty Verse;
> With native Beauty pleases and excites,
> And never with harsh sounds the Ear affrights.[30]

One scholar has aptly termed the majority of eighteenth-century pastoral poems "pretty conventions, pleasant but unimportant."[31] And from Richard Steele's appreciation in the Guardian, one can readily infer their intellectual emptiness as declarations of eighteenth-century primitivism. According to Steele, the pastoral

> . . . transports us to a kind of fairy-land, where our ears are soothed with the melody of birds, bleating flocks, and purling streams; our eyes enchanted with flowery meadows and springing greens, we are laid under cool shades, and entertained with all the sweets and freshness of nature.[32]

To begin to cite the pastoral dialogues, pastoral elegies, pastoral odes, and pastoral ballads which were published in the United States around the close of the century

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[30]Quoted in Congleton, Theories of Pastoral Poetry, p. 112.

[31]Margaret Mary Fitzgerald, First Follow Nature: Privitivism in English Poetry, 1725-1750 (New York, 1947), p. 43.

[32]Richard Steele, "On a Country Life--Pastoral Poetry," Guardian no. 22, April 6, 1713.

would be at best repetitious and unrewarding. Golden Age shepherds and their mates frisked with complete abandon through the poetry columns of the periodicals. Delia, Colin, Corydon, Phyllis, Hebe, Rosalinda, Chloe, Damon, and Strephon are among the practitioners of a pseudo-Arcadian innocence and ease. As late as 1805 Joseph Dennie, as editor of the Port Folio, was forced to warn his contributors: "It is rare to find a song, which has a Chloris, a Phillis, a Delia, or Amarillis in it, possessed of sufficient merit, to entitle it to the rank of mediocrity. . . ."[33]

Not all American pastoral poems, however, followed the neoclassic dictum that the pastoral should present an image of the Golden Age exemplified in Virgil's eclogues.[34] Many of them reflected the views of those eighteenth-century critics who believed the pastoral could more freely deal with country life than extreme neoclassic authoritarianism permitted. As the century passed, poems like Shenstone's "A Pastoral Ballad" (1755), which was often imitated in America, began to contain closer observation of nature and more genuine expressions of romantic love.[35] With lovers'

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[33]Joseph Dennie, "Miscellaneous Paragraphs," Port Folio, V (May 18, 1805), 148.

[34]Congleton, Theories of Pastoral Poetry, p. 305.

[35]Congleton (p. 126) maintains that Shenstone's poems contain "touches of Romanticism."

complaints taking place in more realistic surroundings, landscape description assumed more importance; even poets who otherwise stuck doggedly to Golden Age conventions started using indigenous American settings.[36] As cultural primitivism replaced chronological primitivism in depicting the good life, the inhabitants of classical Arcadia assumed local characteristics; shepherds became simple farm hands, as in Thomas James's "The Country Meeting,"[37] or even Indians, whom cultural primitivists--most of them British--had turned to as perfect illustrations of "their theories of sensibility, benevolence, and the sacredness of the natural instincts."[38] The Indian appears in several pastoral narratives of the 1790's and early 1800's, notably Freneau's "The Indian Student; or the Force of Nature" (1788) and Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Morton's Ouabi: or, The Virtues of Nature (1790). Freneau draws no moral in telling of the Indian who left Harvard college to return to his native woods; Mrs. Morton more typically takes sides by contrasting the corrupting luxury of civilized life with the wholesome simplicity of a life close to nature.

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[36]Joseph Dennie saw the incongruity of Arcadian shepherds carrying on their dull business along American rivers. To a would-be contributor to the Port Folio he wrote: "The pastoral dialogue between two shepherds of Schuylkill, we are obliged to reject, with some degree of loathing." See Port Folio, I (September 19, 1801), 303.

[37]American Museum, IV (1788), 478-79.

[38]Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, p. 114.

Ancillary to the influence of pastoral poetry, the imported Della Cruscan fad took extraordinary hold in America and led to a flood of sentimental poems in which pastoral conventions figured prominently. In England this debased manifestation of the cult of sensibility had been made popular by Robert Merry, a British emigré in Italy, who, signing his effusions "Della Crusca," engaged in an epistolary flirtation with Mrs. Hannah Cowley ("Anna Matilda"). First published in the London World in 1787, the poems attracted much attention, and in 1790 the craze took hold in America with "Philenia's" (Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Morton's) "Lines Addressed to the Inimitable Author of the Poems under the signature of Della Crusca":

> Across the vast Atlantic tide
> Down Apalachia's grassy side,
> What echoing Sounds the Soul beguile,
> And lend the lip of grief a smile!
> 'Tis DELLA CRUSCA'S heavenly song,
> That floats the western shores along.[39]

Over the next decade newspapers, magazines, and miscellanies readily succumbed to popular demand for verse from American Della Cruscans, whose affectations and eccentricities are well revealed by such poetical signatures as Carlos, Orlando, Adelaide, Arouet, Philomela, Euphelia, Constantia, Philenia, and, of course, Anna Matilda. Royall

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[39]This poem, first published as an addendum to Mrs. S. W. Morton's Ouabi: or, The Virtues of Nature, was subsequently reprinted in the American Museum and in E. H. Smith's American Poems (1791). See Fred Lewis Pattee, The First Century of American Literature, 1770-1870 (New York, 1935), pp. 107-108.

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Tyler's satirical "Address to Della Crusca . . .," the first influential reaction to the craze, well illustrates the extent to which these poets had enlisted the American landscape in support of the rhetorical sublime:

> Let loose thy epithets. . .
> Draw forth thy gorgeous sword of damask'd rhyme,
> And ride triumphant through Columbia's clime,
> Till sober lettered sense shall dying smile,
> Before the mighty magic of thy style . . .
> What sonorous streams meander through thy lays;
> What lakes shall bless thy rich bequest of praise . . .
> How will Ohio roll his lordly stream,
> What blue mists dance upon the liquid stream!
> Gods! how sublime shall Della Crusca rage,
> When <u>all</u> <u>Niagara</u> <u>cataracts</u> <u>thy</u> page . . .
> Rise, Della Crusca, prince of bards sublime,
> And pour on us whole cataracts of rhyme . . .
> Be the grand standard of thy style unfurled,
> Proclaim thy sounding page from shore to shore,
> And swear that sense in verse shall be no more.[40]

Poets of the Graveyard School, read with avidity in America, inspired numerous admirers to use ruin paraphernalia in creating melancholy landscapes as backgrounds for thoughts on life, death, and immortality. Although the "black" religious melancholy of Young's <u>Night Thoughts</u> (1742) and Blair's <u>The Grave</u> (1743) found acceptance among American readers, it was the milder melancholy associated with pensiveness and retirement--the mood, in short, of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Church-yard" (1751)--that prevailed in the last half of the

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[40]Royall Tyler's "Address to Della Crusca, Humbly Attempted in the Sublime Style of that Fashionable Author" (signed "Della Yankee") was published in Joseph Dennie's <u>Farmer's Museum</u>, May 16, 1797. See M. Ray Adams, "Della Cruscanism in America," <u>PMLA</u>, LXXIX (June, 1964), 259-65.

eighteenth century.[41] The elegaic mood for which Gray's poem served as the norm was

> . . .pensive rather than deeply mournful, penetrated with a love of quiet and solitude and philosophic musing. Its favorite themes are death and mutability. Its favorite haunts are ivied ruins and yew-shaded churchyards. It loves twilight and silence and the notes of the sweet bird that shuns the noise of folly. Its basis is an intellectual contemplation of the instability of life and fame, and its emotion is vague and diffuse. . . .[42]

The revelations of sympathy, humanitarianism, and self-pity in the "Elegy" accorded well with the vogue of sensibility which was beginning to exert its influence on American literature, and Gray's mortuary landscape capitalized upon the fad for the ruins of man-made structures which the eighteenth-century Englishman's interest in the past and in "picturesque" scenes had generated.[43] In American poetry, however, the muted notes of sentimental gloom were heard oftener in dark forests or besides lonely streams than amid ivied ruins, for finding their country lacking in Gothic churches and mouldering castles, Americans looked more frequently than their English cousins to the wild and irregular "ruins" of the natural world for "Graveyard" paraphernalia.

Poems of the early national period influenced by

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[41]In the last quarter of the eighteenth century appeared eight American editions of Young's Night Thoughts and twelve of Blair's The Grave. (See James D. Hart, The Popular Book, p. 28.) Between 1790 and 1810 Gray's "Elegy" reached a peak of fame in England and America unmatched in the history of poetry. See Eleanor M. Sickels, The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy from Gray to Keats (New York, 1932), p. 93.

[42]Sickels, The Gloomy Egoist, p. 11.

[43]Fitzgerald, First Follow Nature, p. 137.

Graveyard conventions range from Freneau's well known "House of Night" and "The Indian Burying Ground," both in many ways highly original poems, to insipid imitations of Gray by anonymous and pseudonymous poetasters who indulge their melancholy at evening in rural graveyards which, despite their lack of yew trees and "ivy-mantled towers," are even in worse state of neglect than the famous one at Stoke-Poges. One in particular needs a sexton's care:

> In this neglected spot, where grazing kine
> O'er many a mould'ring grave, unconscious tread,
> And withering weeds and creeping brambles twine
> Their gloomy foliage o'er promiscuous dead--
>
> Well pleas'd, I rove. . . .[44]

By the late eighteenth century, topographical poetry in England had become a well established poetic genre. The Gentleman's Magazine in 1788 complained that readers "have been used to see the Muses labouring up . . . many hills since Cooper's and Grongar, and some gentle Bard reclining on almost every mole-hill."[45] English "hill" poems and similar poems describing specific localities had numerous counterparts in America, the best known being Greenfield Hill by Timothy Dwight. Relative to the total amount of nature verse written and published in Federalist America, topographical poetry holds a minor position, but it is of major significance

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[44]Anon., "An Elegy Written in the Burial Ground at _____," American Museum, XI (1792), app. 1, 9.

[45]Gentleman's Magazine, LVIII (1788), 151. Quoted in Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge, 1922), p. 248.

in revealing how poets used the American landscape to meet the needs of a national literature.

Topographical poetry--also labeled "local" or "loco-descriptive"--had emerged as a distinctive type in the seventeenth century with Sir John Denham's Cooper's Hill (1642).[46] Over a century after its appearance, Dr. Samuel Johnson, with his usual perspicuity, defined the type that had emerged. Of Denham he wrote, "He seems to have been . . . the author of a species of composition that may be denominated local poetry, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection, or incidental meditation."[47] Although Dr. Johnson's definition suffices for the conventional product, the development of Romantic subjectivity inevitably resulted in less formalized "local" poetry.

Following Cooper's Hill, three poems that marked important stages in the development of the genre as Johnson defined it were Pope's Windsor-Forest (1713), John Dyer's Grongar Hill (1726), and Thomson's The Seasons (1730).[48]

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[46] John Dyer, Grongar Hill, ed. Richard C. Boys (Baltimore, 1941), p. 26.

[47] Lives of the English Poets (London, 1955) I, 58.

[48] Although The Seasons contains a few topographical passages, neither by intention or design are the four poems topographical; nevertheless, the influence of Thomson on the genre was far-reaching. See Durling, Georgic Tradition in English Poetry, p. 196.

In Windsor-Forest Pope refined many of the motifs which Denham had introduced, but the vague "here . . .there" descriptive technique did little to advance landscape description toward more accuracy and vividness of detail:

> Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,
> And part admit, and part exclude the day;
> . . . . . .
> There, interspers'd in lawns and op'ning glades,
> Thin trees arise that shun each other's shades.
> Here in full light the russet plains extend:
> There wrapt in clouds the blueish plains ascend.[49]

Although John Dyer seems to have had less influence on the genre than either Denham or Pope, his handling of description did much to improve the quality of topographical poetry.[50] In Cooper's Hill and Windsor-Forest the didactic urge had overwhelmed the descriptive, but Dyer's poem nicely balances the two essentials of topographical poetry, "the loved physical substance and the happy thought."[51] His most famous reflection accompanies a ruin-piece, complete with crumbling, ivy-covered towers: once this "pile" was complete,

> But transient is the smile of fate!
> A little rule, a little sway,
> A sun beam in a winter's day,
> Is all the proud and mighty have
> Between the cradle and the grave.

In describing the landscape from the hilltop ("Now I gain the mountain's brow,/ What a landskip lies below!"), Dyer was among the first to contrive an effect analogous to landscape

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[49]Windsor-Forest, lines 17-24.

[50]Durling, Georgic Tradition, p. 196.

[51]Geoffrey Tillotson, Augustan Studies (London, 1961), p. 190.

painting, for as his "wand-ring eye" ranges the prospect, he pauses to describe each scene in sufficient detail and vividness "to enable the reader to visualize a picture after the manner of the landscape painters Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorrain."[52]

Even though Dyer brought to the type a genuine feeling for nature, The Seasons, with its greater popularity, exerted a more lasting influence on topographical poetry by extending the knowledge and popularity of the picturesque and by revealing the possibilities of Miltonic blank verse.[53] The description of a waterfall in "Summer" demonstrates Thomson's skill with graphic detail, as well as his mastery of blank verse:

> . . . swift-shrinking back,
> I check my steps and view the broken scene.
> Smooth to the shelving brink a copious flood
> Rolls fair and placid; where, collected all
> In one impetuous torrent, down the steep
> It thundering shoots, and shakes the country round.
> At first, an azure sheet, it rushes broad;
> Then, whitening by degrees as prone it falls,
> And from the loud-resounding rocks below
> Dashed in a cloud of foam, it sends aloft
> A hoary mist and forms a ceaseless shower.

Usually the scenes described in detail in The Seasons are not so "rough";[54] more often, as in the prospect from Hagley

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[52] Christopher Hussey, The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View (New York, 1927), p. 18.

[53] Robert A. Aubin, Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England (New York, 1936), p. 86.

[54] In lines excised from the final version of "Summer" Thomson labeled the waterfall view a "rough prospect." See Alan Dugald McKillop, The Background of Thomson's Seasons (Minneapolis, 1942), p. 73.

Park, they reflect Addisonian concepts of "greatness," "novelty," and "beauty":[55]

> Meantime you gain the height, from whose fair brow
> The bursting prospect spreads immense around;
> And snatch'd o'er hill and dale, and wood and lawn,
> And verdant field, and darkening heath between,
> And villages embosomed soft in trees,
> And spiry towns by surging columns marked
> Of household smoke, your eye excursive roams--
> Wide-stretching from the Hall in whose kind haunt
> The hospitable Genius lingers still,
> To where the broken landscape, by degrees
> Ascending, roughens into rigid hills
> O'er which the Cambrian mountains, like far clouds,
> That skirt the blue horizon, dusky rise.[56]

William Cowper's The Task (1785), while it stimulated an already widespread interest in descriptive poetry, did little to influence the direction of the topographical genre.[57] The two prospect-pieces in Book I represent conventionally picturesque scenes described for their own sake and not for what they reveal of the poet's own state of mind. In his description of the scenery along the River Ouse, Cowper presents with sharpness and accuracy what he sees, but with emphasis on land in cultivation and on nature adorned by art, he shows himself firmly allied with

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[55]For a discussion of Addison's aesthetic theories as they relate to the "picturesque" tradition, see Chapter V under the heading "The Prospect."

[56]From "Spring." On the basis of such passages McKillop (p. 73) says it is evident that Thomson "prefers varied prospects and large-scale light effects to the ragged, the sublime."

[57]Along with Cowper's other poems, The Task enjoyed considerable popularity in America. Between 1787 and 1800 it appeared in at least four American editions, and it even penetrated to the frontier; portions were printed in The Palladium of Frankfort, Kentucky, on August 9, 1798. See Ralph Leslie Rusk, The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier (New York, 1926), II, 11.

Neoclassic tradition:

> How oft upon yon eminence our pace
> Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have born
> The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
> While admiration, feeding at the eye,
> And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
> Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd
> The distant plough slow moving, and beside
> His lab'ring team, that swerv'd not from the track,
> The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
> Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
> Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
> Conducts the eye along its sinuous course
> Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
> Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms,
> That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
> While far beyond, and overthwart the stream
> That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
> The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
> Displaying on its varied side the grace
> Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tow'r,
> Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
> Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,
> Groves, heaths, and smoking villages, remote.

As this prospect-piece indicates, techniques in landscape description had changed little between Thomson and Cowper. Romantic subjectivity could hardly be deemed an important force until early in the nineteenth century, and in the meantime, topographical poets painted their prospects, expounded local history, and offered moral precepts _ex cathedra_. Thomas Gray's _Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College_ (1747) was the first important poem in the genre to interpret, if ever so briefly, the effect of the prospect on the author's own temperament. Analysis of subjective states became more common, however, with the realization that grand, wild, and somber works of nature could inspire reverential awe rather than terror or mystification. George

Keate's The Alps (1763) was the first of a long line of poems that led to the triumph of mountain glory over mountain gloom.[58] But notwithstanding such excellent topographical poems as Tintern Abbey (1798) and Shelley's Lines Written among the Euganean Hills (1819), the old didactic-descriptive poem, in which the poet is a spectator rather than an interpreter of nature, persisted well into the nineteenth century.

The Romantic revolt of 1798 had little immediate influence in either England or America, and at the turn of the century the state of topographical poetry in the two countries was the same. Denham, Pope, Dyer, and Thomson were the chief models, and subjectivity--when it did appear--seldom rose above sentimentalism. The review of Richard Jago's Edge-Hill, published in the Port Folio in 1804, contained criteria for evaluating topographical poetry that critics in both countries could accept: "the poem of Edge-Hill is local; and though it is embellished with strong painting, apt allusions, historical incidents, and moral reflections yet its descriptions are not always adapted exclusively to the place it professes to celebrate."[59] By adhering to

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[58]See Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite (Ithaca, New York; 1959), pp. 21-27; also R. A. Aubin, Topographical Poetry, p. 90.

[59]Anon., "Biography. Life of Richard Jago," Port Folio, IV (February 25, 1804), 62.

these criteria, American poets practiced an unsuccessful double allegiance, for in looking to England for forms and techniques common to topographical poetry and to their own country for the substance, they wrote poetry that, for all its professed faithfulness to the American scene, might as well be English as American. Believing that people of refined taste the world over "see" a landscape identically, they failed to realize that a scene in nature achieves its individuality through the poet's own vision, not through its national origin. Earnestly wanting a national literature, they merely succeeded in showing that the Hudson by any other name would still be picturesque.

III. THE TOPOGRAPHICAL POEM: TYPES

The divided allegiance of American poets--to eighteenth-century English poetry on one hand and to the realities of American nature on the other--complicates an attempt to analyze American topographical poetry. For useful categories one looks both to the tradition and to the native environment; but, in either case, there still remains the difficulty of defining the genre itself. Although literary histories often limit "topographical" poetry to conventional "hill" poems, such a restriction fails to account for other kinds of descriptive poems with localized settings, both those with traditionally picturesque descriptions interspersed, in Dr. Johnson's words, with "embellishments" and those that as time passed exhibited more and more the influence of "sensibility" and the freedom of expression associated with Romantic subjectivity. Defying rigid definition, "topographical" accounts for poems as different in mood and form as Byron's "Lochin y Gair" and Denham's "Cooper's Hill."

A classification using the categories Neoclassic, pre-Romantic, and Romantic lacks value if only for the vagueness of the terms as indices to poetic content; and even if one accepts the terms as convenient labels for historical periods, they have little relevance to American poetry, which until the Revolution lacked even a national identity and which displays no important mileposts, such as

make Warton's "The Enthusiast" and Lyrical Ballads turning points of sorts in English poetry. A more workable classification might involve a twofold differentiation between poems having motifs and conventions associated with Neoclassic standards of restraint, correctness, order, and decorum and those associated with "sensibility" and "enthusiasm" in Romantic poetry, but seldom does a poem exhibit exclusively the characteristics of a single school.

Another classification, based on the type of topography described, would have the advantage of being unmistakably adapted to the American environment, for at the end of the eighteenth century two general kinds of scenery vied for poetic attention--the hill and dale, field and stream landscape, east of the Appalachians where nature's rudeness had been tamed to man's control, and the rugged western frontier where nature was a strange and vital force and not merely "picturesque." Presumably the wilderness would call forth responses different from those of the cultivated East. But with rare exception such was not the case, for the frontier elicited responses as conventional as the seaboard. One is finally forced to reject these possibilities in favor of categories based primarily on the type and physical extent of the features described, a system which Robert Aubin uses in his study of topographical poetry.[1]

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[1]In Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England Aubin uses categories which he designates as hill, sea, mine and cave, estate, town, building, region, river, and journey.

Notwithstanding its shortcomings, such as a tendency of the categories to overlap with each other and in some cases to merge with other genres, it provides a workable way of studying both English and American topographical poetry, and the analysis which follows, in the main, adheres to his method.

HILL POEMS

Hill poems provided an ideal framework for the eighteenth-century poet to combine description and didacticism, for his position on an eminence permitted relative freedom of organization since he could describe the scenes or "pictures" within his vision in almost any order by simple expedients such as "Turn thy eyes. . ."(6), "Behold yon vales. . ."(1), or "Next to the sight. . ."(11).[2] Jumping from view to view, he could digress at will upon whatever each suggested in the way of moral truths, the events of local history, and the men who made that history. This, the conventional pattern in the tradition of Denham, Pope, and Dyer, was followed in most American topographical poems between 1783 and 1812.

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[2]In all references to topographical poems in this and subsequent chapters, the number in parentheses is the number of the entry in the appended checklist, where data of publication for each poem will be found.

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The description, history, and abundant moralizing of Timothy Dwight's Greenfield Hill, the longest and best known American hill poem, provide excellent illustration of this conservatism. Through the well known historical and instructional sections of the poem--e.g., "The Destruction of the Pequods" and "The Farmer's Advice to the Villagers"--the poet sought to improve the minds and soul of his readers, a desire quite in harmony with neoclassic canons of the purpose of poetry.[3] Even the description, rightly admired for its "accuracy of observation,"[4] conservatively emphasizes the regularity and harmony of a landscape subjected to man's control, and the arrangement of details conforms to neoclassic requirements of the picturesque. The general prospect in Part I suggests a landscape painting in which man's hand is evident and in which the diverse elements contribute to a pleasing harmony of design:

> Far inland, blended groves, and azure hills,
> Skirting the broad horizon, lift their pride,
> Beyond, a little chasm to view unfolds
> Cerulean mountains, verging high on Heaven,
> In misty grandeur. Stretch'd in nearer view,
> Unnumber'd farms salute the cheerful eye;
> Contracted there to little gardens; here outspread
> Spacious, with pastures, fields, and meadows rich;
> Where the young wheat its glowing green displays,
> Or the dark soil bespeaks the recent plough,
> Or flocks and herds along the lawn disport.(3)

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[3]Dwight stated in the introduction to Greenfield Hill that he wished "to contribute to the innocent amusement of his countrymen, and to their improvement in manners, and in economical, political, and moral sentiments."

[4]Howard, Connecticut Wits, p. 221.

With description, instruction, and history as the staples of hill poetry, the most suitable spot for hill poets was obviously Boston, which combined a varied landscape of hill, sea, river, town, and country with rich historical associations of the Liberty Tree, the burning of Charlestown and Battle of Bunker Hill and the heroic death of General Warren in that Battle. Using personification, panegyric, and the "Here . . . there" technique of Pope, Mrs. Sarah W. Morton typically selected the brow of Beacon Hill for her prospect north across the Charles River to Charlestown:[5]

> See varied charms adorn the circling main,
> The peopled isthmus, and the velvet plain;
> Here ruddy Health the grateful soil divides;
> There gen'rous Commerce cleaves the yielding tides;
> From cultur'd vales, see tow'ring mounts arise,
> Their piny summits curtain'd by the skies:
> Like a new planet mid the vast serene,
> Lo, rising Harvard swells th' extended scene,
> O'er distant regions spreads a ray divine,
> Bids other Bowdoins, other Winthrops shine.(8)

If not from Beacon Hill, the poet might hold forth from a similar elevation in the vicinity of Boston, such as Milton Hill or Dorchester Heights. Wherever he stood, he would likely make obeisance to commerce, local pride, and rural contentment:

> Then turning view with other eye
> The place where gallant ships pass by,
> The widely spread indented shore,
> And bay with islands spotted o'er,

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[5]This eminence was leveled in 1811 to make way for new construction.

And light-house near the fatal graves,
Whose warning many a vessel saves.
North, see the chief town of the State,
Boston the opulent and great,
Where to the gladden'd eye arise
The stores of busy merchandize.--
Then leave the city, view the plain
Where innocence and virtue reign. (10)

Few hill poems published between 1783 and 1812 contain prospects very far removed from what were then urban centers of population. Pitchwood Hill, in far-off Gorham, Maine, received conventional treatment by Samuel Deane, who contributes to the river prospect in the poem an incongruous mixture of realistic place names and classical allusions, a not uncommon practice:

Down the eastern slope below,
See the grand Presumpscot flow!
Noble river, broad and deep,
Majestic, slow his waters creep!
Winding his serpentine way,
From Sebacook to the sea.
Fancy, on the verdant banks,
Views the fairies' midnight pranks.
Naiads, Tritons, here may seem
To wanton o'er the limpid stream.(2)

For the most part, the scenery described in Pitchwood Hill is properly picturesque, in that the landscape is neither too tame nor too rude, but the forest extending beyond the cultivated fields and streams within the poet's view is too wild to be treated as anything other than nature in ruins. Evidently the growing appreciation of grand scenery had not extended to Gorham, Maine.[6] For this "dark and dismal

[6]Pitchwood Hill was written in 1780, at about the time that the taste for wild and majestic scenery was developing in America. See Mary E. Woolley, "The Development of the Love of Romantic Scenery in America," The American Historical Review, III (October 1897), 56-66.

wood" is

> Hideous as in days of yore,
> When fell Indians walk'd the shore:
> Still the haunt of Wolf and Bear,
> Foxes, Ravens sheltered there:
> For beasts of prey a safe retreat,
> Seldom trod by human feet.

The emphasis on horror in the description of the "dismal wood" in Pitchwood Hill indicates how completely it belongs to the neoclassic tradition. In other hill poems uncultivated nature is approached less sensationally and more soberly, but even these lack a genuinely romantic view of nature. In the best romantic poetry the poet endows the natural world "with spiritual content and values" which he interprets through his imagination.[7] The first step leading to this insight is a subjective point of view in which the poet relates the natural world to his own experience. In the few really subjective American hill poems, the poets never seem to get beyond the first stage. To them nature is a vaguely defined place of retreat, not a means of insight into "the life of things." Philip Freneau's "Neversink" is a case in point. In few other hill poems has the retirement theme been given more felicitous expression, but one discovers little else as the poet, looking out on the Atlantic from the hills of Neversink in New Jersey, bids farewell to the ocean:

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[7]Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1960), p. 204.

Proud heights! with pain so often seen
(With joy beheld once more),
On your firm base I take my stand,
Tenacious of the shore:
Let those who pant for wealth or fame
Pursue the watery road;
Soft sleep and ease, blest days and nights,
And health, attend these favorite heights,
Retirement's blest abode! (4)

ESTATE POEMS

Numerous poems in the early national period were aimed chiefly at describing country seats and honoring their owners. Despite the absence of a landed aristocracy, America had its share of elegant country homes, for "the banks of such rivers as the James, the Schuylkill, and the Hudson were embellished with manors and country houses, the summer retreats of wealthy townsmen."[8] Estate poems, as the most conservative of the topographical genres,[9] follow a fairly predictable guidebook pattern, including description plus panegyric plus homage to the ideal of rural retirement. Requisite to the conventional estate poem were a locale providing a picturesque prospect of the surrounding countryside, landscaping in which Art and Nature complemented each other, and an owner whose dignity, refinement, and benevolence made him eligible for praise.

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[8]Hans P. Huth, Nature and the American (Berkeley, 1957), p. 57.

[9]Aubin, Topographical Poetry, p. 143.

Mount Vernon, the famous villa overlooking the Potomac, best exemplified these requirements. Col. David Humphreys, who served on General Washington's staff in the Revolution, celebrated his chief's estate in a poem which, subordinating description to panegyric, gives only passing attention to the setting through a few stereotyped epithets:

> To thee, my friend, these lays belong,
> Thy happy seat inspires my song,
> With gay, perennial blooms,
> With fruitage fair, and cool retreats,
> Whose bow'ry wilderness of sweets
> The ambient air perfumes. (19)

In this frequently reprinted poem, the retirement theme figures prominently, for the great Patriot had "retir'd from fields of war" and had not yet been called back from his beloved home to become President.

> Here lapp'd in philosophic ease,
> Within thy walks, beneath thy trees,
> Amidst thine ample farms,
> No vulgar converse heroes hold,
> But past or future scenes unfold,
> Or dwell on nature's charms.

In a poem considerably longer and more detailed than Humphreys', John Searson ineptly tried to delineate the charms of Mount Vernon. Clearly meriting Robert Aubin's tag as "possibly the worst of all . . . topographical versifiers,"[10] Searson wrote bad verse not so much out of blind adherence to convention as out of simple-mindedness:

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[10] Topographical Poetry, p. 144.

Pleased to the last, I view this pleasant seat,
And found its views so elegant and neat;
The prospect from it must e'er please the mind,
When elegant Potowmack here we find.
From right to left, from left to right we see,
Th' beauteous Potowmack, that arm of the sea.
See ships and vessels passing by the door,
Almost ev'ry day and every hour.
Indeed, the prospect is so very fine,
Such rural scenes must e'er the thoughts refine.
The house itself is elegant and neat,
And is two stories high, neat and complete. (21)

If Searson's rambling inanities express any philosophy of nature, it is the deistical belief that "Nature is God," asserted as the poet viewed the gardens at Mount Vernon. In many estate poems the mention of formal gardens occasioned elaborate catalogues of the flora, but Searson, either through modesty or lack of botanical knowledge, spares the reader:

But, should I range from herb to herb and flow'r,
'T would be voluminous, and pass my pow'r;
But, from Mount-Vernon's gardens I will go,
Other prospects to view. . . .

Compared to other American estates, Mount Vernon exemplified restraint in the art of landscaping, for several were quite flamboyant. Grange, seven miles from Philadelphia on the Schuylkill, featured "cresent-seats," "embroider'd walks," "pansied bowers," "moss-clad grotto's, founts, and cool alcoves"(28). The walk skirting the hilltop seemed particularly contrived to evoke the picturesque:

But chief my warm'd, my grateful muse would hail!
Yon <u>mazy</u> walk which overlooks the vale,
Which skirts, in graceful curves, the rural steep,
Where jasmines twine and sadden'd willows weep,
Where flowers adorn, where shrubs perfume the way
And nodding poplars check the blaze of day.

At "The Woodlands," another estate on the Schuylkill, "classic pleasures reign" even more prominently than at Grange. Not only do "little Naiads mourn,/ With ceaseless sighs, around their Shenstone's urn," but inside the mansion hang paintings which indicate the owner's "Taste":

> What charms, what beauties strike my raptur'd eyes!
> On every side, the living canvas speaks;
> A god pursues, the flying maiden shrieks;
> Or Night, with starry robe and silver bow,
> Sheds her mild lustre on the calm below. (35)

At still another Schuylkill estate "the cultur'd hand of art" combines with the "plastic power" of nature to produce a grounds and mansion which also reflect the owner's taste:

> Rich without ostentation, simply grand,
> See on an eminence the mansion stand,
> No gaudy ornaments, no glitter there,
> No empty show to catch the vulgar stare;
> It speaks a transcript of the owner's mind,
> Conceptions just, and sentiments refin'd! (32)

A similar comparison in "The Excursion" flatters the owner by praising his taste in architecture. The estate, "Whitehill," the "residence of Quietude," is "majestic in simplicity,/ Plain, artless, as the owner's mind,/ To every generous act inclined. . ."(30).

A few estate poems depart from the neoclassic tendency to balance carefully the rival claimants art and nature and to tip the scale in favor of nature. In these poems formal gardens and landscaping give way to arrangements both less artificial and more practical. Ascending the gradual hill to the mansion, the poet of "Poplar-Grove" hears a trickling rill," which has its source near a large

oak nearby (31). As the Mansion itself comes in view, he notes a large garden on his left. Besides sunflowers, roses, hyacinths, tulips, and "Pinks and Pioneys," he discovers more edible plants, including "the clambering pea and bean,/ The cabbage and colwart," plus lettuce and "blushing radishes." As one might expect, the two estate poems of the naturalist Alexander Wilson catalogue flora and fauna, and the domiciles described are not country estates but Wilson's own "cot" in "The Invitation" and William Bartram's farm in "A Rural Walk," In the former poem are catalogued "the flow'r-fed humming-bird," the "orange Baltimore," the "tyrant kingbird," as well as owls, crickets, tree-frogs, "kitty-dids," "flashing fireflies," and a woodpecker attacking a black snake(25). In the latter poem, "at Bartram's hospitable dome," the catalogue includes sights and sounds along a woodland path, such as the song of a Bob White and the spectacle of a tortoise eating mushrooms(26). At the farm itself, a botanical garden, the first in North America,[11] contained "unnumber'd plants and shrubb'ry sweet,/ Adorning still the circling year,/ Whose names the muse can ne'er repeat. . . ."

Only one estate poem shows the influence of the frontier. When Mrs. Ann Eliza Bleecker published her "Return to Tomanick" in 1793, this community in upstate New York

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[11]Huth, Nature and the American, p. 14.

(Renssalaer County) was a clearing in the wilderness, and her flower garden was subject to depredations not known to most "estate" owners:

> My little garden, Flora, hast thou kept,
> And watch'd my pinks and lilies while I wept?
> Or has the grubbing swine by furies led,
> The enclosure broke, and on my flowrets fed? (17)

In the description of the weeding of her garden, Mrs. Bleecker follows the neoclassic critical dictum that "low" and "mean" words should be abjured, for as she toils in the hot sun around her "lovely plants," it is not weeds but "obnoxious herbage" that she draws from the soil. She does, however, achieve a degree of directness and simplicity in a genre sketch of summertime farm activity:

> The village children, rambling o'er yon hill,
> With berries all their painted baskets fill.
> They rob the squirrel's little walnut store
> . . . . . .
> Or else to fields of maize nocturnal hie,
> Where hid, the elusive water-melons lie;
> Sportive, they make incisions in the rind,
> The riper from the immature to find;
> Then load their tender shoulders with the prey,
> And laughing bear the bulky fruit away.

TOWN POEMS

Town poetry conveniently designates descriptive poems whose subject is a specific city, town, village, hamlet, spa, or park. The category excludes poems which, like Johnson's <u>London</u>, are satirical rather than descriptive in purpose. Lacking much homogeneity, town poems "at least display a fairly common interest in architecture, social

customs, ruin-sentiment, and love of home."[12] Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village," the chief influence on American town poetry, swept through late eighteenth-century America "as the outstanding example of strictly contemporary verse."[13] His unfavorable picture of America--"Those matted woods where birds forget to sing"--probably prompted patriotic reaction among American readers; likewise his appeal against social injustice in his own country had little meaning for Americans.[14] Nevertheless, his delineation of rural villages as "bowers of innocence and ease" held obvious appeal to American readers, who seized avidly upon any poetry which developed the theme of rural contentment.

Few American poems which imitate "The Deserted Village" are restricted to a particular locality and hence are not topographical, but the anonymous "Lines Written at Hempstead, L. I." directly imitates Goldsmith's idealized conception of village life. The picture of the town after the day's work is over and the sun is setting echoes the first thirty-four lines of the famous English poem:

> Thus in thy peaceful seats, lov'd village! free'd
> From healthful labour, healthful sports succeed.
> Profusion smiling at the festive scene,
> Opes her full bosom glad'ning all the green;

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[12]Aubin, Topographical Poetry, p. 187.

[13]Howard, Connecticut Wits, p. 25. Twelve American editions of "The Deserted Village" were published between 1771 and 1800. See James D. Hart, The Popular Book, p. 28.

[14]See Philip Freneau's The American Village for an American's reaction to Goldsmith's poem.

Friendship her genial influence sheds around,
And Freedom waves her banners, ivy-crown'd;
No captious sceptic here his doubts disbands,
Religion guides the bark which Reason mans.
The stranger's welcome to the friendly board,
Which comfort, ease, and rustic fare afford;
The ruddy looks of innocence and health
. . . . . .
The neat built church where oft with pious haste,
All meet, the sweets of holiness to taste;
These are thy native charms, lov'd village! these
Adorn thy seats of innocence and ease. (86)

Far from being confined to poems imitating Goldsmith, the theme of rural retirement permeates all varieties of town poetry. The opening couplets of "Lines Written at Bethlehem" represent the vague and vapid escapism so characteristic of topographical poetry of this period:

Oh! Beth'lem, dear romantic, rural shade!
By pious hands for contemplation made:
I joy, once more, to share thy fragrant breeze,
To take my walk beneath thy lofty trees;
To wind along the margin of thy stream,
And there invoke the muse's fancied dream:
Or, stray along thy groves, where heav'n bestows
Health unimpair'd--and undisturb'd repose. (61)

Paradoxically, poems with actual city names in their titles generally do not deal with city life; the reference to a city provides an opening for a city-country contrast. In "Written After a Visit to Philadelphia" the poet finds it a pleasure to be home once again in the country:

Escap'd from fashion's gaudy haunts,
  Where dissipation frolics round,
Where mirth her bright allurement chaunts,
  And pleasure thrills her joyous sound:

Escap'd from these--how dear the scene
  Where oft I've passed the thoughtful hours!
Where blest retirement, mild, serene,
  Awakes reflection's noblest powers. (80)

Use of a city name to point up the city-country contrast also occurs in "Rural Retirement. Written upon Leaving Boston" and "The Landscape. Written in View of New York." In the former poem the poet reminisces on the follies of city life from the safety of his "snug cottage in a verdant field." With disdain he recalls the "hackneyed life" of "the sons of riot." Sharpers, fops, coxcombs, and rakes--all are part of the "madding multitude"(71). In the latter poem, the anonymous observer, at a safe distance from the wicked city, looks out across the Hudson from the Jersey shore. Before him is a "varied landscape" of "murmuring waters," summer breezes, and sailing vessels. Beyond

> . . . domes on domes arise;
> Dwells not wild Ambition there?
> Pride and state, in courtly guise?
> Gentle friend, ah! here repair.
>
> Here no envious cares molest:
> Nature only is our guide;
> Calm and peaceful is the breast,
> Where contentment doth reside. (70)

So pervasive was the belief that "happiness below" flowed only from the "retreat where innocence is found"(56) that only a few town poems actually acclaim "city" life. In "Lines on the City of New-York" the poet predicts New York will "be the Athens of mankind," and he praises such disparate elements as the city's "well pav'd streets" and her "lovely daughters"(73). John Searson's bungling lines on the new federal city describe the White House as "magnificent, superb, and grand"(58), and at Alexandria he notes, "The

buildings here are generally neat;/ The streets well pav'd, which makes walking complete"(59). In Georgetown the buildings are also "very neat;/ But paving of the streets not yet complete"(60). Such inanities are foreign to the longest and best poem describing urban life; John D. McKinnon's "Description of the City and its Amusements in the Winter" sketches the "ever-loved variety" of city life in New York. On the streets are seen

> . . . the merchant cool,
> With calculating brow--the merry tars,
> That, fiddling, cleave the wind, and strive in song
> With AEolus--the beau, in shagg'd surtout,
> Curbing, with mien erect, his fretful steeds--
> And lily faces peeping from their muffs. . . .(52)

Despite such scenes of gay activity in which "social sympathy" encircles all "with benigh embrace," the central purpose of the poem is to show that only by fleeing to the country can one escape "the childish vanities,/ The hate, the toil, and vacancy of life." Men of the calibre of George Washington naturally live in the country, McKinnon claims,

> For minds of such a stamp, tho' cloudless, still
> If steep'd in the polluting breath of throngs
> And smoking cities, ever seek the pure
> And still sublimity of Nature's scenes. . . .

The watering-place poem, a sub-species of town poetry, inevitably accompanied the rise of spas as commercial ventures, and they performed the function of modern advertising through extravagant claims and appeals to local pride. Although America had no resorts with the reputation

of Bath (which was the subject of several "distinguished" topographical poems),[15] at least two poems published between 1783 and 1812 celebrated American spas. Thomas Law found that Ballston Springs, near Saratoga, New York, "refined" his blood, "revived his mind," and "made all things joy impart," including his Emma's smile (50). William Prichard's "The Beauties of Harrowgate" served to advertise the resort through slogans such as, "Let England, Bath or Buxton's charms relate,/ We Philadelphians praise sweet Harrowgate"; and "Hither the gen'rous and the gay repair,--/ Sip the clear wave, and breathe salubrious air"(55).[16]

Other variations of the town category were the park poem and town-ruin poem--the former typified by "The Beauties of the Mall," which describes evening beauties, both natural and human, along the elm-lined Mall at Boston(65); the latter by David Humphreys' "An Elegy on the Burning of Fairfield"(46), which Robert Aubin calls a "manly" example of this type.[17]

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[15]Aubin, Topographical Poetry, pp. 162-63.

[16]In the reprinting of this poem in the American Museum (1787) some textual revisions were made, evidently in an attempt to improve the diction. The second couplet quoted above was changed to "Hither the beauteous and the free repair,/ Sip the clear stream, and breathe a purer air." Such changes in diction were not uncommon in the reprinting of topographical poems within this period. For example, John Swanwick's "Lines Written at Bethlehem," first published in the Columbian Magazine for June, 1787, was reprinted ten years later in the author's own Poems on Several Occasions. What was originally verdant became grassy; oraison was changed to glad homage; muse to friend; groves to charms; and scenes to vallies.

[17]Topographical Poetry, p. 179.

Closely resembling graveyard elegies in mood, the town-ruin poem had developed as part of a growing interest in ruins and the sentiments they inspired. At Crown Point, New York, an abandoned fort presents a scene of Gothic terror:

> And now high shadowing o'er the turbid flood,
> Ticonderoga's fatal heights we gain;
> Where ravenous crows, lur'd by the scent of blood,
> With sable plumage darken all the plain.
>
> . . . . . .
> And soon, the fatal, threatening ramparts past,
> Where Crown-Point's rocky base repels the wave,
> I see its ruin'd bulwarks gloom the waste. (76)

The dominant impression that emerges from an examination of the whole body of town poetry is a general "falsehood of description," a vice that Wordsworth sought to avoid by looking "steadily" at his subject. This falsehood is particularly noticeable in the only town poem set in the frontier region then lying west of the Appalachian barrier. One of the first poems to come out of the West, it was composed for a Fourth of July oration at Marietta, Ohio, in 1789, one year after Marietta had been established as the first planned permanent settlement in the Old Northwest Territory. Its inflated rhetoric gives no true indication of either the topography, geography, or economy of the town. One could hardly surmise from reading it that Marietta, situated in the river bottoms at the confluence of the Muskingum and Ohio, was surrounded by the high forested hills of the Appalachian Plateau, which stretched forth in every direction from the little settlement. Evidently the author, the cultured

and refined Return J. Meigs,[18] wanted the literature which came out of Marietta to reflect the highest tastes of the East, so that it could not be gainsaid that the new territory lagged in proper cultivation of the arts. The poem so heavily depends on neoclassic conventions that one could substitute other place names for those used and the description would not be any less applicable:

> Here late the Savage hid in ambush lay,
> Or roam'd the uncultur'd vallies for his prey;
> Here frown'd the forest with terrific shade,
> No cultur'd fields expos'd the opening glade;
> How chang'd the scene! See nature cloth'd in smiles
> With joy repays the lab'ror for his toils
> Her hardy gifts, rough industry extends,
> The groves bow down, the lofty forest bends;
> On every side, the cleaving axes sound,
> The oak, and tall beech thunder to the ground,
> And see the spires of Marietta rise,
> And domes, and temples swell into the skies;
> Here Justice reign, and foul dissention cease,
> Her walks be pleasant--and her paths be peace.
> Here swift Muskingum rolls his rapid waves;
> There furmenous [sic] vallies, fair Ohio laves,
> On its smooth surface, gentle zephyrs play,
> The sun beams tremble with a placid ray;
> What future harvests on his bosom glide,
> And loads of Commerce swell the "downward tide,"
> Where Mississippi joins in length'ning sweep,
> And rolls majestic to the Atlantic deep. (53)

REGION POEMS

As the least well-defined of all topographical types, the region or district poem describes areas as extensive as entire countries and as limited as counties or river

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[18]Return J. Meigs, a graduate of Yale, was successively Senator from Ohio, governor of that state, and Postmaster General of the United States.

valleys.[19] Those of broad scope tend to overlap with long didactic-descriptive poems developing the "rising glory of America" theme; as the extent of the area described narrows, the type becomes confused with other topographical genres, especially town and river poetry. In general, the broader the scope of these poems, the more conventional and stereotyped their features. The travelogue technique, which marks the longer poems, produces a melange of features, most of which appear in Freneau's The Rising Empire, a series of eight poems which satirize and describe states of the eastern seaboard. "Pennsylvania" illustrates how Freneau made use of conventional features of eighteenth-century descriptive poetry, including praise of commerce and agriculture, river apostrophe, river catalogue, and tributes to famous men:

> Spread with stupendous hills, far from the main,
> Fair Pennsylvania holds her golden rein,
> In fertile fields her wheaten harvest grows,
> Charged with its freights her favorite Delaware flows;
> From Erie's Lake her soil with plenty teems
> To where the Schuylkill rolls his limpid streams--
> Sweet stream! what pencil can thy beauties tell--
> . . . . . .
> Here Juniata, too, allures the swain,
> And gay Cadorus roves along the plain;
> Sweetara, tumbling from the distant hills,
> Steals through the waste, to turn the industrious mill--
> Where'er those floods through groves or mountains stray,
> That God of Nature still directs the way,
> With fondest care has traced each river's bed,
> And mighty streams thro' mighty forests led,
> Bade agriculture thus export her freight,
> The strength and glory of this favoured State.
> She, famed for science, arts, and polished men,
> Admires her Franklin, but adores her Penn. . . .(90)

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[19]Aubin, Topographical Poetry, p. 214.

The only region poem of any length of avoid most of the neoclassic stereotypes was one by John D. McKinnon describing autumn scenery in rural New York. A contemporary reviewer of Descriptive Poems (1802), which contained this poem, regretted that McKinnon's poems had not been "interspersed with more flowers of sentiment, or enlivened by a few historical episodes."[20] The fact that McKinnon violated conservative critical canons does not make him an American Wordsworth; yet at times he wasable to see nature as something more than a scene arranged for its picturesque effect or as a melodramatic sounding board for the rhetorical sublime. The trouble is that he could not sustain the imaginative insight of some of his better passages:

> . . . Thro'every nerve,
> Inspir'd with animation, in the pathless field
> I stroll delighted; and, above the vale,
> Pause on the rising hill, whose hoary rocks,
> With creeping briar and crested sumach spread,
> And scented with the cedar's spicy breath,
> O'erlook the scene. 'Tis here, while Nature smiles
> In her autumnal charms, and placid skies
> Reflect their mild complacence on my soul--
> While, teeming with increase, the fragrant earth
> Her rich profusion yields, that I would tempt
> The poet's imitative song. (94)

Other region poems can be called romantic because of the poet's subjective response to his experience in nature, but most of them are vitiated by sentimentality in the form of love complaints so common to neoclassic pastoral poetry.

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[20]Unsigned review in American Review and Literary Journal, II (1802), 330.

Were it not for their localized settings, these poems would more properly be called pastoral than topographical. The conclusion to "The Fair of Berkshire," in which the poet laments his lost love, illustrates how romanticism was getting off to the wrong start in America:

> Or mounted on Ascutney's towering height,
> Where the long prospect pains the aching sight,
> O'er the wide space, imagination points,
> To the cool shades which lovely Mira haunts.
> Now mid the follies of a city life,
> Where sense with fashion holds continual strife,
> In the full crowd I mix with vacant stare,
> Alike all faces--Mira is not there. (100)

More ambitious than innocuous lyrics like "The Fair of Berkshire" were the longer pastoral romances, a type of narrative poem "falsely simple and simply sentimental" that flourished in England from about 1720 onwards.[21] A few of them fall into the topographical category by virtue of localized settings. The scene might be the banks of the Ohio or the wilderness of Kentucky, but were not specific names used the setting might easily be mistaken for Arcadia. The hero typically combines the traits of noble savage, stoical hermit, and innocent lover. In "An Indian Eclogue," set on "the Banks of the Ohio," the Indian Mingo soliloquizes on his love for the "nimble Lawrah," whose yellow neck is "as soft as bear grease, and as beaver sleek." His love

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[21]Bonamy Dobrée, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, 1700-1740 (Oxford, 1959), p. 565. Among the best known American examples of this form are Mrs. Morton's Ouabi and Freneau's The Indian Student, but the settings of these poems are not sufficiently localized for them to be considered topographical.

for the fickle maiden is in vain, however, so he will become a solitary wanderer:

> . . . I'll take my spear,
> And thro' the forest chace the shaggy bear;
> The bounding buck shall own my oft-try'd art,
> And feel this arrow rankling in his heart. (96)

The best known pastoral romance having a specific American setting is the Englishman Thomas Campbell's Gertrude of Wyoming (1809), which went through several editions in the early nineteenth century, both in England and America. Many Americans believed with Washington Irving that Campbell had succeeded in this poem in showing "that our native scenes are capable of poetic inspiration and that our country may be as capable of poetic fiction as anything in Europe."[22] Joseph Dennie, however, thought "it was a somewhat perilous undertaking to lay the scene in a country to which the writer was a stranger. . . ."[23] Dennie's concern with the accuracy of description was well founded, for although the setting is supposed to be Wyoming County, Pennsylvania, on the banks of the Susquehanna, the source for most of Campbell's information about America came from travel books, one of which was William Bartram's Travels, from which were derived the flamingoes, crocodiles, palm trees, and magnolias that made Campbell's Pennsylvania look

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[22]Quoted in Edward Wagenknecht, Washington Irving: Moderation Displayed (New York, 1962), p. 103.

[23][Joseph Dennie], "Review of Gertrude of Wyoming," Port Folio, II (August, 1809), 155.

"more like Bartram's southern region than its own reality."[24]

The pastoral romance is an easily recognizable accompaniment of the interest in cultural primitivism that arose in the eighteenth century; not so easily placed within a cultural context is the "anti-nature" poem. Joseph Brown Ladd's "Prospect of Carolina, For July" pictures the climate of South Carolina as unbearably bad. The hot sun, "with fierce, effulgent ray,/ Darts from his orb intolerable day" and "thick vapours," rising from stagnant pools and marshes, spread "abhorr'd disease" so that "no living wight can bear/ The deadly influence of empoison'd air"(92). In an anti-nature poem also set in the South--specifically the "Pine Barrens of North-Carolina"--Philip Freneau describes with depressing realism an inn maintained by an early-day impoverished white Southerner and his family. The poet eats his evening meal amid "slumbering swine" as the landlord "drains his bottle to the dregs," Even his horse seems discontented at this abode of "fleas and filthiness," and he warns strangers to stay away from "this dejected place"(42).

One might assume that these anti-nature poems were exclusively an American product, the result of firsthand encounters with the wilderness frontier. Yet "anti-nature" originated in a study of eighteenth-century English literature as a convenient label for descriptive poems showing

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[24] N. Bryllion Fagin, William Bartram: Interpreter of American Landscape (Baltimore, 1933), p. 183.

disgust with nature.[25] William Diaper, in Brent (1727), one of the better of these poems, amusingly condemns the country he is in. Besides encountering wet, soggy marshes and vapoury fens, he discovers that the speech of the peasants is hardly superior to animals, that birds refuse to sing, and that "Serpents innumerous" roam the mountainside.[26] Such poems represent inevitable reactions to formal praise of the countryside at this time almost obligatory, and are in the same spirit as Dr. Johnson's rationalistic attack on the pastoral conventions in Lycidas. When encountering first-hand the crudities and inconveniences of nature or when, as a result of their reading, realizing the excesses to which pastoral conventions could carry praise of nature, even men otherwise disposed to appreciate the beauties of natural scenery might be tempted to react with something of Dr. Johnson's skepticism: Whatever images the pastoral can supply, he stated, "are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind."[27]

RIVER POEMS

Rivers have been so widely associated with man's

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[25]See Bonamy Dobrée, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, p. 149.

[26]Quoted in Dobrée, p. 149.

[27]"Life of Milton" in Lives of the English Poets.

deepest and often conflicting feelings toward time, destiny, action, and quiescence--what collectively might be called the "life spirit"--that they readily suggest the concept of the archetype, a term used by C. G. Jung to designate primordial images existing in the collective unconscious of mankind, their appearance in poetry eliciting profound emotional responses in the reader.[28] If one finds Jung's hypothesis too tenuous, he can account for the magic of such images by the less speculative explanation that once the connection has been made between a "universal inner experience and an omnipresent outer analogue" the association may become a commonplace of oral and written tradition.[29] Whatever view one accepts, he cannot deny the significance of river imagery in topographical poetry of the early national period. Practically every poem alludes to or describes a particular stream; in fact, rivers appear as subjects of complete poems more frequently than any other feature of the American landscape.

The Schuylkill, by far the most popular American stream, as early as 1758 was the subject of an innocuous pastoral advertising it as a place of retreat for Philadelphia's

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[28]For an elaboration of archetypes as pre-existent forms in the psyche, see C. G. Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetic Art" in Contributions to Analytical Psychology (1928), pp. 245-46, and The Collected Works of C. G. Jung (1959), vol. 9, part 1, 142-43. For a limited discussion of flowing water as an archetypal pattern, see Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (London, 1934).

[29]See M. H. Abrams, "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," in English Romantic Poets (1960), p. 49.

nymphs and swains.[30] The Hudson, easily the second in popularity, had more than any other American river numerous historical associations to be exploited. Margaretta V. Faugeres and John D. McKinnon, in their long poems on the Hudson, take the reader on guided tours in which they make use of the travelogue technique--a series of sketches of local activity, history, and scenery tied together by the poet's progress down (or up) the river. In citing Mrs. Faugeres' "The Hudson" as typical of the "hopeless mediocrity" of English and American river poems from 1790 to 1798, Robert Aubin undoubtedly had in mind its stereotyped descriptive passages. Neither wilderness scenery, nor cultivated fields, nor city bustle elicited any originality of treatment. Near Lake George the river is

> Cool'd by projecting rocks, eternal shade.
> Amid those airy clifts (stupendous height!)
> The howling natives of the desert dwell:
> There, fearful Echo all the live long night
> Repeats the panther's petrefying yell.

Farther down the river,

> Unnumber'd herds of cattle graze the plain,
> And in the valley waves the yellow grain;
> The green maize rustles on the mountain's brow,
> And the thick orchard's blossoms blush below:
> For the luxuriance of the cultur'd soil
> Amply rewards the hardy rustic's toil.

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[30]Anon., "Schuylkill Side," New American Magazine, I (June, 1758), 143-44. Probably the position of Philadelphia as a leading literary center accounted for the popularity of the Schuylkill, as well as some appeal in the name itself that led to its use even when no particular river was intended. Nothing in Philip Freneau's "Hermit's Valley" indicates a specific locale, yet the title "Hermit's Valley" in the 1795 edition became "Hermit's Valley, a Rural Scene on the Schuylkill" in the table of contents of the 1809 edition.

And at New York

> . . . a hardy throng
> Spread various works the loaded shores along;
> Sound the harsh grating saw, or hammer loud,
> Or blow the roaring furnace, sable brow'd,
> . . . . . .
> Or guide the groaning wheels, and straining steed,
> To where the sons of trade their wealth unlade. (105)

Marked by more felicity of expression than Mrs. Faugeres' poem, John D. McKinnon's "Description of the Hudson River" takes the reader up the river from New York to Albany. As a follower of Thomson, McKinnon strives for picturesque effect. In describing a sunset along the Highlands near Croton, the poet "paints" his prospect by making the reader aware of color and of the diverse yet pleasing combination of elements composing the scene. Ahead of him are the Highlands, "In grand perspective hung across the bay,/ And steept in hazy distance." As the sun sinks below the summit of the hills, the breeze dies and the surface of the river becomes a mirror,

> . . . where the vermillion sky
> Sees all its new-born twinkling stars, and round
> The peaceful shores the woods in darkness wrapt,
> And mansions whitening on the strand. (108)

A similar passage in "Description of the Mohawk," a companion to the Hudson poem, further illustrates McKinnon's technique. Upstream from Cohoes Falls is a prospect so picturesque that the French landscape painter Claude Lorrain would claim it as his own. In this passage, one of the best in all of McKinnon's poems, the evocative power of the

imagery rises above the limitations imposed by the personifications and occasional lapses into turgid diction:

> . . . Here the dusty road
> Forsaking for the verdant turf, we scent
> The fragrance of the evening, and survey
> The shore, enamor'd of its pensive scenes,
> Harmonious, tranquil, which thy genius, Claude,
> Taught by the sober Fancies, had confess'd her own.
> Amidst the shade suspended o'er the vale,
> The mirror of the Mohawk's tide reflects
> A varied tapestry: the vivid green
> Of willows interwove--the plane tree's hoar
> And dappled waist--the pensive, sombre elm,
> Queen of the Flats, her hanging robes diffuse
> And graceful. Fronting in perspective dim,
> A range of mountains from the Kaatskill's loins
> Projected, in a promontory falls
> Sublime in distant grandeur on the shore;
> While through its horizontal firs, the west,
> Still beaming with effulgence, dyes the stream
> With ardent yellow. (139)

To one accustomed to the stereotyped content of most river poetry, McKinnon's poems read exceptionally well.[31] Less marked by a spirit of localization than any other topographical category, most river poems serve as vehicles for sentimental melancholy, the vicissitudes of love, or the blessings of rural retirement--the last an all-pervading motif of topographical poetry which in no other category is so tiresomely reiterated. The wish for contentment remains

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[31]A startling illustration of the stereotyped content of many river poems is the ease by which a poet could alter the position of stanzas within the same poem in subsequent reprints or interchange stanzas between different poems or even alter titles without modifying the texts. John Davis resorts to all three kinds of manipulation. In "Morning at Occoquan" and "Evening at Occoquan" stanzas are rearranged or exchanged in subsequent reprints; his "Ode to the River Rariton" was reprinted as "Ode to the River Occoquan" with no significant changes in the text of the poem.

the same, whether uttered beside the Schuylkill:

> O! that the destinies had fix'd my lot,
> Upon this limpid stream's enamel'd bank--
> Here, calm content should gild my humble cot,
> And not a sigh escape for wealth or rank; (120)

the Connecticut:

> On thy lov'd banks, sweet river, free
> From worldly care and vanity,
> I could my every hour confine,
> And think true happiness was mine; (122)

or the Souhegan:

> But hark! thy guardian sylph is sent--
> Soft music breaks from yonder tree--
> Delicious sounds! Here reign content,
> And nature's child, Simplicity. (157)

As early as the 1750's, in poems such as John Langhorne's "Ode to the River Eden" (1759), English poets tended to associate rivers with their deepest and saddest longings, and henceforth streams proliferated as "recognized confidants of poets who rivaled them in aquosity."[32] In American river poetry the sentimental attachment of poets to a favorite stream produced countless expressions of woe. William Moore Smith, disappointed in love, tells his troubles to the Lehigh:

> If by thy flow'ry banks I rove,
> Or wander thro' the silent grove,
> That shades thy waters as they flow;
> The tear still bulges in my eye,
> Still recollection calls the sigh,
> And points the venom'd sting of woe. (142)

Other streams produced variations on the theme. Along the

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[32]Aubin, Topographical Poetry, pp. 225 and 232.

Schuylkill "John Smith" recalled happier days: "But now, alas! those blissful days are o'er,/ Each pleasing sport, each dear delight no more"(113). By the Sampit William Martin Johnson extracted a "melancholy joy" from "staid Eve" amid various Graveyard paraphernalia(136). "Jaques" compared the placid course of the Lehigh with his own turbulent life:

> How pleas'd to wander on the Leheigh's bank,
> As rippling gently o'er its pebbled bed,
> It wafts a mournful music to mine ear.
> How pleas'd, if he, who stamp'd my early fate
> With many a sad, and many a dreary change,
> Had so ordain'd, that like this quiet stream,
> Mine hours might onward glide, serenely calm! (134)

In several river poems the influence of pastoral conventions produced lovers' complaints as artificial and conceited as those in the worst dialogues between Strephon and Chloe. In "An Ode to the River Leheigh" the poet laments how scenes along the river no longer give him joy, but "would Louisa bless her swain,/ Thy banks, mild stream, would please again"(142). Josias Lyndon Arnold delights in the Connecticut River because "Fanny" lives nearby(122). "Frankly" apostrophizes the Raritan for the same reason: at "Sidney's hospitable dome" lives Maria, a girl of "unwarped simplicity, a guileless heart,/ Pure and unsullied as the virgin snow"(155). And "Palemon" relates how the presence of Delia would lend "new life to the prospect" along the Hudson(111).

The tone of affectation and insincerity in these

sentimental poems seldom appears in river poems with settings along the western frontier. In general, the poets of the wilderness (or "desert" as it was often called) held no illusions about the discomforts and loneliness of frontier life; yet they resorted to literary posing in picturing the idyllic fields and streams which they had left behind or to which they were returning. The latter situation marks "The Traveller Returned," a pseudonymous poem written on the return of the poet to the Hudson Valley from travels in the Great Lakes territory. By "wayward fate" he was too long detained

> On distant wild and cheerless shores,
> Where thund'ring Niagara roars;
> Where Erie's ever-restless waves,
> A dark uncultur'd border laves,
> And savage yells, and haggard fright
> Float on the sable wings of night;
> Where forests vast involved in fire,
> In wreaths of flame to heaven aspire,
> Or rooted firm in solid rock,
> Repel th' impetuous torrents' shock;
> Where mountains mock at floods and time,
> And all reveals the dread sublime:-- (109).

Not only did Indians, forest fires, and uncongenial scenery plague him, but equally repulsive were the "Ignorance" and "cheerless Superstition" which reigned "on rude St. Lawrence's dreary coast." Now, however, he is back along the "soft-flowing Hudson," where he can find a "sweet recess" to soothe "the calm of life's decline" and

> Where unrestricted Commerce wide
> Pours in her wealth with every tide;
> Where Science boasts instructive power,
> And Friendship cheers the languid hour.

In a companion poem, the same weary traveler, not having yet returned home, laments his isolation on the "unfriendly shores" of the St. Lawrence. As in the previous poem, he makes light of ignorance on the frontier; preparing to return to his "native plain," he addresses the stream:

> For, ah! whatever charms thy varied coast
> Sublime or beauteous yield th' admiring sight,
> Few are the mental stores its tenants boast,
> Lock'd in the gloom of intellectual night. (148)

A poem by James Elliot further develops the theme that nature on the frontier has few joys for even those most appreciative of her bounties. As he lies alone and ill at Fort Hamilton on the Miami River in the Ohio Territory, he knows only anguish:

> In these long walls where gloomy silence reigns,
> While whistling winds through every opening creep,
> Worn with disease, and rack'd by tort'ring pains,
> In vain I court the soothing smiles of sleep. (131)

Blaming his misfortunes on overweening ambition, which has "kindled flames" that "consume" his heart, he sees rural contentment as the only path to happiness, but it is a way of life that has not been his to enjoy:

> Happy the man who tills his fruitful fields
> In sweet retreat, and tastes each rural charm;
> Blest with the generous bounty nature yields,
> He reigns--the peerless monarch of his farm.
>
> Happy the hardy and unletter'd swain,
> Who never from his native circle strays;
> Who roams at ease the hill, or flowery plain,
> And spends in joy and love his cloudless days.

Elliot sustains his soul-searching introspection and obeisance to rural retirement in "Lines, Written at the City of Marietta. . . ." His career as a soldier at an end, he has managed to find some peace of mind in retirement on the banks of the Ohio. His lot has been hard, for following the innocent contentment of his "infantile years" afflictions came heavily, including penury and loss of health. But at Marietta

> . . . Health returns--again Contentment reigns--
> I feel their influence, their charms divine;
> Releas'd at length from military chains,
> Sweet Peace of Mind, again I hail thee mine! (132)

His description of the Marietta countryside is as stereotyped as that in the tribute to the pioneer community by Return J. Meigs. Despite the opportunity for firsthand description, Elliot uses the "eye of fancy" to paint such features as "Allegheny Mountain," which he acknowledges in a footnote is not actually visible at Marietta. And the opening lines apostrophizing the Ohio expose the emptiness of bombastic rhetoric:

> Hail, Queen of Rivers! Hail, Columbian Nile!
> Along thy beauteous banks I fondly roam,
> And view yon cloudcapt mountain, which awhile
> Will yet seclude me from my native home.
>
> Stupendous monument of power divine!
> The muse explores thy solitary height,
> By fancy led thy craggy cliffs to climb--
> And then to orient realms extend her flight.

Less literary posturing characterizes Susannah Wright's "A Copy of Verses, Written . . . on Removing from

Chester to the Banks of Susquehanna." The poet's new life on the frontier leaves no time for enjoyment of nature, which would compensate for the social pleasures she has left behind:

> From all the social world estrang'd,
> In desert wilds and woods,
> Books and engaging friends exchang'd
> For pendant rocks and floods.
>
> Nature's uncultivated face
> A varying aspect wears;
> But every charm and every grace
> Are sunk in stronger cares. (143)

Her labor is unending. From dawn "through noontide's sultry sun" to the "dew of ev'ning" tasks that sap her energy leave her no time to read poetry. Each morning renews the day of care and thus passes the "unvarying year." But in an effort to become resigned to her lot, she will attempt to "regulate" her passions and subdue her will, and meantime she will try to appreciate the "pristine glories" of "scenes that never pall":

> Behold the trees their leaves resume,
> The shrubs and herbage rise,
> Unbidden flowers the grove perfume,
> And all serene the skies.

The Rev. William Duke used his experience in crossing the Alleghenies to supply images for a hymn with the conventional theme of a pilgrim toiling through and overcoming difficulties. "Hymn XXXIX. Written on the Banks of the Monongahala" relates how God's "sufficient grace" sustained him on his journey "up the steep/ And rugged mountain's side" and over "trackless passages through deep,/ Dark forests." God reveals His presence in an "hour of need" when a

backwoodsman in the Alleghenies supplies unexpected help:

> Refreshment, unexpected, flow'd
> From rude humanity,
> And indigence herself bestow'd
> The needful charity. (130)

Another song set along a frontier river was the ballad "Banks of Kentucke," which, with its conventional themes of local pride and rural contentment, offers scant evidence that in 1788 the banks of the Kentucky River were still part of a virgin wilderness. One detects only attitudinizing as the poet forsakes "the populous city" for the "gay fertile soil on the banks of Kentucke." The spectacular palisades of the Kentucky River in the vicinity of Frankfort, Danville, and Lexington get only passing mention in a stereotyped river apostrophe: "Hail, stranger to song! hail, deep-channel'd river,/ Thy prominent cliffs shall be famous forever"(144).

POEMS OF NATURAL PHENOMENA

Asher B. Durand's painting "Kindred Spirits" shows the poet William Cullen Bryant and the painter Thomas Cole standing on a precipice looking out on a prospect of rude grandeur. Such a combination of poet, painter, and sublime landscape was appropriate, for by 1849, when this painting appeared, both man had shown a predilection for sublime scenery--Cole in his Hudson River landscapes and Bryant in such poems as "The Prairies." This exploitation of the

sublime dominated much nineteenth century nature poetry, and early in the century American poets were writing about those features of the landscape which possessed the grandeur necessary to delight and astonish the souls of their readers.

Waterfalls, the most plentiful and most awe-inspiring natural phenomena in America, were early subjected to poetic rhapsodizing. Long an outstanding scenic curiosity, Niagara Falls had appeared in English poetry at least as early as James Ralph's Night (1728), and after the Revolutionary War an effort began to transmute Niagara into "the grand American poem".[33] Between 1783 and 1850 at least forty different poems on the Falls were published in America and England,[34] but few of these appeared before 1815, probably because Niagara still lacked ready accessibility to tourists and travelers. The few that were published feebly reiterate the ever popular motifs of river poetry. Thomas Law compares the alternately calm and tempestuous waters with the vicissitudes of human life(173). John Shaw, in "Imitation of Petrarch. . .," develops the ubi sunt theme(178), and Robert H. Rose reverses the "O could I flow like thee" formula of Cooper's Hill:

> And though with sensations I ne'er knew before,
> I bend me enraptur'd to list to thy roar,
> And, as thy blue streams irresistibly roll,
> Feel the awe most sublime which possesses my soul;

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[33]Spencer, Quest, p. 48.

[34]Charles Mason Low, Anthology and Bibliography of Niagara Falls (Albany, 1921), II, 696-749.

Yet I would not for worlds that my life were like thee!
O far be each thought of such tumult from me! (177)

In attempting to communicate the sublimity of the scene, these poets unleash the full power of their rhetoric. Thomas Law, in "Niagara," finds "strange emotions" agitating his soul as he looks into the "abyss profound"(173). Robert H. Rose, "lost in the trance" which the view occasions, feels himself an "atom" while viewing the "stupendous" scene(177). The anonymous poet of "The Falls of Niagara" in Medley leaves the impression he is on a reckless emotional binge:

With steps uncertain to a jutting rock
   To gaze upon th' immense abyss, I hie.
And all my senses feel a horrid shock,
   As down the steep I turn my dizzy eye.

On cloudy steams I take a flight sublime,
   Leaving the world and nature's works behind;
And as the pure empyreal height I climb,
   Reflect with rapture on th' immortal mind. (179)

Poetically the most popular of all natural phenomena from 1783 to 1812,[35] Passaic Falls in New Jersey was held to be "scarcely less sublime/ Than fam'd Niagara's tremendous flood"(163). Accordingly, it received the same excessive praise, such as that from an anonymous poet who finds the view sufficiently grand to convert an atheist:

The awe-struck atheist the scene surveys,
In silence wrapt, and lifts his thoughts on high.
"Tis God who made the whole," abash'd he cries,
Him prostrate owns before the mighty deep. (164)

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[35]Between 1783 and 1812, not counting reprints in magazines, at least eleven different poems on Passaic Falls were published in America; for their titles, consult the appended checklist.

One of these poems, however, has intellectual substance unmatched by few topographical poems of this period. Samuel Low's "On the Falls of Pasaick" contains long descriptive passages showing strongly the influence of Thomson, plus an account of the creation of man and the natural world from Chaos, sentimental reminiscence involving "once lov'd Amanda," and didactic passages on the value of nature to a man of sensibility. These elements add up to an interesting philosophical nature poem quite within the neoclassic tradition. The descriptions, marked as they are by Latinate diction, nevertheless reveal a poet with his eye on the object. Awareness of detail distinguishes a passage describing the mist rising from the Falls, which in wetting nearby vegetation intensifies its colors:

> Well pleas'd I turn:--on yonder humid cloud,
> Which ceaseless rises from those depths profound,
> My eye delighted dwells; innum'rous drops,
> Like early dew pellucid, than the dew
> More subtle and minute, its fabric form;
> The solar beams, refracted in their course,
> With heav'ns own tinctures paint the lucid spray,
> Reflecting smiles around;--the glitt'ring shower
> Gives to the landscape, picturesque and rude,
> And wildly beautiful, a richer tinge,
> Irriguous gleaming on the grass-grown rocks,
> Imbruing vegetation, making earth
> More fertile, and the neighb'ring scenery
> Look still more lovely, more enchanting still. (163)

Like most eighteenth-century nature poets, Low did not admire exclusively natural scenery; somewhere the hand of man should be evident. One prospect in the poem explicitly shows "Art and Nature sweetly harmoniz'd," art in this case

being "fair Newark's rising village" and nature "Jersey's lofty woods and oak-crown'd hills." Low follows this attempt to balance the rival claims of natural and man-made scenery by a passage which shows his interest in the relationship between poetry and painting, another common concern of eighteenth-century descriptive poets:

> The variegated scene . . .
> Grew indistinct and dark, to vision lost,
> Inspiring holy awe and thoughts serene!
> Enchanting landscape! which the graphic art
> In vain attempts to rival; which makes faint
> The glowing tints a Titian's canvass shows;
> Which not Lorrain's nice pencil could pourtray
> In colours vivid as the living scene!

The didactic passages of the poem formally expound deistical ideas current in the eighteenth century. Like Thomson in The Seasons, Low sees God revealed through natural revelation rather than supernatural. Pervading nature is a universal mind revealed to the mind of man through the grandeur of nature, a view outlined in a passage which begins as an apostrophe to "Prolific Nature" and ends as a pantheistic sermon. The "secret workings" of nature produce

> . . . in astonish'd Intellect,
> Conceptions of sublimity and grandeur,
> Which make description languid, which defy
> The power of elocution, and for which
> The tongue of man hath never found a name.
> But if the wild magnificence of Nature
> Can thus engage the rapt enthusiast's mind,
> How passing wonderful is Mind itself!
> And, oh! how infinitely greater still
> Is that eternal, independent Mind,
> That Soul of physical and moral worlds,
> Essence of Intellect and breath of Life!
> That vivifying Spirit, who pervades
> The Universe immense!

Although "sensibility" does not appear in the poem, ideas underlying the word receive relatively detailed formulation. Like Thomson, Low believed that the harmony in nature is proof of benevolent design and that this harmony extends to man's moral life. To Low, nature is "Parent of Good." Virtue comes from contemplating nature. Even viewed in the sad retrospect of loss, nature holds more joy than sensual pleasures, which destroy the "moral sense" and "vitiate the taste." Those who lack "feeling minds" cannot escape "mere corporeal Nature's brutal taste," but

> Not so the child of sentiment and taste,
> Contemplative, enlighten'd and refin'd,
> Who knows to see, to study and enjoy
> The pure, the temp'rate, tranquillizing scenes
> Of unperverted Nature. . . .

JOURNEY POEMS

In England and on the Continent the rise in tourism during the eighteenth century, brought on by safer and easier conditions of land travel, aided the "return to nature" by bringing city dwellers into close contact with natural scenery. In letters, diaries, journals, and books travelers recorded observations that ranged from disinterested curiosity to self-conscious enthusiasm for the variety, beauty, and grandeur of landscape. In the latter mold were William Gilpin's popular tours made with the object of "examining

the face of a country by the rules of picturesque beauty."[36] Even though problems of length and organization made poetry a less suitable medium for travel accounts than prose, many poets nevertheless cast their observations into rhyme or blank verse, a tendency which culminated in Lord Byron's highly popular Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. Despite noticeable freedom of structure, journey poems fall into two general groups, the travel narrative and the travel guide. In the first group belongs Anne Ritson's long versified narrative A Poetical Picture of America, Being Observations Made, during a Residence of Several Years at Alexandria, and Norfolk, in Virginia; Illustrative of the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants: and Interspersed with Anecdotes, Arising from a General Intercourse with Society in that Country. . . (1809). As the title suggests, Mrs. Ritson is concerned primarily with events, not description. Only the second group, whose purpose is chiefly descriptive, can be called topographical. Relatively few poems of either type were published in America between 1783 and 1812, perhaps because travel was still so difficult in the young, undeveloped country.

The difficulties of travel failed to discourage the

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[36]Quoted in H. V. D. Dyson and John Butt, Augustans and Romantics (London, 1940), p. 286. The first of Gilpin's "picturesque tours" was Observations on the River Wye relative chiefly to picturesque beauty (1782); by 1809 Gilpin had written four other guides to the scenery of Britain.

American poet and naturalist Alexander Wilson from taking a walking trip that resulted in the most opulently detailed of all American journey poems. In 2,200 lines of open couplets, "The Foresters" records with the completeness of a diary each day's progress of the poet and his two companions from the "green banks of Schuylkill" near Philadelphia to Niagara Falls. Copious use of place names and other landmark identifications makes possible actual mapping of the route. Although this wealth of detail gives strength to the imagery, it proves the poem's greatest weakness since it is responsible for several embarrassingly prosaic incidents, such as that which occurs as the young travelers take refuge from a storm in a log cabin in the Pocono Mountains. When the mountaineer admires their gun powder, the poet replies with a testimonial for his favorite brand:

> Dupont's best Eagle, matchless for its power,
> Strong, swift, and fatal as the bird it bore.
> Like Jove's dread thunderbolts it with us went,
> To pour destruction wheresoever sent. (185)

Such a passage shows Wilson at his worst, and the general unevenness in overall quality of performance makes evaluation difficult. Occasionally his accuracy and closeness of observation serve him in good stead, for some sections of the poem, like the description of Lake Cayuga, are genuinely poetic:

> Beneath mild sunshine as we onward glide,
> Flat moss-clad forests rise on either side;
> High midst the leafless multitude is seen
> The dark majestic pine in deepest green;

The snow white sycamores, that love to drink
The passing stream, and skirt the river's brink,
Wide o'er the flood their arms, capacious throw,
To meet their soften'd forms that lie below.
Still files of ducks in screaming thousands pour,
Till, near Musquito point their flocks decrease
Where night o'ertook us and we moor'd in peace.

Although the comparatively straightforward style and attention to detail make the poem atypical of topographical poems in this period, The Foresters nevertheless exists well within the tradition of neoclassic descriptive poetry. There are four extended prospect-pieces in the poem, one from Blue Mountain, another from "the brink of an abyss" at the summit of the Alleghenies, a third from the edge of the Niagara Escarpment, and the climactic one at first viewing of the Falls. There is the usual compliment paid to the cottage of content, set amid "green fields and meadows." Accompanying this sketch of rural contentment there are the favorite personifications "Peace," "Health," "Plenty," and "Innocence." There is a long digression on Indians, the chief part of which is a sentimental monologue by an Indian "wanderer." There is an extended apostrophe to the Susquehanna River ("Hail, charming river. . . ."), as well as shorter ones to personified "Hospitality" and "Rural Industry." And there is the stock diction: "airy arches," "domes of Science," "spots . . . embrown'd with culture," "the levelled tube," and "the ravish'd eye."

Wilson's close observation is responsible for some

remarkable sketches of frontier life as the poet and his companions traverse the wilderness of north-central Pennsylvania and western New York. By and large, the frontiersmen that they encounter are as ignorant, uncouth, and dirty as popular twentieth-century stereotypes of the southern Appalachian mountaineer as "hillbilly" or "cracker." The sixth day of the trip, for example, finds the travelers passing the huts of settlers along the upper reaches of the Susquehanna. These people, who have as constant companions a "dog and gun," are dressed "in fluttering rags, with scarce a hat or shoe." Seemingly beyond all hope, they pass "Filth, want, and ignorance from sire to son." Throughout the journey, the poet finds the lodgings to be less than desirable. On the second night of the trip he and his companions stop at Easton, Pennsylvania, at an inn distinguished by

> The wretched fare its scurvy walls afford;
> The black wet bread, with rancid butter spread,
> The beastly drunkards who beside us fed;
> The beds with fleas and bugs accursed stored,
> Where every seam its tens of thousands poured:
> The host's grim sulkiness, his eager look,
> When from our purse the glittering gold we took.

Three days later the young adventurers stay at a poor inn, "Of all things destitute save fire and wood" and at which they pass the time by jesting with their ignorant host. The seventh evening finds them in the Alleghenies of Pennsylvania where they start to put up for the night at "Pat Dougherty's

Hotel and Drygood Store." They renege, however, when they observe in Pat a "foul mass of misery" and when they discover that "all that Filth can boast of riots here." Finally, over the New York state line on the twelfth night they lodge in a trapper's "log hovel"--"small, cheerless, rude." Although depressing surroundings were the rule for the fourteen overnight lodgings, occasionally they encountered hospitality and cheer, as when, on the eleventh night, they passed the evening in a humble cottage amid a family gathering remindful of Burns' "The Cotter's Saturday Night":

> To Johnny's joke succeeded William's tale,
> Sweet Mary serv'd with many a witching smile,
> And thou, Devotion, wert a kindred guest,
> Of all our joys the noblest and the best;
> Around, conven'd with David's holy lays,
> In solemn strains awoke our evening praise;
> The kneeling father's fervent prayers ascend,
> "O be the strangers' comfort, guide and friend."

No other journey poem of the early national period matches "The Foresters" in length, interest, and detail. Wilson's other journey poem, "The Pilgrim," was left uncompleted and hence offers little basis for comparison with his <u>magnum opus</u>. Purporting to be the account of a river journey from Pittsburgh to New Orleans, the poem ends after two days on the Ohio(186). Like "The Foresters," "The Pilgrim" pictures the frontiersman disparagingly. Beaching his little skiff, the poet spends the first night out of Pittsburgh at a "squatter's wretched shed," whose Hillbilly

owner "scratch'd, and chew'd his quid." Michael Forrest's Travels through America is long enough to offer a basis of comparison with "The Foresters," but the thirty-six pages of heroic couplets, which cover the seaboard from Boston to Charleston, preponderate in such inane passages as the one describing the trip north from Annapolis:

> The rural prospects thence along the shore,
> Are highly pleasing up to Baltimore,
> Which town improves like Rome in days of yore,
> Early next day, I did a seat engage
> To Philadelphia in the flying stage;
> My muse was mute till we reach'd Brandiwine,
> Whose bloody plain did rouse the sacred nine! (181)

Although filled with the usual neoclassic mannerisms, Richard Lewis's "A Journey from Patapsco to Annapolis," first published abroad in 1732 and reprinted in America during the Federalist period, is a remarkably early instance of close observation of nature combined with sentimental introspection(184). In a study of the American Museum, in which the poem was reprinted, Howard L. Sylvester has explained an interesting but quite accidental similarity between Lewis's poem and Beethoven's Symphony No. 6, the "Pastoral": "Both begin with cheerful impressions of nature and country life, move toward dramatic climax in the thunder and violence of a sudden storm, portray the peace and freshness of the countryside after the storm, and end in thanksgiving to God."[37]

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[37]"The American Museum: A Study of Prevailing Ideas in Late Eighteenth Century America" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1954), p. 315.

For the poem, at least, Thomson's The Seasons is the probable source for these structural elements, especially of the thunderstorm and the concluding hymn of thanksgiving.

In "To Mr. Bleecker, on His Passage to New York," Ann Eliza Bleecker explores the Hudson Valley with the same regard for neoclassic niceties that her daughter, Mrs. Faugeres, observed in her longer river-poem "The Hudson"(q.v.). As she vicariously shares her husband's trip down the Hudson from Albany to New York, Mrs. Bleecker ranges from "rough mountains" to the commerce along "Eboracia's plain" and typically observes of the "rural seats" downriver that "Nature's work, the hand of Art completes"(180). The neoclassic proprieties are just as elegantly preserved in "A Trip to Burlington," in which the poetess chats with unnamed friends or reads "the moral page of Steele" while relaxing on the deck of a boat bound for Burlington, a typical rural retreat(187).

IV. THE TOPOGRAPHICAL POEM: EVALUATION

Difficulties in finding categories for American topographical poetry within conventional literary periods stem from its inconsistencies, particularly from the contradiction implicit in a body of poetry "romantic in substance yet neoclassic in form."[1] Although a form-content dichotomy itself may not best explain the inconsistencies, certainly the same poem often exemplifies theories underlying two different types of poetry, one a poetry of statement and the other a poetry of implication. If one associates the former type with the Neoclassic period and the latter with the Romantic, then topographical poetry in late eighteenth-century America is best labeled "pre-Romantic," but recent critics have so roundly attacked the label that its use is immediately suspect. From such problems in terminology, already suggested at the beginning of Chapter III, arises the difficulty of studying topographical poetry _en masse_.

One method of elucidation, followed in succeeding chapters, isolates motifs and conventions which constantly recur throughout the mass of poems.[2] While this procedure

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[1] Leon Howard in _Transitions_ (p. 53) sees this contradiction in almost all American poetry of the late eighteenth century.

[2] Chapters V and VI treat in detail common motifs and conventions of American topographical poetry.

has the advantage of revealing overall trends, it ignores the organic form of individual poems and hence discloses little of use in pinpointing supposed contradictions between Neoclassic form and Romantic content. If one is to understand these contradictions and the failure of artistic endeavor which they presuppose, then his only recourse is to the individual poem.

Since it is impossible to examine closely every poem in this study, an alternative is to analyze a typical transitional poem; that is, a poem in which elements of feeling, or "sensibility," modify or otherwise affect the basic didactic-descriptive objectivity. One can rule out poems like Timothy Dwight's Greenfield Hill that reflect in both conception and execution "mimetic" and "pragmatic" creative theories; i.e., art as the imitation of universal Nature and art aimed at instructing and pleasing an audience. Although no poems of this period unequivocally reflect "expressive," or Romantic, theories, a few manage to suggest that they were created partially in the belief that the "sources and subject matter"of poetry

> are the attributes and actions of the poet's own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet's own mind.[3]

One of these transitional poems is John Miller

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[3]M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (New York, 1953), p. 22.

Russell's "The Village Cliff" (1799),[4] a "hill" poem containing motifs and conventions associated with both Neoclassic and Romantic theory.[5] Although no other literary historian makes reference to this poem, Mary Dexter Bates treats it prominently in an unpublished dissertation that surveys in detail American poetry between 1783 and 1800. According to Miss Bates, "The Village Cliff," along with three other descriptive poems by Russell, gives "the first clear indication that romanticism had come to flower in America."[6] Such an enthusiastic judgment is surprising in light of other contemporary "Romantic" poems, such as Freneau's "The House of Night" (1779) or Thomas Odiorne's The Progress of Refinement (1792). Nevertheless, the poem is well suited to analysis, not only because it is transitional but also because, in common with other "hill" poems, it best exhibits characteristics, notably the "prospect"

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[4]A graduate of Harvard (1785), John Miller Russell was the son of Thomas Russell, a successful and respected merchant of Charlestown and Boston. In analysis of the poem qua poem, the sole relevance of the author's identity is to demonstrate that it was the work of an educated man and not of an untutored child of nature gifted with "original genius."

[5]The prospect, the rural retirement theme, "ruin" sentiments, history, and moralizing are collectively found in practically every conventional "hill" poem. The youthful recollections and personal address conventions most often occur in poems in which expressions of the poet's subjective states predominate. See the appended Checklist and Chapters V and VI.

[6]Bates, "Columbia's Bards," p. 308.

description and "incidental meditation," that define the topographical genre.

In common with other late eighteenth-century hill poems, simple chronological and spatial progression governs the structure of "The Village Cliff." One of the early refinements in topographical poetry, observable in Dyer's Grongar Hill, was a structure which took into account the observer as well as the scene observed. In Dyer's and subsequent hill poems, the reader can usually follow the action of the poem easily because he is oriented within a temporal and spatial framework established by the poet's relation to the scene. Conventionally the poet moves from the base to the summit of the hill, marks the time of day embraced by the action, describes the "picturesque" scenes before him in a fairly logical sequence, and supplies whatever instructive commentary the views suggest. "The Village Cliff" adheres to this basic structure, but its action is complicated by the introduction of subjective memory passages in addition to the usual historical reminiscences. As the poet's point of view shifts from present time to past experience and back again, the reader, already oriented temporally and spatially, experiences some confusion until he accepts the "spots of time" technique as expressionistic rather than as a logically ordered mirroring of present experience. Because it emphasizes the workings of the poet's own mind, this free association of ideas is an atypical technique in eighteenth-

century descriptive poetry.

Although the representation of scenes and experiences colored by the poet's own memory and imagination represents an "expressive" theory of art, the poem nevertheless is grounded firmly in the Neoclassic tradition in which objective description of external nature is interspersed with historical and moralistic embellishment. A close examination of what actually happens in the poem reveals a work of art at once simple and complex, chaotic and unified, imitative and original--a reflection perhaps of the poet's ambivalent wavering between tradition and innovation.[7]

In an opening passage that sets the time of the action as morning, the season as autumn, and the mood as carefree, the poet invites his friend to accompany him to the top of an unnamed hill in the vicinity of Boston. Following this six-line invocation, the real action of the poem begins. Together they proceed over "lawns and heaths and woodlands" to the top of the "mount" where, upon approaching the edge of a "tow'ring cliff," they view a "shudd'ring" gulf below. From this spot, as the ensuing action indicates, the poet has an open prospect of the surrounding countryside; and, as customary in "hill" poems, he remains in this location for the rest of the poem. With a mechanical

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[7]For convenience of reference in the analysis which follows, the full text of the poem is included in Appendix B.

transition ("From such a height as this . . ."), the poet launches a six-line encomium on the exploits of an American balloonist and his French partner, who in 1784 had made the first flight from the Cliffs of Dover over the English Channel to France. Passing abruptly from historical digression to memory passage, he recalls the view of distant mountains in springtime. Then, as now, he and his companion could see the "snow-clad" peaks, which at that time marked the last traces of winter but which now presage its advent. The mention of winter is the clue for a short Thomsonian winter-storm piece, which introduces "tempests" and "dire chilling blasts" to contrast with the clear skies and "temp'rate airs" of the present autumn day.

From distant northern mountains, the poet shifts his view to the "bluey ridge" (the Blue Hills?) bounding the southern horizon, thence immediately east to "the spires of Boston" and "Charlestown's lofty steeple," which lie beyond hills and valleys spotted with "frequent" farms, the abode of "plenty." The scene of rural contentment merges into a genre sketch of a "ruddy lass" cheerfully singing while engaged in "rural toil" on the "plain" below. In an apostrophe to the happy maid, the poet contrasts the joys of rural life with the pleasures of sophisticated city life, to the benefit of the former. After her work is completed, the young lady will be squired by her "fav'rite lad" to a

village social, held at a spot where, in times past, local "peasants" gathered to observe scenes of war in distant Boston. The ensuing "ruin" piece, which briefly paints the "sublime" terrors of the Battle of Bunker Hill and the burning of Charlestown, is followed by an apostrophe to Joel Barlow, whose "genius" in describing such scenes entitles him to be called the "American Homer."

With the opening of a new verse paragraph, the scene of wartime devastation gives way to happy memories of youthful blackberry picking expeditions that, one must assume, took place in nearby fields and hills. A genre sketch of a girl squirting her "swain" with blackberry juice is concluded with an aphorism announcing that such "artless rural sports" are emblems of "youthful innocence and ease." The next paragraph signals a return to the present through reference to "yonder little snug and neat abode," a structure evidently on the nearby slope of the hill. But memory again takes over as the poet recalls how, alone in this retreat, he has spent many pleasing hours "Giv'n up to calm reflection's soothing pow'r" while listening to the "sweet strains" of an Eolian harp. Often he has been diverted from this mood of revery by some "honest swain" who, attracted by the mysterious music, expects to see a musician and, finding none, peers everywhere until he discovers the source of the "sweet melody." The poet's retreat has also furnished

pleasures of the "fancy," for seated at an open window, he has sometimes imagined a resemblance of the "smooth and round" hillside to the surface of the ocean, so that whenever he has seen his friend or a "peasant" walking along the edge of the hill, the poet has fancied him mounted "on clouds" or "on the ocean's brim."

Resuming his prospect description, the poet looks in an unspecified direction--presumably in the general area of the retreat--and sees a pond in the middle of which is an island where fishermen find rest from the summer sun amid its "shady arbors." The movement to the next verse paragraph brings another view from the hill within focus. Sighting the village immediately below the cliff, the poet catalogues its various structures, among which is the "village tavern," a center for rural gossip and politics. Through allusions to famous comic characters in literature, he manages a thirteen-line caricature of amusing activities and personalities that he and his "jocund friend" have observed while seated in the inn.

An apostrophe to the village itself follows this genre sketch. Imitating Goldsmith's "Sweet Auburn . . .," the poet extolls simple village life; here, amid scenes of rural contentment, he first felt the urge to give "the soft emotion free access." Now he must leave his native village, and he bids both it and his friend farewell. "Prudence"

demands that they depart to play their roles in the "great theatre of life." The poem concludes on a moralistic note with the hope that their parting will not end their friendship but that it will "grow yet stronger with increasing years,/ And be a spring of comfort" in their souls.

Because poetry is a consciously contrived rendering of emotional experience, the mood, or tone, which prevails in a poem is central to its understanding. In "The Village Cliff" the pervading mood is gay and carefree. Unlike many contemporary poems with openings that reveal a solitary introvert looking to nature for solace, "The Village Cliff" exposes a buoyant and spirited lover of nature who urges his friend to "haste" so that they may "in social mood together rove" through the fresh morning air. Like Wordsworth in "The Tables Turned," the poet sets up a contrast between studies, associated with "the cares of life," and the enjoyment of nature, to the benefit of the latter. Despite fluctuations, mainly from quiet revery to boisterous frivolity, the "social mood" established in the opening maintains an ascendancy throughout the poem.

Frivolity dominates in three episodes connected with memory passages. The first, forthrightly comic in its effect, involves the girl who, on a blackberry picking expedition, surprises her boyfriend by squirting juice in his face. Another, in the Eolian harp sequence, concerns the "honest

swain" who acts the part of a bumpkin in trying to determine the cause of the mysterious music. The third is the tavern scene in which the poet and his "jocund friend" share "sympathetic laughter" over the fancied resemblance of many a "phiz" to such characters in literature as Tony Lumpkin, Falstaff, and Don Quixote.

Other detail in the poem, less gross in its effect, supports the carefree "social mood." In the digression on the balloon flight from Dover to France, the two pioneers launch their flight in a "gay bark," and in the genre sketch of the singing girl, the "ruddy lass" is in "jocund mood of heart." "Laughter loud," "wanton freaks of merriment," "careless innocence," and "jocund damsels" are phrases that mark the mood of gaiety in the account of the blackberry expedition, an outing climaxed by the almost slapstick squirting incident.

In at least two passages the gaiety is toned down to quiet revery. In one the poet expressly states his mood, and in the other the mood is induced by the effect of the imagery. The poet is outwardly pensive as he recalls times spent at his summer retreat:

> In yonder little snug and neat abode,
> Full many pleasing moments have I pass'd.
> Alone, and seated in an elbow chair,
> Giv'n up to calm reflection's soothing pow'r,
> The blazing hours have pass'd away unheeded;
> While the sweet strains of the AEolian harp,
> Now softly sighing to the passing breeze,
> And now in fullest concert swelling out,
> With magic pow'r, as by the fairy touch,
> They gently soothe the wearied soul to rest.

The choice of detail in the description of a nearby pond captures the mood of rural peace and contentment:

> How finely shows that calm and lucid pond;
> Its high romantic bank thick set with trees
> That overarch the flood. And in the midst
> A beauteous island rising from the wave,
> With shady arbors crown'd, that yield retreat
> To those, who in the blazing summer's sun
> Have patient toil'd, to catch the finny race,
> There underneath those thick embow'ring shades
> They rest their weary limbs; and, pronely stretch'd,
> Inhale the cooling breeze that floats along
> The wide encircling surface of the deep.

A minor variation from the pervading "social mood" occurs in two passages aimed at arousing "sublime" emotions. Like many of his contemporaries, the author of "The Village Cliff" strives for sublimity through descriptions evoking awe and terror. The first instance, near the opening, describes the "shudd'ring" reaction of the poet and his companion as they view the "gulf" below them from the edge of the cliff. The second, a conventional ruin-piece on Boston at war, makes use of images of noise, blood, and fire in order to evoke "that scene so awfully sublime."

These minor variations leave little impress on the prevailing mood of gaiety, and even the major excursions into quiet revery and boisterous levity are compatible with the basic tone. One jarring discord, however, is the conclusion, in which the poet reviews his past and looks forward to the future. One would expect the preceding memory passages to prepare for a meaningful synthesis of thought

and emotion, but the poet's pious utterances on "sober manhood" not only lack emotional significance but also have little bearing on the gay "social mood" that, up to the conclusion, so dominates the action.

The total emotional experience that comprises poetic enjoyment depends not only on moods discoverable in the overt action of a poem but also upon more complex emotional states, induced by poetic imagery.[8] In "The Village Cliff" landscape description figures as the primary source of imagery, for as a "hill" poem in the picturesque tradition, it aims at accuracy of visual effect. From his position at the edge of the cliff, the poet first looks to the northwest, then to the south, then east (Boston), then to the area comprised by the hill itself, and finally to the unnamed village below him.[9] In two transitions marking shifts in view, the poet is at pains to emphasize the visual character of his experience:

> Now change the scene where other prospects rise,
> And see what pleasing objects glad the sight.
> The eye with level glance at distance kens
> The <u>bluey ridge</u> that bounds the southern view:
> But let the eye that loves, when unconfin'd,
> Quick as the light, to stretch its pow'r as far
> As human optics reach, draw nearer home,
> And mark the pleasing images in view.

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[8] <u>Imagery</u> here means not only formal figures of speech but, more inclusively, all verbal reproductions of sensational and perceptual experience.

[9] Because the poet only approximates his location relative to Boston, one cannot determine these directions with total accuracy.

The influence of the picturesque tradition lies in the selection and emphasis of detail rather than in any attempt to fill the scene with enough detail to enable the reader to compose a picture. In the views to the northwest and south, the emphasis is on horizontal vastness--the "greatness" residing in landscapes that, according to Joseph Addison, enlarges the soul.[10] The drop from the cliff itself to the gulf below is so described as to elicit awe, a feeling that ever since Edmund Burkehad been associated with the natural sublime.[11] The selection of detail in the prospect opening on the view eastward suggests harmony in variety, a quality of the strictly "picturesque" as opposed to the "sublime" or "beautiful." Through images of both city and country, art and nature, the poet maintains a delicate balance between rudeness and tameness inmature:

> The spires of Boston o'er the eastern hills,
> And Charlestown's lofty steeple meet the eye;
> Around sweet interchange of hill and dale,
> The yellow fields of corn and fading woods;
> The curling smoke that marks the frequent farm,
> Where plenty dwells in this th[r]ice happy land.

Elsewhere in the poem the same balance is achieved by the juxtaposition of two contrasting passages (both forming

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[10] Spectator No. 412 (June 23, 1712). For an analysis of the influence of Addison's "The Pleasures of the Imagination" on an American hill poem, see Chapter V, under "The Prospect."

[11] In A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757), Edmund Burke had classified depth as the most powerful source of the sublime. See Monk, The Sublime, p. 93.

verse paragraphs) rather than by a combination of city-country images into a single passage. The first of these passages describes in considerable detail a "calm and lucid pond" surrounding a "beauteous island." The paragraph following catalogues objects in the nearby village, including the "sacred dome" around which "alternate rise/ The goodly mansion and the humble cot."

In these formal landscape descriptions, the poet attempts to mirror accurately the external world, for the picturesque tradition demanded an eye that remained fixed on the object. Yet in this adherence to fact lies the weakness of most of the imagery in the poem. Particularized imagery in itself does not make poetry, as the great Romantic poet-critics recognized. Wordsworth, in 1816, wrote that "objects . . . derive their influence not from what they are actually in themselves, but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those conversant with or affected by those objects."[12] And Thomas DeQuincy, in the same vein, wrote: "The fact is that no mere description, however visual or picturesque, is in any instance poetic per se, or except in and through the passion which presides."[13]

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[12]Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1937), II, 705. Quoted in Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, p. 54.

[13]Notes to a partial translation of Lessing's Laocoön, in Collected Writings, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh, 1889-90), XI, 206. Quoted in Abrams, p. 54.

Those landscape descriptions in "The Village Cliff" which owe least to picturesque conventions are the most genuinely poetic. The account of the remembered blackberry picking expeditions is conceived not as a static picture but as a sequence of movements and sounds:

> How often with a rural virgin troop
> I rov'd the woodland path, or upland heath,
> In careless innocence still passing on,
> While laughter loud re-echo'd through the grove,
> And wanton freaks of merriment were shown.
> At length the place of blackberries is found,
> When o'er the fields the jocund damsels stray,
> And each one gathers up the sav'ry fruit. . . .

In its effect this passage is so seemingly simple, spontaneous, and natural that it could almost pass as one of the scenes of everyday rural life that Wordsworth delighted to depict, but nothing is done with the little sketch (which concludes with the girl-squirting-boy diversion), and it remains as just another vignette among the series of nature sketches.

The same sparseness of development spoils another otherwise excellent bit of description, the memory-piece beginning, "As at my open sash I frequent sit. . . ." Visual, tactile, and auditory images, combined with an apt simile, vivify a scene that makes for one of the most original passages in topographical poetry. Seated at the open window "when summer heats prevail," the poet looks out on a landscape so barren of detail that few poets nurtured in the picturesque tradition would attempt to describe it. The view is simply that of the curved brow of the hill, barren of foliage,

forming the horizon. The poet amplifies the effect of this stark meeting of earth and sky through a simile comparing the gentle swell of the hill with the huge yet gentle swells of the ocean. Into this scene the poet puts in relief against the horizon a single figure--either his friend or a "peasant"--who to the observer's "fancy" appears to be walking on clouds "or on the ocean's brim." For its time, such description seems almost surrealistic, and the dreamlike quality of the imagery supports the dreamlike mood of the poet as he sits musing for long periods at his favorite rural haunt. But here again the scene is flashed before the reader and just as abruptly dismissed from view.

If "The Village Cliff" occasionally transcends poetic convention, it sometimes retrogresses into stereotyped imitation. The Thomsonian reference to the seasons near the opening of the poem features nouns, verbs, and adjectives that could have come directly from "Autumn" or "Winter," or one of their many imitations:

> What time the waning autumn comes around,
> In pure cerulean skies and temp'rate airs,
> Those snow-clad heights again salute the eye.
> The van of winter, (shiv'ring to behold!)
> Presaging tempests and dire chilling blasts;
> And soon (ah! how unlike this beauteous morn!)
> The ruthless forces of the North arrive,
> Howl through the groves, and darken all the air.

Its evocative power similarly deadened, the imagery in the description of Boston at war draws upon the machinery of the melodramatic sublime, including a "loud tumultuous roar,"

"continual thunder," "burning domes," and a "pyramid of fire." Topping off this ruin-piece is an apostrophe to Joel Barlow, a rhetorical flourish that includes an antithesis of sorts between the primitive grandeur of Homer and the polished ease of Virgil. For the moment the poet has forgotten he is writing poetry and has assumed the mannerisms of a Fourth of July orator.

With formal apostrophe and personified abstraction the most widely used rhetorical figures in the early national period,[14] their appearance in "The Village Cliff" is not surprising, but except for the address to Barlow, the apostrophes are unobtrusive, and the personifications seem natural enough. It is true that the poet conventionally links "plenty," who dwells in this "happy land," with a rural landscape; that elsewhere "sober reason" stands "fix'd in silence" while listening to the village boors; and that in the conclusion the "voice of prudence" commands the poet to forego his youthful pleasures. But these are hardly what Hugh Blair, a spokesman for the rhetoricians, would call "strong" figures.[15] The other instances of personification are commonplace pathetic fallacies that seem metaphorically appropriate to the

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[14]Gordon E. Bigelow, Rhetoric and American Poetry of the Early National Period ("University of Florida Monographs: Humanities," No. 4; Gainesville, Florida, 1960), p. 70.

[15]In Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783), XVI, Blair defined "strong"personification as that "in which inanimate objects are introduced not only as feeling and acting, but also as speaking to us, or hearing and listening when we address ourselves to them." Quoted in Bigelow, Rhetoric and American Poetry, p. 70.

descriptive passages in which they appear.[16]

Relative to the length of the poem, one finds few instances of simile, metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche. This scarcity of metaphoric imagery is consistent with the didactic-descriptive form, for overt statements rather than symbolic associations carry the weight of communicated meaning. One of the few similes with any originality--the comparison of the hill with the sea--has already been discussed in conjunction with its appropriateness to the memory passage in which it appears. Another significant simile, found in the episode of the Eolian harp, likens the "magic pow'r" of its music to the "fairy touch":

> Alone, and seated in an elbow chair,
> Giv'n up to calm reflection's soothing pow'r,
> The blazing hours have pass'd away unheeded;
> While the sweet strains of the AEolian harp,
> Now softly sighing to the passing breeze,
> And now in fullest concert swelling out,
> With magic pow'r, as by the fairy touch,
> They gently soothe the wearied soul to rest.

Although "The Eolian Harp" (1796), by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, also uses the fairy music comparison, the two similes are only superficially similar. In Coleridge's poem the figure receives considerably more expansion and elaboration, and the wind-harp itself is presented as a symbol of "animated nature." In "The Village Cliff" neither the

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[16]Zephyrs that "breathe," mountains that "lift their hoary heads," and groves that appear "in vernal dress."

figure nor the matter-of-fact passage that contains it lends itself profitably to symbolic interpretation.[17]

Other figures in the poem are the kind that "observation will always supply," and for that reason suffer from their obviousness.[18] Of all the images, the "theatre of life" metaphor at the close of the poem receives the greatest elaboration yet is the weakest in imaginative effect, possibly because Shakespeare, in the "All the world's a stage" speech in As You Like It, had robbed an already commonplace analogy of its effectiveness. The reader is hardly surprised to learn that the poet and his companion must forego the pleasures of youth to "enter the great theatre of life" and that they will have to perform their "several parts" as they move in "different scenes" on "the world's broad stage."

Synecdoche and metonymy serve to illustrate how the poet, in the spirit of Neoclassic orthodoxy, often selected

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[17]One is tempted nevertheless to make something of the image, for Professor Myer Abrams sees the wind-harp as one of the most significant symbols in Romantic poetry: "The wind-harp has become a persistent Romantic analogue of poetic mind, the figurative mediator between outer motion and inner emotion. It is possible to speculate that, without this plaything of the eighteenth century, the Romantic poets would have lacked a conceptual model for the way the mind and imagination respond to the wind [loosely, a symbol of poetic inspiration], so that some of their most characteristic passages might have been, in a literal sense, inconceivable." See "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," in English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. M. H. Abrams, (New York, 1960), p. 38.

[18]Some examples are "quick as the light," "bombs. . . Like meteors gleaming," "the spring [water source] of comfort," "the spring [the season] of youth," and "blazing hours."

his figures from a common store representing propriety and elegance in language. The "calm and lucid pond" in turn becomes "the flood," "the wave," and "the deep." A midnight feast is called "the midnight board," and the village church, never named as such, appears alternately as "the spire" and "the sacred dome," Similarly, the city of Boston is represented by its "spires" and Charlestown by its "lofty steeple" or, in the ruin-piece, by its "burning domes."

The diction itself, considered apart from its imagistic significance, maintains a precarious balance between the language which Neoclassicists thought peculiar to poetry and that "really used by men." In the category of "poetic diction" are archaisms such as "art," "yon," "hast," and "swain"; the periphrasis "finny race"; the Latinism "cerulean skies"; and epithets such as "sounding waves," "embow'ring shades," "goodly mansion," and "humble cots." Language with a Wordsworthian naturalness includes "this mild and clear autumnal sun," "the freshness of the morning air," "the far off mountains tipp'd with snow," and

> The yellow fields of corn and fading woods;
> The curling smoke that marks the frequent farm.

The only place names with the appeal of local color are those of mountains ("On grand Monadnock and Wachusett heights"), and the only noticeable Americanism is "blackberries."[19]

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[19] Boston, Charlestown, and Breed's Hill were too current and too closely associated with British place names to have a distinctively American quality.

Offsetting these indigenous substantives are words--notably "lawns," "heaths," "groves," and "peasants"--that seem more appropriate to English poetry than to American. If the poet has a favorite word, it is "jocund"; and its recurrence in three places is not surprising in view of the episodes of levity.

If in imagery and diction the poem vacillates between tradition and innovation, in form it leans slightly toward innovation, for although blank verse was far from new, most poets contemporary with Russell preferred orthodox couplets for their descriptive verse.[20] Thomson in The Seasons, Cowper in The Task, and Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey" were in a minority among eighteenth-century nature poets, and to this company Russell allied himself. Throughout the 180 lines of the poem, the author sustains a verse form which, through its power to capture delicate vocal inflections, was proving itself eminently adapted to reflective nature poetry.[21] His use of the medium is not without flaw, however. Without too much syllabic distortion the poem can be scanned perfectly

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[20]Consult the appended Checklist for the prevalence of octosyllabic and decasyllabic couplets in American topographical poetry.

[21]One interesting exception to the continuity of blank verse in the poem is a closed couplet used to emphasize the epigrammatic character of a didactic aside: "These artless rural sports are form'd to please,/ Emblems of youthful innocence and ease." Except for alliteration--e.g., "the toil of tedious study throw aside"--no other rhyme appears in the poem.

as iambic pentameter;[22] and this metrical regularity, combined with an excessive use of end-stopped lines, is responsible for a monotonous rhythmic uniformity. The strength of the verse lies in its idiomatic directness; a notable avoidance of syntactical inversion and grammatical license gives the verse a clarity and rapidity in keeping with the general mood of gaiety. To one accustomed to the heavy "sublime" style of most of the ambitious didactic-descriptive poems of the period, Russell's simplicity and directness are refreshing. The relatively high incidence of predicative statement as opposed to a preponderance of substantives, adjectives, and phrasal modifiers is aptly suited to a poem in which the meaning is dependent chiefly on overt statement and representational accuracy rather than upon imagistic richness.

The foregoing analysis, in toto, suggests a poem that stands roughly between the poetry of statement of Denham and Pope and the poetry of imagination of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and later Romantics. It "pleases" by mirroring the delights of nature and "instructs" by historical example and moral precept; but it also throws attention upon the poet's own particular vision of the external world. Inthe sense, then, that the poem combines the objectivity of Neoclassic nature poetry with the subjectivity of Romantic, it is "pre-Romantic,"

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[22]The author achieves this regularity partly by using single-syllable adjectives joined by and, by present participal modifiers, and by dropping the ly ending on adverbs.

but this label does not disclose the value of the poem qua poem.

In determining this value, one reasonably asks if there is a "rich ground of meaning beyond what is overtly stated."[23] What is stated is clear enough: from the hilltop the poet reviews his happy, youthful experiences in nature, bids them farewell, and avows the responsibilities of adulthood. If there is meaning beyond the overt meaning, it is difficult to find, mainly because of a lack of thematic unity. In the sense that most of the episodes and descriptive passages are centered upon the pleasures of young innocence and that they lead up to a rejection of the past and an acceptance of manhood, the poem achieves a semblance of unity. But tacking on a trite moral to a poem already loosely constructed hardly constitutes the kind of enrichment of the "youthful memories" motif that characterizes any one of Wordsworth's great poems of growing up.

Despite the failure of the poet to do anything with the youthful memories motif, there exists the possibility for larger meanings in a unity achieved by implication rather than by outward ordering of experience. Some of the memory passages, or "recollections in tranquillity," might be

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[23] W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., uses this criterion in demonstrating the superiority of a nature sonnet by Coleridge to a similar one by William Lisle Bowles. See "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery" in Wimsatt's The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (Lexington, Kentucky, 1954), p. 109.

construed as having imaginative significance beyond the merely pleasurable visual or emotional response that eighteenth-century poets of the picturesque aimed at; hence larger meanings might be induced from them expressive of inner states of the poet's mind. But even if such readings are allowed, no possibility exists of discerning the design which is latent in the multiform sensuous picture."[24] Other than their common grounding in pleasant youthful memories, the "spots of time" are too disparate and too sketchy for the reader to discover in them an organic unity from which a significant richness of meaning might be derived.

If the poem has value, it rests on a superiority relative to the mass of topographical poetry published in America between 1783 and 1812; for in style, imagery, and tone, "The Village Cliff" stands above most other contemporary productions. In a period when most poetasters aimed for eloquence and achieved grandiloquence, Russell writes with directness and simplicity; and if he occasionally lapses into turgidity, as in the ruin-piece on Boston at war, he is not so much to be censured as praised for not yielding any more often than he does to contemporary stylistic fashions. Moreover, if for most of the poem he abides by the contemporary idea that figurative language is ornament--devices

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[24] Ibid., p. 110. Wimsatt maintains that the richness of Romantic nature poems depends on discovering such design in their structures.

for rhetorical heightening--he occasionally constructs images which suggest a unity of tenor and vehicle. Likewise, if in most of the descriptive passages he seems to value visual detail only for its efficacy in rendering picturesque scenes, there are a few--such as the blackberry picking outing--in which he transcends convention. Finally, in an era when the introduction of subjective feeling into a nature poem was so often the signal for cloying self-pity, he shows that sensibility does not always imply sentimentality. Slight though these achievements may be, they are enough to set apart "The Village Cliff" from the mass of insipid topographical poetry of the early national period.

V. MOTIFS AND CONVENTIONS: TRADITIONAL

Because the eighteenth century was notoriously convention-bound, a study of topographical poetry cannot overlook the extent to which literary precedent determined its form and content. Cooper's Hill is generally accepted as the prototype of the genre even though, of course, antecedents for the conventions in local poetry go far back into classical Greek and Roman literature. From its appearance in 1642 to the early nineteenth century when the old patterns were significantly modified by the Romantic sensibility, Cooper's Hill and the major poems directly influenced by it determined the content of local poetry. Invocation of the muse, the prospect-piece, the retirement theme, historical matter, moral reflections, mention of an estate and honor to its owner, praise of commerce, address to a river, the appearance of rural deities and of rural sports--these are the motifs that became the staples of traditional topographical poetry.[1] Besides making use of all these features in Windsor Forest, Pope contributed several of his own, including the ruin-piece, the catalogue of flora and fauna, and the prophecy of future national prosperity. Thomson's The Seasons, unrivalled in scope and popularity as a neoclassic nature poem, further enhanced

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[1]Cooper's Hill is discussed for its influence on topographical poetry in R. A. Aubin, Topographical Poetry, p. 35; C. V. Deane, Aspects, p. 116; Dwight L. Durling, Georgic Traditions, pp. 195-96.

the status of these features as literary conventions, and in Grongar Hill John Dyer, although contributing no new features, perfected those he inherited and thus enhanced the appeal of the genre.[2]

In England what was occurring in the development of topographical poetry very naturally carried over to America, and the themes and conventions discussed in this chapter are the same as those made popular by Denham and his English followers. It is obviously the framework and intended effect of these features that are identical. The American continent--big and untamed--and the American way of life--new and undisciplined--produced specific applications of these motifs quite different from those of English poets; but the general attitude toward nature--what men looked for and what they enjoyed when they wrote about external nature--remained the same.

THE PROSPECT

In Spectator No. 412, one of the series on the Pleasures of the Imagination, Joseph Addison explains how "greatness," "novelty," and "beauty" in objects of sight give satisfaction to the beholder. Since most of his illustrations involve "landskips" or "prospects," one discovers what the term prospect meant to an influential early eighteenth-century

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[2]Among the more prominent conventions in Grongar Hill are invocation, prospect, catalogue, ruin-piece, moralizing, and praise of retirement.

critic.[3] Prospects fulfill the requirements of "greatness" if they provide "Largeness of a whole View." For the vastness of such "unbounded Views" fills the beholder with a "pleasing Astonishment" and causes him to feel "a delightful Stilness and Amazement in the Soul." In short, "wide and undetermined Prospects are as pleasing to the Fancy, as the Speculations of Eternity or Infinitude are to the Understanding." Prospects fulfill the requirements of "novelty" if they fill "the Soul with an agreeable Surprise," gratify its curiosity, and give it "an Idea of which it was not before possest." Toward this end, nothing "more enlivens a Prospect than Rivers, Jetteaus, or Falls of Water, where the Scene is perpetually shifting, and entertaining the Sight every Moment with something that is new." A prospect is "beautiful" if it contains "Gaiety or Variety of Colours," "Symmetry and Proportion of Parts," "the Arrangement and Disposition of Bodies," or "a just Mixture and Concurrence of all together." Anyone who has studied eighteenth-century nature poetry knows how these aesthetic principles laid down by Addison guided neoclassic poets in their descriptions of landscape. In almost every topographical poem featuring an extensive prospect the effect aimed at

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[3]The terms landscape and prospect were often used interchangeably in the eighteenth century, the latter term generally carrying a connotation of greater extensiveness of view than the former. See C. V. Deane, Aspects, p. 100.

was vastness, variety, and beauty as defined by Addison.[4]

One advantage of the poet over the painter was that the former could survey a more extensive scene than could the artist, restricted as he was to a canvas of one dimension.[5] Obviously a hill presented the best vantage point for this grand survey of all that the eye could behold. The American hill poem with the most extensive prospect description is Greenfield Hill, in which Timothy Dwight views the countryside surrounding his residence near Fairfield. Surveying the diversified landscape between his own Hill and Long Island Sound, some three miles away, Dwight consciously or unconsciously emphasized elements in the scene that contributed to Addison's triad of aesthetic pleasures. The novelty that arises from "variety" is suggested in the opening lines of the prospect-piece:

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[4]In general, in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, sublime, picturesque, and beautiful can be equated with Addison's "greatness," "novelty," and "beauty." However, down through the century these terms became significantly modified in usage so that Addison's definitions are more suggestive than complete. It is especially important to remember that his concept of the sublime was rather tame. He "preferred open prospects to mountain passes" and "horizontal extent as against elevation." See Walter J. Hipple, The Beautiful, The Sublime, and The Picturesque (1957), p. 18.

[5]Painters eventually tried to overcome this disadvantage by unusual means. In Art and Life in America Oliver Larkin (p. 112) reports that Charles Peale made drawings from the eight sides of a cupola at Annapolis to be combined in a continuous print. New York saw such panoramas displayed as early as 1795.

Heavens, what a matchless group of beauties rare
Southward expands! where, crown'd with yon tall oak,
Round-hill the circling land and sea o'erlooks;
Or, smoothly sloping, Grover's beauteous rise,
Spreads its green sides, and lifts its single tree,
Glad mark for seamen; or, with ruder face,
Orchards, and fields, and groves, and houses rare,
And scatter'd cedars, Mill-hill meets the eye;
Or where, beyond, with every beauty clad,
More distant heights in vernal pride ascend.
. . . . . .
Here, sky-encircled, Stratford's churches beam;
And Stratfield's turrents greet the roving eye.
In clear, full view, with every varied charm,
That forms the finish'd landscape, blending soft
In matchless union, Fairfield and Green's Farms,
Give lustre to the day. (3)

Stretching south far beyond the slight hills and cultivated fields was Long Island Sound, the view of which provided the kind of horizontal spaciousness that Addison associated with "greatness":

Here crown'd with pines
And skirting groves, with creeks and havens fair
Embellish'd, fed with many a beauteous stream,
Prince of the waves, and ocean's favorite child,
Far westward fading in confusion blue,
And eastward stretch'd beyond the human ken,
And mingled with the sky, there Longa's Sound
Glorious expands.

Sunsets and sunrises, according to Addison, are especailly productive of "beauty," for the eye naturally delights in "those different Stains of Light that shew themselves in Clouds." Over Long Island Sound,

What varied beauties, changing with the sun,
Or night's more lovely queen, here splendid glow.
Oft, on thy eastern wave, the orb of light
Refulgent rising, kindles wide a field
Of mimic day, slow sailing to the west,
And fading with the eve; and oft, through clouds,

Painting their dark skirts on the glossy plain,
The strong, pervading lustre marks th' expanse,
With streaks of glowing silver, or with spots
Of burnish'd gold; while clouds, of every hue,
Their purple shed, their amber, yellow, grey,
Along the faithful mirror.

Such prospect-pieces, indispensable to the hill poem, appeared as well in other varieties of topographical poetry. The hilltop location of most of the famous estates of early America commanded views that enabled the owner to satisfy his taste for the picturesque just by stepping out on his veranda:[6]

Where'er my wond'ring eyes I bend,
New beauties still I find;
Here cooling vistas far extend,
The gardens bloom behind.
To distant plains I stretch mine eye,
And view th' enlarged scene;
Above a vast extended sky,
Below a boundless green. (18)

Prospects do not always require elevations; any extensive view would suffice. The description might originate from a body of water, such as a river or lake,[7] or it might be in retrospect(85). It could be in blank verse, heroic couplets, or even in sonnet form. The fourteen lines of Samuel Low's "On the Prospect from New-Utrecht Bath" combine

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[6]According to canons of eighteenth-century aesthetics, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, that nonpareil of Republican estates, presented a prospect that would qualify as more sublime than picturesque. The immensity of the vistas from this "little mountain" in the Virginia Piedmont is quite in contrast with the more restrained "greatness" of views from minor elevations such as Greenfield Hill.

[7]See, among others, "The Excursion"(30), "A Trip to Burlington (187), and McKinnon's "The Hudson" (108) for prospect-pieces from bodies of water.

objective description with self-indulgent sentimentality:

> What time the sun th' Atlantic flood ascends,
> With beams of glory circling 'round his brow,
> How lovely is this view, where beauty blends
> With grandeur!--how th' horizon glows!--and now
> On distant vision how the light-house gleams!
> Lo! Jersey's heights, and now her length'ning shore,
> Yon moving sails, and sounding surges hoar,
> Catch the first radiance of the solar beams!
> Blest is the child of sentiment, to whom
> A scene oft opens picturesque like this;
> Who, while he sees the rising sun illume
> This charming scene, feels conscious of his bliss;
> For me, sad victim of an adverse fate,
> He sets, alas! too soon, and mounts too late! (51)

A few prospect descriptions, representing the "mountain madness" that entered English and American poetry late in the century, were inspired by breath-taking vertical heights that in their awesomeness far exceeded the "rude kind of Magnificence" which Addison defined as "Greatness" in nature. The awful gulfs that opened forth from the summits of the forested Appalachians were enthusiastically acclaimed by Alexander Wilson, who described several such scenes in "The Foresters." One especially "ravishing" view was encountered in the "solitary, silent, vast" Alleghenies:

> One vast pre-eminent ascent we scal'd,
> And high at last its level summit hail'd,
> There, as we trod along fatigued and slow,
> Through parting woods the clouds appear'd below,
> And lo! at once before our ravish'd view,
> A scene appear'd astonishing and new.
> Close on the brink of an abyss we stood,
> Conceal'd till now by the impending wood,
> Below, at dreadful depth, the river lay,
> Shrunk to a brook 'midst little fields of hay;
> From right to left, where'er the prospect led,
> The reddening forest like a carpet spread,
> Beyond, immense, to the horizon's close,
> Huge amphitheatres of mountains rose. (185)

In whatever form they recorded their impressions of nature, sensitive Americans of the early national period seemed particularly prone to discover prospects and to find in them elements of the sublime, beautiful, or picturesque. While visiting Boston in 1809, Elias Boudinot had occasion to journey down to Quincy to visit John Adams, an event he recorded in his diary. The resulting prospect-piece, with its emphasis on a balance of art and nature, indicates how gentlemen to the manner born had trained themselves to look for picturesque scenes.

> July 26 Wednesday. Went to Quincy to dine with Mr. Adams, by the road that leads over Milton Hill. The road is fine--The Villas on the way are really superb & magnificent; but when we passed the Bridge & gained the Summit of Milton Hill, we were surprised & gratified with a prospect surpassing any thing we had yet seen. A beautifull River, called Neponset, meandering thro' a large,extensive Meadow, with here & there a grand Mound of tall timber Trees--a number of beautiful Islands in the Bay--a distant view of Cape Ann bounding the Bay to the North East--the open Ocean at about 20 Miles distance, but full in view from our high situation--The numerous Churches & Steeples on every side, and a multitude of handsome Country Seats upon the surrounding Hills in every direction but one--a distant light House, with about 20 Vessels under Sail, formed one of the most enchanting prospects, that could engage the human Eye.[8]

This distinguished statesman, who instinctively reacted to a picturesque scene, is in contrast with the

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[8]Milton Halsey Thomas (ed.), Elias Boudinot's "Journey to Boston" in 1809 (Princeton, 1955), pp. 45-46. This passage can be profitably compared with a description of the same scene in H. M. Lisle's Milton Hill (6), written six years earlier. Although the poetic diction and burdensome embellishments in Lisle's couplets are in sharp contrast to Boudinot's terse diary style, the similarity of details in the prospects discloses that the two men had similar tastes in natural scenery.

anonymous writer for the Port Folio who premeditated an attempt to capture the meaning of "beauty" in the florid opening to his topographical sketch of Boston:

> Boston is encircled on the West by a beautiful bason [sic], into which a small stream, known by the name of Charles-River, discharges itself after creeping through some of the neighboring villages. On a clear summer morning, the view from a rising ground on the 'Common,' over this bason to the opposite shore, is extremely picturesque and enchanting. Indeed, the landscape has been often admired by strangers: and while such views as the falls of Niagara in America or the mountains of Switzerland in Europe, may create nobler ideas of the Sublime, this scene is surpassed by none in communicating to the mind whatever is understood by the Beautiful. . . .[9]

A description in prose by Sarah Hastings of a prospect near Strasburg, Pennsylvania, illustrates both the pervasiveness of the prospect-piece as a convention of eighteenth-century literature and the tendency of writers of this period to analyze their aesthetic responses. Mrs. Hastings becomes so enthusiastic over the sublimities of the scene that her effusion could be very easily mistaken as a précis of a typical hill poem:

> I have seated myself . . . on the highest pinnacle of the first Mountain. Never before did I breathe the pure salubrious Air, in so exalted a situation. Below, lies an extensive Country, embellished with all the Arts of civilized Life; whose Towns and Villages are now finely decorated by the mellow tints of an Autumnal Sun; which sheds a grand Sublimity over the scene with which I am surrounded, and wakes every faculty of the Soul into a glow of enthusiastic Ardor.[10]

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[9]Anon., "Sketches From Nature: A Landscape," Port Folio, IV [ns.] (November 28, 1807), 239-40.

[10]Sarah Hastings, Poems on Different Subjects. To Which Is Added a Descriptive Account of a Family Tour to the West; in the Year 1800 . . . (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1808), p. 184.

RURAL RETIREMENT

It is axiomatic that eighteenth-century nature poets believed with Cowper that "God made the country and man the town." Even those who seldom set foot in the country wrote poetry extolling the superiority of rural living. The love of retirement was a sure sign of sensibility, and to poets of this time sensibility had become "a badge of moral and aesthetic distinction."[11] The Man of Feeling indulged his sensibility in a soft primitivism which flourished largely as a rather impracticable ideal. There were, of course, poems in which the expressed love of rural life was dictated by honest conviction rather than literary convention, and in America, particularly, agrarian idealism became the basis of an actual way of life that fulfilled the ever present American dream of innocence and simple felicity.

In poetry of the early national period agrarian idealism manifested itself mostly as vapid escapism. There is considerable substance to Wordsworth's expression of his desire to escape the "fretful stir/ Unprofitable and fever of the world," but Wordsworth had the ability to transcend the limitations of his theme, an ability that most other poets lacked. For these rhymesters, toil, envy, and want

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[11]Hoxie N. Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York, 1942), II, 137.

marked the course of human life, and the only remedy for this predicament was a retreat to a country seat, a rural grove, a purling stream, or a cottage of content--in short, to places unrealistically conceived and vaguely defined. In topographical poetry the escape motif appears with overwhelming frequency. Its prevalance in town and river poems has already been discussed, but it also pervades other types, including hill poems.[12] Samuel Deane concludes his discursive observations from the brow of Pitchwood Hill with a mildly religious expression of the retreat urge:

> Hither I'll turn my frequent feet,
> Indulging contemplation sweet;
> Seeking quiet, sought in vain
> In courts and crowds of busy men,
> Subduing av'rice, pride and will,
> To fit me for a happier Hill. (2)

The anonymous author of "Verses Written at Mount Radnor" retires to "still scenes remote from care and noise" in order to "forget the world and all its toys"(15). "Peaceful breast" rhymes with "rest" and "serene" with "scene" as the poet redundantly demonstrates that "Contemplation" loves "sequester'd glades and high embow'ring groves."

Similar vacuities punctuate estate and journey poems. Since the life of a country gentleman embodied the Horatian ideal of rural contentment, one rightfully expects the theme

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[12]See especially the discussion of town-poems and river poems in Chapter III.

to be prominent in estate poetry, where typically the manor is described as "luxuriant in fair rural scenes" and as lying

> Remote from walks where noise and revels reign,
> And fierce ambition fires the tortur'd brain;
> Remote from Town with all its clamorous train. (28)

One might suppose that in journey poems, which describe the pleasures of travel, the theme would not be much in evidence, but such is not the case. William Forrest, on a tour of America, observes a scene of contentment as he rides in a "stage-boat" up the Delaware:

> The verdant shores afford a pleasing sight,
> To all who do in rural scenes delight.
> On the green margin of this silver stream,
> The rural swains and rural nymphs are seen,
> Frisking about, void of affectation;
> Rul'd by nature, more than education.
> Thrice happy they who thus can spend their days,
> In scenes of pleasure, not in search of praise;
> Contented with what Providence has giv'n
> They fill their happy circle mark'd by heav'n;
> Strangers to all the busy scenes of life,
> To liberal arts and domestic strife;
> And more contented in their narrow sphere,
> Than the rich monarch is in his, or peer. (181)

Wherever rural contentment occurs in topographical poetry, one discovers the distressing uniformity with which adherents of the cult of simplicity rejected the "city." That this rejection is largely posturing is seen in the fact that in 1800 only five American cities had a population of more than 10,000. Yet, if one believes the poets, city life was unbearably dirty, crowded, competitive, and immoral; the condemnation was universal. In "The Invitation" Alexander Wilson admonishes his friend, "Come then, dear sir, the

noisy town forsake,/ With me awhile these rural joys partake"(25). "R. W." wants to erect his cottage away from the "noisy croud"(114). "Sixteen" likewise wants to escape "madd'ning crowds"(115). "Poplar Grove" is a "rural seat" that "to the town-sick soul affords a calm retreat"(31). "O. D." bids farewell to the city with its "sons of care"(119). Nathaniel Evans rejects "the city's noise,/ Its tumults and fantastic toys"(133). An anonymous poet describing Passaic Falls wants to "cultivate the ground . . . far from the crowd with vice imbued"(169). And to those wishing "to banish every care," Josias Arnold urged desertion of the town, "a filthy cage"(16).

In a minority of poems the depiction of the country reached beyond the limitations of the rural retirement theme to include realistic sketches of country living. Known as "genre sketches," a term derived from painting, these actual pictures of country labor and pastimes had their origin in the Georgic tradition in English poetry, and from the beginning they appeared in topographical poems. Cooper's Hill and Windsor Forest both contain well-known sketches of rural sports, but surprisingly few American poets show interest in hunting or fishing. The sketch of a hunter stalking game in "A Summer's Day," reminiscent of Pope's famous description in Windsor Forest, is so ineptly done as to constitute almost a parody of the rural sports theme:

In yonder wood, where lofty pines and oaks,
Attract the passing eye, the feathered race
On every branch sit twittering sportive songs.
. . . . . .
Here the sly sportsman hunts the plumy tribe,
And with his polished gun stalks cruel round.
Oft on the bough the songful rovers sit,
While sly beneath the hedge the hunter creeps;
Levels his tube.--Sudden the thunder breaks
And echoes thro' the grove! From her high seat
Falls the sweet bird and shuts her eyes in death.(12)

Most American topographical poets sketched less sophisticated pastimes more in keeping with simple rural tastes and manners. Two sketches in John Miller Russell's "The Village Cliff" echo portions of Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village." In one, the "village tavern near at hand is seen,/ Where news and rural politics are heard,/ Discuss'd by twenty mouths, all op'd at once"(9). In the other, the village "lads and lasses" are pictured at a social, engaged "in pawns, (sweet rural sport!) or lively dance." Few aspects of rural life escaped attention. The scene sketched might be as conventional as a cornfield in harvest(94) or as unusual as that of a "patient wight" using a divining rod to determine the location of a well(101). "Verses Written at Mount Radnor" paints the beginning of a typical day on a frontier farm. As the morning mist hovering over the fields dissipates, a cock crows; hearing the familiar sound, the farmer and his sons head for the fields, the father leading and smoking his pipe. Next to arise is the "blithe milkmaid," who starts for the "cow pen"

. . . to fill her copious pail,
And as she trips th' accustom'd path along
Her voice she tunes to some love pleasing song.
The impatient mothers think her coming slow,
And call their calves with many an echoing low. (15)

A similar sketch of frontier farm activity in McKinnon's "Description of the Mohawk River" imparts a mood of innocence and simplicity without sentimentality. As the poet passes through "solemn woods" of vast extent in the upper Mohawk Valley, he occasionally encounters a log cabin in a clearing. At one of these an "impaled" garden

. . . flourishes with roseate flowers;
And at the door the children gambol near;
Their lily-featured mother still intent
On busy cares domestic; while the sire
Along the echoing causeway drives his kine,
Or plies his axe far sounding. (139)

Alexander Wilson's "The Pilgrim" captures the unaffected pleasures of a frontier social. On the second day of a trip down the Ohio out of Pittsburgh, the poet stops at "Sugar Camp" to observe mountaineers gathering maple syrup. Evening at the camp is a time of gay life and love:

The lasses from the kettles neat
  Their vigorous sweethearts oft regale,
With pliant lumps of sugar sweet,
  Dropp'd in the cool congealing pail.

And while the blazing fire burns high,
  Within the hut the leaves are prest,
Where snug as squirrels close they lie,
  And Love and Laughter know the rest. (186)

THE DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE

In recording what they saw in nature, eighteenth-century poets tended to enumerate rather than to describe,[13] and they listed not particulars but species, in keeping with the neoclassic dictum that "just representations of general nature" are more pleasing and instructive than individual variants. Although lacking in vividness, these catalogues are impressive in variety, for eighteenth-century poets were fond of discovering the multifariousness of nature. American poets found that the flora and fauna of American fields and forests were suited to impressive listings that would further the cause of literary nationalism, and they were quick to record species unknown in England. It was for his discovery of fresh materials indigenous to American nature that Joseph Dennie had praised Alexander Wilson for his "A Rural Walk":

> He delights in pictures of American scenery and landscape and wisely, therefore, leaves to European poets their Nightingales and Skylarks, and their dingles and dells. He makes no mention of yews and myrtles, nor echoes a single note of either Bullfinch or Chaffinch, but faithfully describes American objects, though not entirely in the American idiom.[14]

Probably because as a naturalist he had trained himself to observe nature closely, Alexander Wilson faithfully

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[13] C. V. Deane, Aspects, p. 106.

[14] [headnote to "A Rural Walk"], Port Folio, V (April 27, 1805), 126.

recorded "American objects" with a completeness that few other poets could match. If the tendency to "describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest" is characteristic of the Romantic poet, then Wilson is a Romantic, for his close observation results in catalogues that astound the average reader. "Cedars," "spice-wood," "hiccories," "walnuts," "dog-wood," "chinkopin," "sloes," "catalpas," "magnolias," "peach," "pears"--the trees alone in "A Rural Walk" make an impressive list.[15] Wilson's longest poem, "The Foresters," contains catalogues of every variety--from the "rural dainties" enjoyed at a country feast to birds, including plovers and snipes, shot in an expedition on Seneca Lake.

So indiscriminately did American poets catalogue nature that it is difficult to discover patterns in their observations. Among flora and fauna birds probably predominated.[16] Many poets besides Wilson were captivated by the great variety of American song birds and were intent on proving that this country had birds to rival European songsters. Accordingly the author of "A Rural Poem"

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[15]For additional catalogues in "A Rural Walk" and "The Invitation," consult the discussion under "Estate Poems" in Chapter III.

[16]Birds catalogued in American topographical poetry of this period include quail, bluebirds, magpies, jays, doves, larks, robins, sparrows, bitterns, hummingbirds, finches, redbirds, yellowbirds, and orioles.

asserts that the mockingbird, "pride of Columbia's woods," rivals "sad Philomela"(113), and the anonymous author of "Verses Written at Mount Radnor" goes a step farther in declaring the superiority of the mockingbird:

> But hark! I hear the unenvious choir rejoice,
> While Music's fav'rite Bird attunes her voice;
> Perch'd on the top of yonder verdant tree,
> She seems to breathe the soul of harmony;
> To her alone all pleasing pow'rs belong,
> Such varying melody adorns her song;
> With alt'ring strains, at ease, she mimics still
> The chirping valley and the warbling hill;
> Thro' ev'ry note her modulations rove,
> Blithe with the Lark, or plaintive with the Dove;
> Now she repeats the Redbird's echoing lays,
> Now sinking soft she earns the Robin's praise;
> I see her spread her silver-streaked wing
> High in the air, yet hear her sweetly sing;
> Descending, still she pours th' harmonious strain,
> Till on the spray she gently lights again.
> Ear-rapturing bird! no more let Poets tell,
> Of Morning Lark, or ev'ning Philomel,
> Since all their various notes in thee combine,
> And ev'ry sound of melody is thine. (15)

Trees had been subjects of catalogues ever since John Dyer, on Grongar Hill, had seen "the gloomy pine," "the yellow beech," "the slender fir," and "the sturdy oak." The thick forests of the Appalachian region contained not only these prosaic varieties but some that were unknown in Europe. The view from the top of Mount Radnor in western Maryland embraced trees

> Whose dewy foliage blushes in the dawn,
> Where golden sassafras and red-buds bloom,
> Diffusing all around their sweet perfume,
> Where stately oaks their heads majestic rear,
> And conic poplars honey'd blossoms bear,
> Where spreading beeches their long branches twine,
> And o'er their summits climbs the native vine. (15)

Samuel Deane, antipathetic to nature's sublimities, found frontier forests to be "dreary," and the tame grove he described contained no varieties that would distinguish it as American:

> Range the border, there are seen
> Trees of ever-during green:
> Fir trees, rich with balsam drops,
> Pointing high their tap'ring tops,
> Pine and Spruce, and Hemlock there
> Raise their summits high in air,
> Other trees are interwove,
> Adding beauty to the grove.
> Maple, sugar-bearing tree,
> Shady Beech, you there may see:
> Tow'ring Elm and spreading Oak,
> Oxen loosed from the yoke,
> Kine, and sheep, and horses rove,
> Grazing in the shady grove. (2)

In the virgin wilderness along the Mohawk John D. McKinnon observed elms, elders, plane trees, bass, oaks, hemlocks, birch, and maple, all of which thrive while their "comrades" are being hewn to provide clearings for settlers.[17] "Towering trees on new-born fields recline" while

> . . . a sturdy few
> Yet standing, girdled by the fatal knife,
> In slow destruction waste, upon their sprays
> And airy summits quench'd the vital lymph;
> In wintry desolation group'd, they pine
> 'Midst summer's genial solstice. (139)

In Pope's Windsor Forest "the bright-ey'd perch. . ., the silver eel. . ., the yellow carp. . ., swift trouts, and

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[17]An even more profuse variety is catalogued by the Schuylkill: the "monarch-tree," poplar, willow, beech, aspin, pine, magnolia, walnut, chestnut, hazel, plum, and elm. See John Smith, "A Rural Poem,"(113).

pykes. . ." were the "scaly breed" inhabiting the "plenteous streams" of England. American streams, no less than English, exhibited the variety of teeming nature. In the Schuylkill John Smith discovers "pikes rapacious," "sun fish," and "sportive trout," plus the "speckled Tortoise" and "dusky crawfish"(113). Josias Arnold, addressing the Connecticut River, introduces some new species:

> Sweet river, in thy gentle stream
> Myriads of finny beings swim;
> The watchful trout, with speckled pride;
> The perch, the dace in silvered pride;
> The princely salmon, sturgeon brave,
> And lamprey, emblem of the knave. (122)

American poets dutifully catalogued the offspring of Flora, Pomona, and Ceres, each of whom had so abundantly blessed the American landscape. Mrs. Eliza Bleecker, the pioneer poetess of upstate New York, was notably fond of flowers. Her garden at Tomhanick contained "yellow cowslips," "early blue-bells," "sleepy poppies," "the humble violet," the "dulcet rose," and "the stately lily," which grew alongside tulips, lupines, and honeysuckles(17). Her daughter catalogued both flowers and fruit growing along the Hudson, including water lilies, crocuses, scarlet larkspur, columbines, and wild roses, plus melons, plums, grapes, mandrakes, and strawberries(105).[18] Besides fruit, American farms displayed

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[18]Other fruits found in catalogues of this period are quinces, peaches, cherries, bilberries, whortleberries, May-apples, blackberries, and dewberries.

the "waving pride" of grain crops such as wheat, corn, flax, oats, barley, and rye.[19]

THE DIDACTIC URGE

Imaging nature could please the eighteenth-century reader but not instruct him, and since neoclassic critics widely held that moral utility was the chief aim of literature, one finds few nature poems wholly descriptive. Interspersed with the descriptive passages are didactic elements, which generally have no organic function in the poem. The Romantic notion that expressions of "feeling" could yield insights into moral truth not possible in a poetry of statement was hardly anticipated, for the "incidental meditations" or "historical retrospections" clearly stand apart as "embellishments." So great was the neoclassic propensity for didacticism that even the great moralist Dr. Samuel Johnson had to say of Cooper's Hill that "the digressions are too long" and "the morality too frequent." In topographical poetry the didactic urge received considerable impetus not only from Denham and Pope but also from James Thomson, whose The Seasons encouraged digressions on country life associated with the Georgic tradition. Although by 1746 Joseph Warton

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[19]See Samuel Deane, Pitchwood Hill (2), and Timothy Dwight, Greenfield Hill (3).

was convinced that "the fashion of moralizing in verse had been carried too far," the "Invention" and "Imagination" which he urged as the chief faculties of a poet did not soon replace the belief that the function of the poet was to mirror pleasingly the truths of universal nature.[20]

American topographical poets, quite complacent about following neoclassic fashions, digressed on such practical subjects as temperance, the education of girls, the duty of children toward parents, and the necessity of controlling the passions.[21] Other poets preached on topics of more universal significance, such as the brevity of life and the development of virtue. The attempts to inculcate morality often existed side by side with digressionson local history, most of it connected with the Revolution and often taking the form of patriotic panegyric or the condemnation of historical misdeeds enacted locally.

Hill poems, as the best exemplars of the conservative influence at work, contained proportionally the greatest amount of embellishment. In "The Agreeable Prospect... ." each stanza begins with a new scene fixed in the poet's sight, followed by loosely related commentary on men, manners,

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[20]From Warton's Advertisement to his Odes on Various Subjects (1746); cited in Dyson and Butts, Augustans and Romantics, p. 43.

[21]See Samuel Low, "On a Spring of Water in King's County, Long Island"(138); Nathaniel Topliff, "Mount Potosi" (10); H. M. Lisle, Milton Hill (6); and Il Ritirado [pseud.], "Lines Written near the Schuylkill"(116).

and morals. Observing the activity of a ship docking leads the poet to comment on sailors' behavior on Sabbaths. Next in his sight are "noble domes," which inspire reflections on freedom's power to promote the arts, industry, and agriculture. The sight of a church on a hill leads him to praise those who contributed to the building of the meeting house and to condemn "mad'ning zealots." Additional instruction is directed to the "sons of sloth" who should be rising at dawn "to see gay nature's universal bloom" instead of devoting their nights to Venus and "the cup." Following condemnation of the burning of Charlestown, the poet concludes with the wish that Britain's "follies" will henceforth "sleep" and that the two nations will become "the best of friends"(11).

Other hill poems describing the Boston area make even greater use of the Revolution. James Allen's "An Intended Inscription. . ." praises the Americans who rose to revenge the cutting of the "Liberty Tree" and reviews the accomplishments of the "patriotic race" at the Battle of Bunker Hill(1). After prefacing her lengthy Beacon Hill with an apology for its dearth of description, Sarah W. Morton pursues in great detail the history of the War. Five pages of notes encumber this unusually dull poem, whose only interesting feature is a description of each state that sent men to the struggle(7). As it provided opportunity

for a ruin-piece, a description of the burning of Charlestown was almost mandatory in these hill poems. John Miller Russell, however, resists describing in detail the "burning domes" of the town because, he points out, Joel Barlow, with "genius, equal to the task," had already painted, "that scene so awfully sublime"(9). Of all events of the Revolution in the Boston area, it was General Warren's death in battle that most often inspired the historical muse:

> To whatsoever side my view I turn,
> I feel my breast with glowing ardor burn:--
> The mount, where Warren's galant [sic] spirit fled,
> And meaner hosts unnumber'd with him bled--
> Tow'ring first meets my wandering eye,
> Its lofty summit pointing to the sky.
> The lesson, our fathers taught at Bunker Hill,
> "Our sons" shall in "their children's" mind instill.(13)

Timothy Dwight's Greenfield Hill, the most ambitious of American hill poems, contains much instruction aimed at showing "the admirable quality of Connecticut institutions, and the romance of local history."[22] All seven parts of the poem present variations on the theme of how the "golden mean" is regarded in Connecticut, not as a utopian vision but as a practical end attainable through the application of "common-sense." Contributing to the balance between extremes is a rural economy of "competence" rather than wealth or poverty, a landscape which is "rough" but which contains

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[22]Howard, Connecticut Wits, p. 222.

"scenes of sweet simplicity"; a climate whose variety is conducive to an active life; and a people made virtuous by useful religion and practical political institutions, quite in contrast with European extremes.

> Of silly pomp, and meanness train'd t' adore;
> Of wealth enormous, and enormous want;
> Of lazy sinecures, and suffering toil;
> Of grey-beard systems, and meteorous dreams;
> Of lordly churches, and dissention fierce,
> Rites farsical, and phrenzied unbelief. (3)

The didactic elements appear most strongly in the georgics, or advice on farm management, in Part VI, "The Farmer's Advice to the Villagers." This common-sense advice on industry and thrift, designed to promote competence among the "happy swains," is a series of Franklin-like proverbs used as texts for brief versified lay sermons. Prudence is the key principle in all these maxims. Some concerned farm maintenance: "Yearly the house, the barn, the fence,/ Demand <u>much care</u>, and <u>some expense</u>." Others, business management: "When first the market offers well,/ <u>At once your yearly produce sell</u>." And others, parental behavior: <u>All discipline</u>, as facts attest,/ <u>In private minister'd is best</u>." Part V of the poem, "The Clergyman's Advice to the Villagers," avoids theology and stresses the importance of both faith and works in everyday life. The two "great commandments" in Dwight's gospel were to be guided by the Bible and to be good to one's fellow man.[23]

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[23]Howard, <u>Connecticut Wits</u>, p. 225.

Local history was the theme of two long episodes in Greenfield Hill. Part IV, "The Destruction of the Pequods," relates how the aggressive Pequot nation was annihilated by the British in 1637. The crucial battle, which Dwight describes, was fought three miles west of Fairfield, near Greenfield Hill. "The Burning of Fairfield," a ruin-piece, recounts how the British, in 1779 under Governor Tyron, "a foe to human feelings born," plundered New Haven and burned Fairfield. A night-time thunderstorm conjoined with the conflagration to produce such a tumult as would accompany the Day of Judgment:

> It seem'd, the final day was come,
> The day of earth's protracted doom;
> The Archangel's voice began to call
> The nations of this guilty ball;
> The hills to cleave; the skies to rend;
> Tumultuous elements to blend;
> And Heaven, in pomp tremendous, came
> To light the last, funereal flame.

Because America lacked a long and storied past, its poets of necessity looked to the Revolution, or to the Indian, for most of their material. The treachery of Benedict Arnold, the victory of General Gates at Saratoga, the heroism of Mad Anthony Wayne, the Battle of the Kegs, Washington's surprise attack at Trenton, Ethan Allen of Vermont--all receive passing notice or expansive treatment in several poems.[24] The Indian, despite his prominence in

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[24]See especially Margaretta V. Faugeres, "The Hudson" (105), and Michael Forrest, Travels through America (181), both of which contain numerous historical embellishments.

American history, inspired relatively little historical reflection. Often, if he is mentioned, it is not with any sense of loss that his passing is described. Josias Arnold used the Indian to point up the contrast between the savage past and civilized present: the river valley where he now sees "yellow wheat and waving corn" was once the abode of "the sachem and his tawney train," who led captives to be burned at the stake(123). A less melodramatic contrast appears in McKinnon's "Description of the Mohawk River," at the conclusion of an eight-page account of Indian wars in the Mohawk country:

> 'Twas here their [the Mohawks'] spirited and
> martial sons
> First sung the war-song--here on frequent spots
> Which now the dwarfish oak and pine o'erspread,
> And where the sumac scatters on the lap
> Of autumn azure-cheek'd, its pinnated
> And scarlet leaves, once stood their huts. (139)

Although digressions on scientific facts and theories were prominent in the poetry of Thomson and his English followers, American topographical poets evinced only a slight interest in science.[25] Aside from a catalogue of planets and constellations in Forrest's Travels through America, the only serious scientific excursions are made by John D. McKinnon, whose river poems show that he had

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[25]In The Seasons Thomson discusses "the rainbow and Newton's spectrum, the force of gravitation. . ., the supposed effects of the sun's force under the earth, the wonders of microscopic life, theories of the origins of rivers, the courses of meteors, and the nature of ice and frost." See Durling, Geogic Tradition, p. 53.

knowledge of contemporary geologic speculation concerning the origin of land forms. His interest in geology is often reflected in his description of scenery,as when he views the high cliffs along the Hudson near Philipsburg:

> Hence onward as we sail
> The towering strata of embattled rocks
> O'er wooded steeps, in precipices hang,
> As if some shock of elemental war
> Had rent their indurated mass of stone
> To give old Hudson passage. . . . (108)

Similar speculations on causality occupy "Description of the Mohawk River" as the poet approaches Cohoes Falls:

> Let Science tell the mighty cause that erst
> The mountain fabric's horizontal base
> Upturning, gave the roaring waters vent
> Along their lacerated bed, slate-paved,
> And branching to the Hudson; while the muse,
> With humbler views, the cataract admires. . . .(139)

The same poem has a lengthy account of the formation of the world by volcanic cataclysm. In introducing this digression, McKinnon lets his readers understand that it is not necessarily factual, for in going back to the beginning of time, he must be "led by conjecture," with only "the ambiguous lamp/ Of knowledge" to guide him. Yet his account should not be dismissed too lightly because, as he explains in a footnote, "the learned have lately indulged themselves in many plausible speculations respecting the formation of the earth" and "fortunately the present age is wise enough to reject all systems for the pursuit of facts."

More often than not, overt moral instruction in topographical poetry was insipid and insignificant; a few poets, however, addressed themselves seriously to the remedy of social ills. One poem went beyond the facile rejection of wealth that usually accompanied the rural retirement theme to deal specifically with the issue of inequality in the distribution of wealth. "Reflections on Viewing the Seat of Jos. Barrell, Esq." panegyrizes a man who stands apart from the idle rich. Nowadays, the poet says,

> The rich support the rich, but grind the poor;
> . . . . . .
> But thou [Barrell], whose stately castle overlooks
> The briny wave to Boston's crowded shores,
> And where yon bridge superb extends its length,
> . . . . . .
> Be thou excepted from the common herd
> Of selfish, full blown opulence and pride. (27)

A belief in temperance motivated Samuel Low to condemn the "fallacious joys" of "liquid fire" and to advocate spring water, "Nature's wholesome bev'rage"(138). The evils of slavery were quite strongly condemned in Sarah Wentworth Morton's <u>Beacon Hill</u>. "Carolina" received the brunt of her disapproval:

> Canst thou contend for freedom, while yon vale
> Pours its deep sorrows on the sultry gale!
> Thus rise with patriot heart supremely brave,
> Nor heed the scourge, that breaks thy shackled slave!--
> What boots the fleecy field, and ricy mead,
> If mid their bloom the culturing captive bleed! (7)

The anonymous author of "Reflections on the Banks of the Schuylkill" believes it is Columbia's duty "to unlock the

chain/ Which binds the wretched negro, and to snatch/ From petty tyrants the uplifted lash,/ Against their brethren rais'd" (115). The lengthiest condemnation of slavery occurs in Greenfield Hill. Dwight contrasts the Negro of Connecticut who "slides on, thro' life, with more than common glee" with the slave, who is "condition'd as a brute, tho' form'd a man." Refraining from attacking slavery in the Southern states, he concentrates instead on the West Indies, where he sets scenes of horror filled with cracking whips, groans, screams, dashed brains, and bursting gore. "Why," the poet rhetorically demands, "streams the life-blood from that female's throat?/ She sprinkled gravy on a guest's new coat!"(3)

Moral instruction inevitably accompanied graveyard musings on the themes of death and mutability. "Sylvia," in the graveyard of the church of Wicacoe, summons Truth and Religion (who abide in the church) to preach to her on the vanities of pride and ambition. Even if, they tell her, success should attend her "wildest wish," she will yet find herself in the grave. No one escapes, for to the "lone grave" are now confined the hands "which held despotic sway o'er half mankind." Moreover, the power gained through ambition never matches the "real fame" of the "untutor'd savage of the wild," who, faithful to the dictates

of heaven,

> Pursues the chace within the gloomy wood,
> To bless his little family with food;
> And bids his board with homely plenty smile,
> To cheer the stranger fainting from the toil. (68)

This speech setting forth the noble savage as an exemplar of virtue is not the only device "Sylvia" uses to delineate the good life. A ghostly voice issuing from "heaven's own choir" speaks ex cathedra on the virtues of sensibility and benevolence. "Once," the voice claims,

> I trod this vale of life,
> Engag'd in all its active cares and strife;
> Condem'd, for sixty years to go
> A painful journey thro' this vale of woe;
> Till heaven, in mercy, sign'd the wish'd release,
> . . . . . .
> Yet think not heaven shall e'er its joys bestow
> On those who meanly thus their toils forego,
> Let not such dreams delude your youthful hearts;
> You in the world must take allotted parts;
> Must tread, with dignity, the varied scene,
> And keep your souls unstained, your minds serene.
> Go chace each selfish passion from your breasts,
> . . . . . .
> Extend your social love, till it shall bind,
> In its delightful chain, all human kind;
> Go, and exert your softest, sweetest powers,
> To gladden with delight a parent's hours:
> By every tender office, go improve
> The binding ties of fond paternal love.
> Go watch the sick-bed of some parting friend.
> . . . . . .
> Go wipe from misery's eye the falling tear;
> The wandering stranger with thy bounty cheer.

GRAVEYARD AND RUIN SENTIMENTS

The taste for the irregular and rude in nature was part of the growing trend toward more emotional freedom in

poetry that eventually led to the enthronement of the sublime as the most exulted of aesthetic responses to nature. By the 1750's English poets were delighting in irregularity, both as manifested in man-made ruins and the "ruins" of nature, such as mountains, precipices, and wilderness tracts. Trim gardens and sculptured hedgerows gave way to nature unimproved and unrestrained, and there developed a fad for buildings in the Gothic style and in the remains of English monuments and buildings of an earlier age.[26] Ruins--man-made and natural--became the appropriate settings for utterances of "graveyard" melancholy and similar disquisitions on the theme of mutability.

American poets found pleasure in every variety of ruin, from wasted battlefields and devastating fires to deathly pestilence. Philip Freneau and Joseph Brown Ladd both composed "graveyard" elegies set at the Eutaw Springs battleground (41 and 49), and Timothy Dwight's account of the burning of Fairfield stresses the horrifics of the aftermath of the fire, as "peaceful slumber'd Ruin wild,/ And Horror rear'd his head, and smiled"(3). The terror of an "epidemic sickness" in New York city was the subject of another ruin-piece:

> And the survivors, hurrying from the scene
> Of death, in consternation seek the fields.
> In dull deploring idleness remain

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[26]Fitzgerald, First Follow Nature, p. 137.

Their hush'd abodes, and stores, and vacant shops.
Throughout the city's void alone is heard
The sudden shriek of agonizing pain,
. . . . . .
While in the vacant market-place Despair
Sits musing on the solemn scene of woe.
As Night succeeds, the leaden-footed Day
No pompous mourning obsequies performs
At the untimely grave. (94)

The ivied ruins of venerable churches--the most patently obvious setting for graveyard sentiments--were given short shrift by American poets. The "gothick-pile" that found a place in "Sylvia's" graveyard musings (68) was no more prominent in American topographical poetry than "Guiandot's" tombstones:

The night in a garb full of horror appears
And the earth seems some rude shock of nature
to dread,
I look round with an awe which confesses my fears,
Whilst, reclin'd on a tomb, I converse with the dead.(83)

To most American poets the ruins of nature were manifestly more interesting than man-made ruins. America was deficient in "Gothic piles" but not in terrifying "ruins" of the world. The "dark and dismal wood" in Pitchwood Hill is the haunt of such denizens as wolves, bears, foxes, and ravens(2). And along the Hudson in "the deep forest's melancholy shade" wolves and panthers "roam,/ And boding owls usurp the tottering tow'rs"(76). A great battle among forest beasts develops in the New Hampshire wilderness:

Here growling wolves in doleful kennels howl;
The alarm is heightened by the screaming owl.
The hooping owl with a more sad'ning air

The victim bids for instant death prepare.
Wild cat and catamount and the bears retreat
Their rendezvous, where they for slaughter meet.
With hideous yell for battle they prepare,
Menace their foe and prompt the furious war,
Till prone in death lies now each dreadful form,
Like some cast vessel wreck'd in a storm.
The eagle, hawk, vulture, and raven breed,
Here suck their blood and on the carcase feed. (88)[27]

The American wilderness provided a great store of such images for the expression of ruin sentiments. Even a swamp could acquire the characteristics of a Gothic cloister. In "The Foresters" Alexander Wilson and his companions enter

Great Catherine's Swamps, that deepening round extend,
Down whose dun glooms we awfully descend;
Around us thick the crowding pillars soar
. . . . . .
So straight, so tall, so tow'ring, side by side,
Each, in itself, appears the forest's pride,
. . . . . .
Here melancholy monks might moping dwell,
Nor ray of sunshine ever reach their cell
Through the dead twilight, reigning horrid here,
In holy groans their relics sad revere.
Great solitary shades! so still and deep,
Even passing sighs in hollow murmurs creep! (185)

The reportedly ferocious wildlife of the swamps in the deep South led Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Morton to an appropriately horrific description of Georgia, a place

Where the mail'd reptile of Egyptian Nile
From shore to shore directs his floating file.
While, from the cavern of his clashing jaw,
The hands of death an hundred arrows draw,
He crops the verdure of the growing grain,

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[27]Other poets described the owl as "lonely" and "screaming"; the wolf as "prowling" and "howling"; and the panther as "screaming." See Alexander Wilson, "The Foresters"(185), and Jaques [Samuel Ewing], "Reflections in Solitude"(134).

> Or drags the wailing baby from the plain;
> E'en while the watchful fisher reads the skies,
> He feels his leaning bark unconscious rise,
> Then whirl impetuous to the plunging wave,
> Drink the salt surge, and dash the billowy grave. (7)

To add to the terror of his ruin-piece in "Grongar Hill," John Dyer had introduced a "pois'nous adder," American poets, not to be outdone, brought to their descriptions a fearsome serpent unlike any known to the Old World:

> There glistening lay, extended o'er the path,
> With steadfast, piercing eye, and gathering wrath,
> A large grim rattle-snake, of monstrous size,
> Three times three feet his length enormous lies;
> His pointed scales in regular rows engraved;
> His yellow sides with wreathes of dusky waved. (185)

Less large, perhaps, but just as frightful was the rattler that supplemented the list of wilderness horrors in "An Essay on Great Ossipee's Northern Prospect":

> The baleful serpent wakening from his den
> Rolls down the steep (eternal foe to man!)
> His rattling tail threats you with sudden death
> And his fang'd jaws glow with invenom'd breath. (88)[28]

PRAISE OF COMMERCE

Patriotism has been defined as the sense of a people having accomplished great things together and intent on doing more. Whether or not this definition is valid, it is

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[28]The rattlesnake was not the only poisonous reptile appearing in topographical poetry of this period. The English poet Thomas Moore's "The Lake of the Dismal Swamp" (174), a pastoral romance, contributed the copperhead; its use, along with other indigenous images in the poem, was brought to the attention of American readers by Joseph Dennie, who published the poem in the Port Folio in 1806.

certain that in eighteenth-century England this optimistic spirit prevailed. The belief in the certainty of progress, combined with a developing historical sense, produced feelings of national pride that no poet could ignore.[29] Patriotic poems occupied over half of Dodsley's first Miscellany, and patriotic themes were particularly evident in the longer didactic-descriptive poems so popular in this period.[30] Of all patriotic themes, the most prevalent is the glorying in England on account of her commerce--a theme which reached its climax in 1757 in Dyer's The Fleece.[31]

Although Americans of the late eighteenth century forcefully rejected loyalty to England, they did not reject English modes of expressing amor patriae, so that in American patriotic poetry as in English the chief theme is praise of the nation's commerce. The theme lacks substance in topographical poetry, however, for generally commerce gets brief mention as a sterile personified abstraction, with qualities that are seldom defined or described in detail. Frequently "Commerce" points up the typical contrast between "natural" nature and nature modified by man's control. Thus does an anonymous poet treat Passaic Falls, which for ages

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[29]Dobrée, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, p. 517.

[30]Virgil's Georgics provided ample literary precedent for patriotic themes in such poems.

[31]Dobrée, English Literature, p. 518.

remained "unseen by aught but Indian eye . . .

> But Commerce now distends the sail,
> And plenty heaves her flowing horn;
> While notes of gladness woo the gale,
> And brighter tints bedeck the morn. (168)

Since commerce was associated more with foreign trade than internal traffic, its praises were usually addressed to cities with great harbors; hence in hill poems on Boston the sight of the harbor inspired numerous rhetorical flourishes on the commercial wealth of the city. From Beacon Hill the poet might see the "sea-like haven" of the "tradeful port" from which "hardy commerce swells the lofty sails/ O'er arctic seas" and to which "tides of wealth the wafting breezes bring"(1). More than likely, he would use the occasion for a city-country contrast: "Here ruddy Health the grateful soil divides;/ There gen'rous Commerce cleaves the yielding tides"(8). Or he might find the "fair scene. . . enrich'd by Commerce, and by Science loved"(7). The author of Milton Hill directs his gaze to "that spot . . . where yon tall vessels float/ And cluster'd masts commercial wealth denote"(6). The most particularized reference occurs in "The Agreeable Prospect. . .." In the harbor where "commerce opes her stores" are seen flags denoting French, Russian, Dutch, and Swedish vessels, as well as "Britain's colours," which now "harmless wave in air"(11).

New York likewise is monotonously lauded for its busy

scenes of trade. In the harbor "tall vessels safe at anchor ride,/ And Europe's wealth flows in with every tide" (73). In Mrs. Faugeres' "The Hudson" the "snowy sail" swells in the harbor as "busy bands of Commerce" crowd the port(105). In another poem, "commerce calls the ships across the main" to exchange America's "superfluous grain" for foreign gold (180) and Thomas Law, addressing the Hudson, contrasts the busy harbor scene with one of long ago:

> I see your houses, towns, and cities rise;
> And hear, from building ships, the axe's stroke,
> 'Midst song and laughter, revelry and joke,
> Where on your noble stream the trunk canoe
> Was paddl'd close in shore, I wondering view
> A thousand vessels, sailing to and fro,
> With all the gifts which various climes bestow. (106)

Because rivers and streams were conventionally associated with scenes of picturesque beauty, they did not lend themselves well to the Commerce motif. In addressing the Raritan, "Frankly" defines the conflict between beauty and utility:

> Flow murmuring on--too soon to quit the shades,
> And sylvan honors that adorned thy wave;
> The Prow too soon thy tranquil breast invades,
> And busy commerce claims thee as its slave. (155)

A few poets, however, accepted streams in both roles. A pallid description of the Brandywine mentions its use as a canal (145), and Return Meigs sees the "fair" Ohio as a potentially great carrier of commercial wealth (53). In tracing the course of the Connecticut River from "northern

mounts" to the sea, "Juvenis" rhetorically informs the stream of both its usefulness and beauty:

> Descending then thy waters lave
> The fertile shores with milder wave,
> Where richer prospects rise;
> Springfield and Hartford owe their trade,
> Their commerce, to thy powerful aid,
> And know thy worth to prize. (146)

In the relatively few poems that associate rivers with commerce, a typical attitude is a wish for the extension of trade so that the country will grow and prosper. "The Ruins of Crown-Point: An Elegy," otherwise filled to overflowing with graveyard gloom and terror, incongruously concludes with the wish that this "sad region" will become "a wealthy mart" and that from this "dreary scene" by the Hudson may rise renewed "the splendid dome,/ While busy Commerce treads the crowded plain"(76).

THE FUTURE GLORY PROPHECY

George Berkeley's residence in America from 1729 to 1731 produced the first poem to develop the "future glory of America" prophecy, which was to become the most overworked theme in eighteenth-century American poetry.[32] In "Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America" (1752), Bishop Berkeley foresaw "another golden

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[32]Leon Howard gives this evaluation in Connecticut Wits, p. 100.

age" of the "rise of empire and of arts" resulting from the westward movement of civilization. Later poets, in long didactic-descriptive pieces such as Joel Barlow's Vision of Columbus (1787) or Francis Hopkinson's "Science" (1792), predicted a future for America "in which the spirit of partisanship was unknown and men were united in a happy fellowship of commerce and prosperity."[33] The belief in inevitable progress toward a millenium was not restricted to America; the theme appeared frequently in eighteenth-century English verse as another manifestation of patriotic panegyric so prevalent in the period. Windsor Forest, the first topographical poem to develop the theme, ends with a vision of a golden age brought about by Britain's superiority on the seas.

In general, the future glory theme was restricted to the longer and more conservative topographical poems. In order to give their millenarian visions concrete form, poets marshalled their most "sublime" rhetoric, but these attempts at heightened style usually resulted in artificiality and pomposity. Most future glory passages in topographical poems are a potpourri of panegyric, personifications, and apostrophes. From them, however, one learns something of

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[33]Howard, Transitions, p. 51.

the aspirations of American poets toward achievements in Industry, Agriculture, and the Arts--that great triad of eighteenth-century "science."

Although the manifest destiny of the United States to conquer the West had not yet been formulated as political doctrine, poets could envision such expansion as inevitable, as Timothy Dwight does at the conclusion of Part II of Greenfield Hill:

> All hail, thou western world! by heaven design'd
> Th' example bright, to renovate mankind.
> Soon shall thy sons across the mainland roam;
> And claim, on far Pacific shores, their home;
> Their rule, religion, manners, arts, convey,
> And spread their freedom to the Asian sea.
> Where erst six thousand suns have roll'd the year
> O'er plains of slaughter, and o'er wilds of fear,
> Towns, cities, fanes, shall lift their towery pride,
> The village bloom, on every streamlet's side;
> Proud Commerce' mole the western surges lave;
> The long, white spire lie imag'd on the waves;
> O'er morn's pellucid main expand their sails,
> And the starr'd ensign court Korean gales. (3)

Alexander Wilson in "The Foresters" also foresees the wilderness disappearing before advancing pioneers. In a formal apostrophe to the Susquehanna River he declaims:

> Thy pine-brown'd cliffs, thy deep romantic vales,
> Where wolves now wander, and the panther wails,
> Where, at long intervals, the hut forlorn
> Peeps from the verdure of embowering corn,
> In future times (nor distant far the day)
> Shall glow with crowded towns and villas gay;
> Unnumber'd keels thy deepen'd course divide;
> And airy arches pompously bestride;
> The domes of Science and Religion rise,
> And millions swarm where now a forest lies. (185)

According to a commencement day speaker in 1795, the destiny of the United States to "socialize the world" through extension of commerce demanded expansion to the west coast. To the end of insuring that neither ocean "shall confine Columbia's genius," he hinted that

> The muse prophetic views the coming day,
> When federal laws beyond the line shall sway
> Where Spanish indolence inactive lies. (98)

The citizens of the United States were a chosen people; their "Liberty" and "Freedom" guaranteed their future greatness, not only territorially but culturally. Eulogies of intellectual heroes were combined with predictions of future achievements in all fields of knowledge:

> Another Rittenhouse again shall rise;
> An Humphreys, whose undaunted arm shall wield
> The sword of freedom, or with daring flight,
> Ascend Parnassus--other Dwight's be born;
> A West whose magic art shall animate
> The canvas, which in vivid tints unfolds
> The page of history; Barlow, bard sublime,
> In his posterity shall live again.
> Poets and statesmen shall adorn thy lands,
> Myriads unborn shall grace Columbia's name. (115)

The sight of Harvard College from Beacon Hill inspired Mrs. Sarah Morton to predict that its "ray divine" would illuminate the "extended scene" by contributing "other Bowdoins" and "other Winthrops"(8). Mercy Warren saw similar eminence for sons of Harvard:

> Here other Boyles or Newtons yet may rise,
> And trace the wonders of the western skies,
> More than one W_____p may adorn the seat,

Of bright Apollo's favorite retreat;
When Harvard's sons may spread the arts refin'd,
Diffusing knowledge o'er the human mind. (62)

Idealistic faith in the progress of "Industry" resulted in visions of eternally radiant American cities, a dream that persisted throughout the century from Mrs. Faugeres' "stately towers, which catch the Morning's splendid beam" to Katherine Lee Bates' "alabaster cities/ Undimmed by human tears."[34] The author of a hill poem, condemning the burning of Charlestown by the British, sees the city as "a new born Phoenix, springing from the flame," with "cloud capt towers" which shall last "till Angels fire the skies"(11). John Searson acknowledged that the Washington City he describes is in its "infant state" but that "hereafter" it will "shine both grand and great:/ Yea, like Jerusalem, it will yet shine/ Because so great's the plan and the design"(58). Mrs. Faugeres' "The Hudson" closes with typical encomium for the citizens of New York, combined with the author's modest assessment of her talents:

And may the Great Supreme, when showering down,
In rich profusion, all the joys of Peace,
Thine [New York's] offspring for his favourite people own,
And hearts bestow the donor's hand to bless:
Then shall thy 'habitants indeed be blest:
Regions far distant shall revere thy name,
. . . . . .
And thou, O River! whose majestic streem [sic]

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[34]Margaretta V. Faugeres, "The Hudson" (105), and Katherine Lee Bates, "America the Beautiful," 1896.

Hath rous'd a feeble hand to sweep the lyre,
Thy charms some loftier poet shall inspire,
And Clio's self shall patronize the theme:
To hail thee shall admiring realms agree,
Sing to thy praise and bless our happy lot;
And Danube's roaring flood shall be forgot,
And Nile and Tiber, when they speak of Thee! (105)

In the final section of Greenfield Hill, devoted to a formal exposition of the "rising glory" theme, Timothy Dwight prophesies material progress that would be as miraculously certain of fulfillment as that so aptly envisioned by Lord Tennyson in "Lockesley Hall." This "public bliss" will arise from the enterprise of the citizens, the gifts of lavish nature, the virtues of rural simplicity, and isolation from the influence of contentious European nations. American nature, in particular, is on a scale grand enough to inspire grand achievement:

Profusely scatter'd o'er these regions, lo!
What scenes of grandeur, and of beauty, glow.
It's [sic] noblest wonders here Creation spreads;
Hills, where skies rest, and Danubes pour cascades;
Forests, that stretch from Cancer, to the Pole;
Lakes, where seas lie, and rivers, where they roll. (3)

Rural competence allied with democracy produces a social climate in which all men can work for the common good. Instead of "domes of pomp" the countryside abounds with "fair seats" surrounded by "the neat inclosure, and the happy shade." This "glad world" will thrive because it is remote

From Europe's mischiefs, and from Europe's woe!
Th' Atlantic's guardian tide repelling far
The jealous terror, and the vengeful war.

Most significant, perhaps, this progress is to be achieved through the perfection of existing institutions, not through their radical alteration. Dwight believed that future achievements in philosophy would reaffirm all that the enlightened eighteenth century already knew about man's comfortable place in the universe. "Moral Science" of the future will trace

> Man's nature, duties, dignity, and place;
> How, in each class, the nice relation springs,
> To God, to man, to subjects, and to kings;
> How taste, mysterious, in the Heavenly plan,
> Improves, adorns, and elevates, the man;
> How balanc'd powers, in just gradation, prove
> The means of order, freedom, peace, and love,
> Of bliss, at home, of homage fair, abroad,
> Justice to man, and piety to God.

OTHER CONVENTIONS

In renouncing pagan literary divinities, pious seventeenth-century American poets, such as Michael Wigglesworth and Cotton Mather, had refused to invoke the muses,[35] but by the mid-eighteenth century veneration of the classics and a regard for elegance--exemplified in the poetry of Milton, Dryden, and Pope--had overcome any religious scruples that might have existed, with the result that the more conservative topographical poems often apostrophize

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[35]Spencer, Quest for Nationality, p. 6.

the Sacred Nine or allude to rural deities, principally naiads and dryads.

Wherever invocation of the muse occurred, it was generally quite elaborate. In Beacon Hill, a poem with more history than description, Mrs. Morton quite appropriately brought to her aid the "historic muse" and nymphs of the woods and streams:

> Then come, ye Nymphs, by museful poet seen,
> With eyes of azure, and with robes of green,
> Ye tuneful Naiades of Pieria's tide,
> Come, and o'er Charles's nobler waves preside!
> While his smooth banks reflect Apollo's beam,
> Bathe your bright ringlets in his silver stream,
> The graceful swell of well-turn'd limbs display,
> And cleave with snowy arms the watery way,
> . . . . . .
> And thou, gay Goddess of yon clustering trees,
> Whose loose locks flutter in the wavering breeze,
> Assist my verse . . . . . .
> Full as the wave o'er Charles's bosom flows,
> Sweet as the breathings of your whispering boughs;
> Deck the loved lay with all your blending views
> Warm'd by the glances of the Historic Muse,
> Whose magic wand restores the trophied plain,
> And tunes to energy the lofty strain,
> Bids the past scene of glorious deeds return,
> And lure oblivion from the warrior's urn. (7)

The even more dazzling display of classical erudition in Milton Hill has only the most tenuous connection with the subject of the poem:

> Euterpe come, thou Muse of heavenly song,
> Leave Cytheran's mount, and bring thy pipes along,
> . . . . . .
> Quit Pierus' clouded top, Aonia's plains,
> Castalia's fountain, and Boeotian swains,
> Idalia's groves, the Heliconian spring,
> And airs seraphic on our mountains sing. (6)

Although poets generally used the invocation merely to show off their knowledge of classical mythology,[36] John D. McKinnon, with more originality and a stronger sense of organic unity, invited the muses to quit their traditional haunts and come to America:

> Mute are thy Doric Swains--thy Tempe, Muse,
> Enslav'd, and over-grown with weeds: Come scent
> Th' Wild perfume of transatlantic pines,
> The lilies of the misty Mohawk's vales,
> And trace the Hudson's quarried course thro' woods
> And shelving steeps romantic. . . .(108)

Unlike formal invocation of the muse, which is largely restricted to conventional neoclassic poems, the formal apostrophe to a river shows up in poems as otherwise diverse as Cooper's Hill and "Tintern Abbey." In "Inscription for Mr. Taylor's North-River Bath," Samuel Low used the antithetical balance that made Denham's apostrophe to the Thames so well known: "Immortal Hudson! fam'd in ev'ry clime,/ Gentle, tho' vast--tho' beautiful, sublime"(107). Since Schuylkill had always been the most popular place name in American poetry, this river was addressed more often than any other; Philip Freneau's apostrophe in The Rising Empire typifies these stereotyped conceits:

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[36]Relative to its length, William Martin Johnson's "An Ode, to the Beautiful River Sampit," 1806 (136), contains more classical allusions than any other topographical poem of this period. Besides an invocation to the "tuneful sisters," the poet mentions Jove, Hebrus, Orpheus, Pluto, Arethusa, Neptune, Diana, and Endymion; he also compares his love to that of Petrarch for Laura and his retreat to Vaucluse.

> Sweet stream! what pencil can thy beauties tell--
> Where, wandering downward through the woody vale,
> Thy varying scenes to rural bliss invite,
> To health and pleasure add a new delight. (90)

A more clever handling of the theme finds the stream told that its fame is insured because of its attraction to poets. The Schuylkill hears that it shall so "inspire the poet's tongue" that even the Ganges will not be able to boast "a more diffus'd renown"(32). One poet, on the condition that the Sampit help him win his girl, promises to rectify its past neglect through having the muse hitherto engrave "an annual verse" upon its "urn"(136).

Of the many forms of panegyric in topographical poetry, one of the most common was praise of the owners of large estates. These attempts at flattery, generally found in estate poems, often seem insincere and bombastic. One instance of such fulsome praise resulted in a parody, one of the very few on topographical poetry to appear in America. The sonnet entitled "On a Country Seat near the City of Philadelphia" begins with a prospect of sorts:

> Here the smooth lawn its verdant bosom spreads;
> And white in aether storied walls ascend;
> Majestic trees uplift their leafy heads,
> And with wide arms the storied walls defend. (29)

A week following the appearance of this poem in the <u>Weekly Magazine</u>, an attempt was made to ridicule its insipidities:

> Here the wild swamp its rugged bosom spreads,
> And hoarse through ether bull-frog's cries ascend,

Briars and thorns erect their prickly heads,
And with sharp fangs the bellowing frogs defend.[37]

The original sonnet closed with the usual tribute to the owner of the elegant mansion:

And peace and plenty crown the beauteous scene,
For F*****t here delights to tread the plain,
And art and Nature mingle in his train.

The irreverence of the parody provides a welcome relief from the pompous rhetoric that beclouds so many of the poems of this period, but as a parody it fails because it too closely mocks the original poem:

And discord marks the dark tumultuous scene.
For rudeness here delights to tread the plain,
Nor **Art** nor Culture mingles in his train.

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[37]Anon., "Parody of the Sonnet, On a Country Seat near Philadelphia," Weekly Magazine, I (April 7, 1798), 316.

VI. MOTIFS AND CONVENTIONS: TRANSITIONAL

In the course of the eighteenth century, as neo-classic tradition lost the force of authority, nature poetry became more subjective. Poets looked inward and found their own particular responses to experience to be as valid as those "just representations of general nature" that rationalistic critics like Dr. Johnson held to be the touchstones of great literature. The appearance of Lyrical Ballads in 1798 marked not so much a revolution as the culmination of a trend, for the transition from the external light of reason to the inner light of the imagination could not have been effected without the poets of the Age of Sensibility. These "pre-Romantics" believed that the natural world was a creation of beauty intended for man's enjoyment and moral improvement, and their shortcomings--such as confusing fancy with imagination and clinging to worn-out aesthetic principles--should not blind the latter-day reader to the significance of their contributions.

As a result of the trend toward more freedom in interpreting nature, one finds in topographical poetry of the late eighteenth century certain recurring motifs that had no precedent in the four poems that, beginning with Cooper's Hill, most influenced the development of the genre.

Rather than being innovations, however, these themes had evolved mostly from established conventions of neoclassic poetry. By the late eighteenth century they were occurring with enoughfrequency to assume their own status as conventions and to form a stock from which the great and not-so-great Romantic and Victorian poets would draw. The life-review, the address of endearment, solace in nature, sentimental introspection, and the love of wild scenery--these are themes which when handled well significantly enhanced the value of Romantic poetry but when mishandled resulted in bathos and sentimentality. In American topographical poetry from 1783 to 1812 these motifs were much in evidence despite any cultural lag that might have slowed their adoption; yet the general failure of American poets in handling them is apparent to one who remembers that this period in England saw an unprecedented outpouring of great nature poems.

CHILDHOOD OR YOUTHFUL RECOLLECTIONS

In using the youthful recollections motif to explore the paradox of man's fall from innocence into experience, Wordsworth and other Romantics had been anticipated by religious poets of the seventeenth century, notably Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne. The interest in the motif among both Metaphysical and Romantic poets can be traced largely to the foundation in the Gospels for reverencing childhood;

to the appeal of primitivism, manifested in a desire to escape to a simpler and more harmonious mode of existence; and to the realization that the "dizzy raptures" of childhood are but a step removed from the experience of the mystic--a step, however, that is never taken as the "prison house" of worldly experience closes in.

The first significant appearance of this motif in the eighteenth century occurs in Thomas Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" in a passage which captures the feeling of innocence lost but which ignores the philosophical implications of the child-adult contrast:

> Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
> Ah, fields belov'd in vain!
> Where once my careless childhood stray'd,
> A stranger yet to pain!

The gentle Weltschmerz of these lines was thereafter to be echoed many times, and the life-review theme found its most memorable expression in works like Wordsworth's immortality "Ode" and "Tintern Abbey" and Blake's Songs of Innocence.

The intrusion of sentimentality into the youthful memories theme is at best difficult to avoid, and few American poets escape a surfeit of emotion. John Miller Russell, in "The Village Cliff," eschews sentimentality, but in bidding farewell to the "sweet village" of his youth, he fails to get beyond clichés in exploring the paradoxes

of growth from innocence to knowledge.[1] Other poets handling this theme likewise escape mawkishness, only to surrender to dullness. John Smith once "stray'd supremely blest in rural joys" beside the Schuylkill, but now that "those blissful days are o'er" patience is the only way he can combat the cares of life(113). John Shaw, forced to desert "native scenes" for "far northern climes," looks back with longing as "Each object he once dearly lov'd/ Recurs incessant to his eyes"(178). The most effective handling of this theme is the brief "Written on the Banks of Conestoga." Despite its galloping anapests, the poem (here quoted in full) manages to suggest a Wordsworthian confidence in the ministrations of nature:

O'er the green-spreading banks of this slow-winding stream,
In life's playful morn, oft, I wander'd with glee;
When nature yet smil'd to my soul, through each scene,
And the path of life's way seem'd enchanting to me.

On yon moss-cover'd rock, where the stream softly laves.
At its marginal base, winding slow through the vale,
Oft musing I sat, as I gaz'd in the waves,
And silently thought,--or breath'd words to the gale.

There where the wild rose, in the breeze waves its head
And spreads sweetest fragrance around through these scenes,
Serene, oft I lay, on the moss' verdent [sic] bed,
And follow'd the phantoms of youth's fairy dreams.

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[1]John Miller Russell, "The Village Cliff," 1799 (9). For a detailed discussion of the youthful memories motif in this poem, see Chapter IV.

And there is the rock, over-bending the flood
That weltering heaves its small billows along,
Where often, as angling, I patiently stood,
And watch'd the gay sports of the small finny throng.

'Twas here, O! loved spot, that my bosom first knew
The rapture of feeling, unmix'd with alloy;
'Twas here, where my muse, first her gay fancies drew
And op'd on my soul a new heaven of joy. (160)

The mere fact that this poem avoids sentimentality works considerably in its favor, for most poets handling the childhood memories theme derive a melancholy and tearful pleasure in looking back on the days that are no more. One of the sickliest of these poets is "Headley," who wrote about a forced move from his home at the Hermitage to another state:

Why, tranquil mansion, does the heaving sigh
Arise half smother'd, from its troubled seat:
Why stands the drop, big swelling in the eye,
When fate compels me from your lov'd retreat?

Imagination's eye, with rapid glance,
Surveys the hours on pleasure's pinions borne;
Recalls those scenes, which ev'ry joy enhance,
Scenes which are pass'd, and never shall return. (33)

The naiveté with which the theme is often explored is little short of humorous. An epistolary poem, supposedly written by a fourteen-year old student at William and Mary College, is a pseudo-Byronic expression of regret for lost innocence. He informs his sister that he would like to forsake Williamsburg for his country home, "parent of his early years," but duty demands that he remain in college. The picture of the homesick teenager seeking philosophic calm in youthful memories presents a travesty on the theme:

How often does reflection trace
The youthful game, the active race!
The walk! the prospect ever fair!
Here lies the garden, orchard there,
And there the hill, with haughty brow,
Looks down upon the field below;
Which, yellow with its various grain,
Flatters the eager wishing swain!
There flow the river's roaring floods,
'Midst rocks, and fields and hills and woods!
Such scenes as these can give delight,
Where cheerfulness and health unite. (85)

"Lothaire," another schoolboy, attempts to describe his feelings "when about to leave the place of his nativity, to commence the study of a profession."[2] His emotions are mixed as "he wistfully gaz'd on the scenes that he loved."

'Twas here, in these scenes of my early delight,
That the muse first inspired me with raptures unknown;
And nature since then wore an aspect more bright,
More wildly romantic my day-dreams have grown. (159)

He leaves these beloved scenes "in search after wealth." Yet, he asks, will "the pleasures which wealth can bestow" repay him the loss of his "solace and pride" or the raptures he feels "alone by the Lehigh's green side"? He ends this debate by deciding that he needs the wealth to aid those "in misfortune and want" and thus bids "adieu to the muse." James Elliot's treatment of the theme seems more firmly grounded in the human condition than "Headley's" or the two schoolboys'. As a soldier alone and ill at a frontier outpost, he unsuccessfully tries to dissipate his fears by indulging

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[2]Quoted from headnote to "An Adieu to the Muse"(159).

"a retrospect of happier days." Although he had been "happy in infancy," soon his life became overcast "by gloomy clouds" until he has now reached the "summit" of his woes. To make certain that his assertion of childhood happiness is not misconstrued, he attaches a clarifying footnote: "It is only meant here that the author was contented, and therefore 'happy in infancy.' He was happy, in a great measure, because he was ignorant"(131).

THE PERSONAL ADDRESS

The address of close familiarity or endearment used to such good effect by Romantic poets had its immediate antecedents in the formalized love plaints of the pastoral tradition. Neoclassic poets begged favors from fickle Delias and Miras, who, as flesh and blood females, were as unreal as the well-worn figure of Freedom in her flowing robes. Romantic poets, however, addressed believable individuals with whom they shared highly personal experiences on which the reader eavesdropped. Countless nature poems by the great Romantics illustrate this convention. Wordsworth's tender confidences to his "dear, dear sister" in "Tintern Abbey"; Coleridge's speculations, shared with his "pensive Sara," in "The Eolian Harp"; and Matthew Arnold's futile search for security with his unnamed companion in "Dover Beach"--these poems all gain from the immediacy

and sincerity of the personal address in much the same way that they gain from having settings that are detailed and particularized.

In their use of the convention, American topographical poets generally failed to create the illusion that they were addressing real persons. Banal sentiments of endearment were uttered to numerous Miras, Delias, and Marias beside convenient streams, near cottages of content, or in pleasing rural "shades" or groves. Often it is the quality of the name that makes serious acceptance of the device impossible. The modern reader can accept Tennyson's Maud or Keats's Fanny because their intense reality to the poet rubs off on the reader, but names like Rosalinda, Lilly, and Amanda--when combined with trite sentiments--prove more ludicrous than quaint. Possibly the worst sample of personal address combining an unfortunate name with sentimental claptrap is the exclamation in "The Brandywine": "O Lavinia! Why wilt thou look into the bosom of the world for happiness?"(145) Almost equally atrocious is the specimen furnished by the anonymous poet who pleads with Magdaline, "Come, then, deluding maid,/ To this enamell'd shade!"(154)

Although in a minority, some poets more successfully manage the personal address. John Miller Russell, in "The Village Cliff," creates the illusion of a real presence

through an address to an unnamed friend in the opening verse paragraph:

> Come, haste my friend, and leave the cares of life;
> The toil of tedious study throw aside;
> And in this mild and clear autumnal sun,
> Let us in social mood together rove,
> Where yon stupendous height invites us forth,
> To take the freshness of the morning air. (9)

The poet fails, however, to establish rapport with his friend because he too briefly maintains the direct-address point of view. Only near the conclusion does he once again make the contact explicit:

> Farewell sweet village! and with thee, farewell
> My pleasant friend! The spring of youth is past,
> And sober manhood opens on our view.

In "Verses Written at Mount Radnor," another long hill poem, a friend likewise accompanies the poet to the summit of his favorite hill:

> Come then, Eugenio, with the Muse ascend
> Mount Radnor's height, and bid the view extend,
> And as from light retiring darkness flies
> With op'ning morn, behold the landscape rise. . ..(15)

Here, as in the preceding poem, the poet fails to use the direct address to gain immediacy. The reader is hardly ever aware of the presence of this "long tri'd" friend, who was the "fond companion" of the poet's "earliest youth." Rather than learning anything significant about this relationship, the reader is subjected to a long and hackneyed digression on the virtues of friendship. A more particularized relationship is examined in the shallow and sentimental

"Lines Occasioned by the Author's Leaving the Hermitage." The author, having parted from his friend after an enjoyable period together, now sadly recalls "scenes which are pass'd, and never shall return"(33). Often, until late at night "in these lone walls," together they studied "the learned dead" as "Contemplation" culled "the labour'd page." Sometimes young "Headley" grew weary of his studies and relaxed with lighter reading:

> Oft have I, when in science' mazes lost,
> . . . . . .
> Forsook the sea in which I darkly toss'd,
> To ease the mind amid the fields of zest.
> From Coke's stern quaintness, and the depth of Ferne,
> From Bacon's dulness, and prolix Fonblanque,
> The mind, with pleasure, seeks the wit of Sterne,
> Or roves with Thomson on some flow'ry bank.

Thus passed the days until his companion was sent away, ending this friendship of "kindred souls." Addressing "dear G____n," he wonders why fate so soon willed their separation. But this is a futile question, and only youthful memories now remain.

> And you, old mansion, still shall be more dear,
> Since your lone shades did first our hearts unite,
> Whose crumbling walls now, like my friend, appear,
> Removing fast forever from my sight.

THE SOLACE IN NATURE

In all ages those individuals endowed with the capacity for deep feeling have had an agonizing awareness that suffering is the lot of man. Even the Age of Reason

was not exempt from doubting that this is the best of all possible worlds; Dr. Johnson had rationally concluded that "Human life is every where a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed." Poets of the Romantic period, not given to generalizing on the human condition, preferred instead to bare unashamedly before the world their inmost yearnings, doubts, and fears. Lord Byron so blatantly displayed the pageant of his bleeding heart that the Byronic hero became a prototype of romantic rebelliousness against an unjust world. Fortunately the Romantics had an anodyne; they found relief in the great out-of-doors that the eighteenth century had discovered for the first time in all its beauty, variety, and grandeur. Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" is an outstanding statement of the function of nature as a balm for distressed minds. As the poet finds himself once again in a picturesque landscape along the Wye after a long absence, he recalls how in times of loneliness and weariness these "beauteous forms" of nature penetrated his whole being with "tranquil restoration."

> . . . how oft--
> In darkness and amid the many shapes
> Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
> Unprofitable and the fever of the world,
> Have hung upon the beatings of my heart--
> How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
> O sylvan Wye!

How often, indeed, would Byron, Shelley, Keats, and their followers find that natural scenery had a mystical power of

restoration. Whether it manifested itself in the pathetic fallacy or in Einfühlung--loss of distinction between self and scene--communion with nature became one of the traits for which the Romantic period is chiefly remembered.

Most American poets could not wear their hearts on their sleeves as successfully as Wordsworth or even Byron; seldom did they sufficiently control their melancholy to prevent their search for solace from degenerating into self-pity. A meditative poem by "Ella" entitled "Silence" starts off well enough, with images that convey a mood of restrained sadness:

> Day slow retreats on showery wing,
> And Evening climbs the eastern skies,
> The hovering vapours round the shores arise,
> Or to the tall rock's frowzy summit cling:
> The hum of busy care is done,
> A welcome respite twilight brings;
> And in the ear of Labour's son,
> The lulling song of Quiet sings.
>
> All, all is still and peaceful as the grave
> Save where the Delaware's distant billows roar,
> When driven by rushing gales, the yielding wave
> Throws its white waters on the echoing shore.
> Hark!--the shrill Quail with deep swoln note
> Breaks the dumb silence of the scene;
> The waking breezes sullen round it float,
> Fold their soft wings, and sink to rest again. (39)

Unfortunately the pensive mood leads only to some trite bromides on the theme of solace in nature. The reader soon learns that the poet's heart is "surcharg'd with grief" and that she finds the silence and growing darkness furnish a "balm" and "sweet relief" for her sad heart. Well she knows

the power of evening silence

> . . . while wandering here,
> Far, very far from all my heart holds dear;
> Where, while remembrance brings their image near,
> Down my pale cheek tear follows tear;
> And the big sigh, in vain supprest,
> Urges a passage from a swelling breast:
> Yet do I know thy soothing e'en here,
> Though far--ah me, how far from all my heart
> holds dear!

The sentimentalism of "Lines of the House at Alveston Changing Its Possessors" looks forward to such "old favorites" of the nineteenth century as "Home, Sweet Home" and "My Old Kentucky Home." More pensive than mawkishly emotional, the short poem rather skillfully mingles the childhood memories theme and the search for solace in nature into one of the expressions of love of home that the nineteenth century so delighted in:

> And must I quit these fields belov'd so long,
> This lawn so fragrant with it's circling flowers,
> Where oft' a train of youthful friends among,
> Careless and gay I've passed the flying hours?
>
> This social hearth, by memory held most dear,
> Alas! no friendly circles now surround,
> No dear familiar faces now appear,
> But unknown voices through the roofs resound.
>
> Ah, through these meads so dear, must strangers rove,
> And stranger hands these cowslip garlands twine.
> These flowers, that wont to bloom for those I love,
> Must they to strangers now their sweets resign?
>
> Ah, though no more for me the rolling year
> Shall bid these landscapes with fresh beauty shine,
> Thy shades, O Alveston! shall still be dear,
> And still retrace the joys that have been mine. (34)

If both of the preceding poems are trite, at least the imagery is concrete enough to convey a genuine love of

nature. Other poets seek solace amid scenes that vary considerably in freshness and particularity, but none penetrate very deeply into the power of nature to assuage suffering. As the traveler in "A Journey from Patapsco to Annapolis" resumes his journey after a thunderstorm, he takes pleasure in the freshness of the air, the singing birds, the flowering dogwood, the maple, and the sassafras along the road. "These vernal joys," he reflects, "all restless thoughts controul,/ And gently soothing, calm the troubled soul"(184). No so concretely depicted is the scenery in Camberwell Grove that "T. G." looks to for consolation:

> Ye peaceful shades that soothe the troubled breast,
> Exert your power, let me your influence share;
> Restore my bosom to its wonted rest,
> And banish from my heart the fiend Despair. (102)

Graveyard scenery gives solace to "Cornelia," who finds "pensive calm" for her "troubled breast" on a "deserted, lonely spot of earth." Anticipating Lord Byron's agitated search for peace of mind, she believes that "The songs of gladness and the voice of mirth,/ Are but harsh discord to the mind distrest"(76). Michael Forrest, in Travels through America, allays the grief of losing his only brother by walking in "lonely fields" near Philadelphia, where he had paused amid his travels. Like Cornelia, he finds the desolate aspects of nature congenial to his melancholy mood:

> Oft have I to the lonely fields retir'd,
> To pay a tribute nature oft requir'd.
> The gloomy rocks, and desolates unknown,

> Have often heard my solitary moan.
> Nor purling streams no more divert my mind,
> Nor woodland music floating in the wind;
> Pensive I pass the heavy hours away. (181)

Rather than the "peaceful shades" or "gloomy rocks" specified in the preceding poems, John Shaw would have a scene of wild grandeur to assuage his sorrow. Yet the "rushing floods" at Niagara Falls cannot "wash away the pain" that plagues him, for youthful recollections keep intruding. Far removed from "native scenes" that he "dearly loved," he finds it vain to seek relief in nature(178).

SENTIMENTAL INTROSPECTION

The search for solace in nature is but a particular manifestation of a broader theme of melancholy, difficult to define but significant in the development of Romantic poetry. "Sentimental introspection" is intended as a term of convenience to embrace all forms of poetic gloom that grapple sincerely, if often ineptly, with what Matthew Arnold called "the something that infects the world." In its highest form the theme includes the Weltschmerz and reminiscent pensiveness associated with the great Romantic poets and in its crudest form the religious melancholy of graveyard poets and the tearful complaints of men and

women obsessed with "sensibility." It applies just as well to the exquisitely controlled self-pity of Cowper's "On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture out of Norfolk" as to the transcendent exploration of mutability in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" or the brooding egotism of the Byronic hero:

> My whole life was a contest, since the day
> That gave me being, gave me that which marr'd
> The gift,--a fate, or will, that walk'd astray;
> And I at times have found the struggle hard,
> And thought of shaking off my bonds of clay:
> But now I fain would for a time survive,
> If but to see what next can well arrive.

Although few American poets could express their discontent with such sincerity and felicity, most of them exhibited the same emotional immaturity that marks these lines from "Epistle to Augusta." With the possible exception of William Cullen Bryant, who found in nature lessons of stoical endurance, most American poets of the early nineteenth century failed to avoid the baleful influence of Byronic gloom. Writing in the shadow of Byron's widespread popularity, they never got beyond the dark sententiousness of a James Gates Percival:

> . . . Life is made of gloom:
> The fairest scenes are clad in ruin's pall,
> The loveliest pathway leads but to the tomb;
> Alas! destruction is man's only doom.[3]

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[3]From "Prometheus," 1821.

This lugubrious response to natural scenery was anticipated in many a "graveyard" poem composed long before the influence of Byronism had made itself felt in America. In 1786 Joseph Brown Ladd composed his own epitaph for his Poems of Arouet:

> Stranger! whoe'er thou art, that from below
> This grass-green hill, with steady steps dost press:
> Shed sympathetic tears; for stranger know,
> Here lies the son of Sorrow and Distress.

Topographical poets of this period were brought to tears not only in graveyards but amid scenes usually associated with beauty and pleasure. Alexander Wilson, in "The Invitation," wants his friend Charles Orr to share in the beauty of the countryside around Gray's Ferry and while on walks together to think of suffering kindred abroad:[4]

> Our thoughts may roam beyond the wat'ry waste
> And see, with sadden'd hearts, in memory's eye,
> Those native shores, where dear-lov'd kindred sigh.
> Where War and ghastly Want in horror reign,
> And dying babes to fainting sires complain.
> While we, alas! these mournful scenes retrace,
> . . . . . .
> Our tears shall flow, our ardent pray'rs arise,
> That Heaven would wipe all sorrow from their eyes. (25)

Addressing a Miss Mason at New Rochelle, Mrs. Faugeres recalls the sweet memories of times spent together enjoying nature along their "fav'rite paths." Now, however, she

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[4]Wilson came to America from Scotland in 1794 at the age of twenty-eight.

often seeks "the couch of rest" because of an undefined depression which causes her to weep(40). An undefinable sense of loss likewise brings "fast-flowing tears" to the eyes of the anonymous author of "Written After a Visit to Philadelphia" as she again finds herself amid the fields and streams that have the power to awaken "reflection's noblest powers"(80).

Solitude, either voluntary or enforced by some decree of fate, seemed the only ground on which sentimental introspection could be cultivated. The English poet Thomas Moore, in "Farewell to Philadelphia," adopts a solitary pose as he recalls the kind reception he received while visiting the city and as he pictures himself a wanderer by the Schuylkill gazing "with a sigh" at its "flowery banks"(54). To set the tone for a description of his favorite cataract, John Howard Payne poses as a misanthrope who retreats to nature to escape "the noisy haunts of men"(176). Properly "pensive," a certain "Young Lady" describing the Falls of Passaic prefers only those paths which are "remote from human ken," and she wrings out a few tears in comparing the eternal flow of the stream to her own transience: unlike the "roaring waters," her own "purple tide,/ That now with ardour swells the youthful vein," is doomed to a short course(165). For some unstated reason, Alexander Wilson, as the author of "The Pilgrim," has been "condemn'd

through distant lands to roam,/ . . . Alone, unguided, and unknown"(186). But this fate does not prevent him from enthusiastically bagging ducks and eagles as he travels down the Ohio. "Lorenzo" is another solitary wanderer, who because of his parents' illness, is now returning home. Typically the setting is late evening and the poet is appropriately equipped with a "palpitating heart" which both "throbs" and "sighs" at the thought of dulce domum(79). John D. McKinnon, in one of his river poems, also assumes the role of a solitary who is enamored by the "happy scenes" of nature even "though sunk/ At heart, and anxious to forsake the world/ And all its vain, deceitful blandishments"(139). Even John Searson saw himself as a homeless stranger who passes his time "in rural walks below,/ 'Till we to our great Shepherd soon must go"(21).

The formula for sentimental introspection was almost certain to include evening solitude and a setting conducive to pensiveness, such as a quiet stream, a peaceful grove, or a graveyard. The latter is the setting for an elegy by "Guiandot" that carries grief to pathological extremes. His tortured mind resisting sleep, he has retreated to the silence of St. Paul's Churchyard, where he reflects that neither love, wealth, fame, or pleasure offered any joy that "was not soon clouded by sickness and pain." He now

vainly endeavors to flee from existence:

> Ah! why am not I too permitted to rest,
> From false joys and vain sorrows why am not I free?
> In life there are few who have been more distrest,
> There are few to whom death were more welcome than me. (83)

Although William Martin Johnson is not actually in a graveyard, he uses mannerisms of the Graveyard School to reinforce the melancholy of "An Ode to the Beautiful River Sampit." As usual the time is evening and the poet is alone; the setting includes such sad but "not all unlovely" images as "gloomy pines," "trembling deer," "the thick'ning cloud, the screeching storm,/ The nimble lightning's lurid glare." Near the end of the poem one stanza looks back to Gray's "Elegy" and another forward to Childe Harold's existential awareness of the necessity of suffering:

> . . . . . .
> In pain itself there is delight,
> If love and pity bathe the wound.
>
> Thus some pale flowers in deserts bloom,
> Where never pierc'd the solar beams;
> Thus some lone star, through midnight's gloom,
> With tremulous radiance dimly gleams.
>
> Curst be the passion's stoic sleep,
> The marble heart, the nerve of steel!
> Give me to suffer and to weep,
> But let, ah! ever let me feel! (136)

In poetry flowing water has been used universally as a representation of the course of human life. It needs but little imagination to discover a number of analogues between life and a river's course, and the "pathetic" fallacy of assigning to a river the virtue of imperturbability

in the face of vicissitudes had an obvious appeal to poets torn by pain and tortured by passion. Addressing the Malvon, "Lysander" wants to keep in view its "course serene" as "through the vale of life" he traces his path(153). The tumult and ensuing calm of the waters at Passaic Falls leads another poet to the conclusion that after "a life of woes" "wearied spirits" will also find "repose"(166). The author of "Sonnet to Schuylkill" similarly sees first despair and then hope in the river analogy:

> Slow wind thy waters, Schuylkill, fav'rite stream!
> And as I muse along thy lonely shore,
> Thy light waves trembling to the noon-tide beam,
> Still flow, ne'er ceasing, and return no more.
> Thus silent, unperceiv'd, the stream steals on
> Which floats us down the tide of life's decay;
> Sunk in the lapse of years forever gone,
> Each gliding moment bears its part away.
> Yet to thy source, fair stream[,]will nature's pow'r
> From her vast reservoirs thy floods supply;
> And nature's God, when life's dull flow is o'er
> Will not extinguish'd let its essence lye.
> To purer realms th' ethereal beam will raise,
> Borne on th' eternal stream of being's deathless maze. (117)

While visiting in America, Thomas Moore, the English poet so admired by Joseph Dennie, found the alternately calm and tempestuous flow of the Mohawk symbolic of his own life. Like the stream, he passes through "alternate shades of woe,/ And flowers of joy. . .

> While still pursuing, still unblest,
> I wander on, nor dare to rest!
> But, urgent as the doom that calls
> Thy water to its destin'd falls,
> I see the world's bewildering force
> Hurry my heart's devoted course
> From lapse to lapse, till life be done,
> And the last current cease to run!
> Oh may my fall be bright as thine!

May heaven's forgiving rainbow shine
Upon the mist that circles me,
As soft, as now it hangs o'er thee. (175)

The comparison is most fully developed in one of a series of nature poems by "Jaques" entitled "Reflections in Solitude."[5] No other poet makes the analogy so explicitly parallel. The Lehigh, from its source beneath some "moss-clad clift," at first flows

By nothing ruffled, save a mossy rock,
Or trunk of some ag'd oak, that time has slain,
That offer scarce a momentary check,
But add fresh vigour to its silent stream;
Onward it speeds, its pure transparent wave,
Till, passing by the rustick's lowly shed,
It loses all its sweetness, all its calm,
And rolls a tainted and an angry tide:
Then, mingling in the many-fountain'd stream
Of Ocean, by Sol's torrid beam 'tis rais'd
To kiss the field with many a morning dew.
Thus, in the early dawn of life, the youth
Starts from the goal of sweet simplicity,
To run his race--His playful untaught steps
Pursue the flow'ry path--till Syrens smile,
And soft seduction crosses o'er his path,
And turn his brain, and leads the orphan where
He sips of Dissipation's madd'ning draught.
. . . . . .
Till worn and wearied by his long career,
He sinks, an helpless and a tainted mass,
Into th' unfathom'd bosom of eternity,
Where Mercy pardons, while the seraphs smile.

SUBLIME SCENERY

Although the apotheosis of the sublime in nature

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[5]Some twelve meditative nature poems by Jaques [Samuel Ewing] appeared in series in the Port Folio in 1801. Only the one quoted here (134) describes a particular locality.

was achieved early in the nineteenth century, the love of wild and irregular scenery was not confined to the Romantic period. A long tradition, grounded in the cult of the picturesque, was responsible for the enthusiasm for natural sublimities that by the 1760's was threatening to engulf neoclassic decorum. Throughout the eighteenth century aesthetic treatises had explored why unbeautiful aspects of nature managed to "delight and astonish," and travelers making the Grand Tour found in the Alps a grandeur that defied existing concepts of natural beauty. These new interests were increasingly reflected by poets depicting features of the landscape hitherto regarded as the "ruins of the world." By 1825 the sublime was so taken for granted that it was easy enough for the youthful Tennyson to garner all the "familiar themes, settings, and adjectives" associated with the cult of sublimity into a melodramatic effort appropriately titled "On Sublimity."[6]

Among the great Romantic poets descriptions of sublime scenery often amounted to something more than sensationalism. Several magnificent "spots of time" in Wordsworth's The Prelude owe their conception to the

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[6]Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, p. 372. Tennyson acknowledges that he was between fifteen and seventeen when he wrote "On Sublimity," which appeared in Poems by Two Brothers (1827). Two sublimities in the poem were American: "Kentucky's chamber of eternal gloom" and "Niagara's flood of matchless might."

enthusiastic appreciation of wild scenery that developed throughout the eighteenth century, but never before had the mystique of "mountain madness" been so well set forth as it was in this poem. The best known of these passages occurs in the Sixth Book, in which the raw experience of descending Simplon Pass is remolded under the shaping power of the poet's imagination into an imposing statement of the power of sublime scenery to inspire mystical reverence.

> . . .The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> . . . . . .
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds and regions of the Heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light--
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first and last, and midst, and without end.

Of all the "spots of time" which objectify some aspect of the poet's experience, the memory of the time when he climbed Mt. Snowdon to view the sunrise (Book XIV) furnishes an unsurpassed statement of the sublime in nature. The experience on the mountain top, rooted in the world of the senses, is transformed by the imagination into an apocalyptic vision in which the poet perceives nature in all its forms--fearful as well as joyous--as "types of a majestic intellect":

> There I beheld the emblem of a mind
> That feeds upon infinity . . .;
> . . . . . a mind sustained
> By recognitions of transcendent power,
> In sense conducting to ideal form,
> In soul of more than mortal privilege.

The grandeur of American scenery should have inspired poetry equal to Wordsworth's in insight and expression; yet any student of the early national period knows it did not. Enthusiasm for the grand and terrible outran American poets' powers of expression, and the result is generally the forced emotionalism of Graveyard horrifics or the bombast of Ossianic grandeur. "Stunn'd," "awe-struck," and "astonish'd," Thomas Law finds that "the most sublime expressions are too faint" to describe Niagara(173). In Rhode Island an ocean prospect leads a certain "young miss" to an ecstasy of appreciation: "Wave ye woods, and ocean roar:/ Ye shall give sublime enjoyments,/ When your Emma is no more"(97). In Massachusetts a mountain prospect commands from "Linus" an attempt at graveyard terror:

> Now turn and view yon lofty mountain, shagged,
> With bristly pines and studded o'er with rocks:
> A direful scene! around the mountain top
> Perpetual horror reigns. . . .(12)

And on the Hudson "Cornelia" directs grand aspects of nature--including lightning and thunder--to her aid in describing the ruins of Fort Lee, located atop "rugged cliffs," that "tower sublime,/ Above the force of waves and time"(77).

To storms and cliffs, one can add cataracts as features of nature guaranteed to arouse sublime emotions. All three are combined in a poem on the Schuylkill: sitting under a "hanging craggy steep," the poet enjoys his "romantic wild retreat" amid the "sounds of falling streams" until the revery is broken by the sound of an approaching thunderstorm(118). "Horrid" and "dreadful" are two adjectives that "Juvenis" musters to describe a cataract on the Connecticut River(146). And an anonymous admirer of Passaic Falls finds in its tumult a match for his anguish:

> Tho' throbs my heart with plaintive woe,
> It long shall love thy roaring tide,
> Which makes it beat with fiercer glow,
> And swell with more than mortal pride. (168)

More clever than poetic is Washington Irving's little exercise on Passaic Falls, which relates how a "Spirit that rul'd o'er the thick-tangled wood" suddenly changed a "tranquil vale" to a scene of rude grandeur. For ages, the "soft sylvan scene" remained undisturbed: "No grandeur of prospect astonish'd the sight,/ No abruptness sublime mingled awe with delight." Without warning, the "fierce Spirit"produced a cataclysm:

> He riv'd the green hills, the wild woods he laid low,
> He turn'd the smooth stream in rough channels to flow;
> He rent the rude rock, the steep precipice gave,
> And hurl'd down the chasm the thundering wave.
> A scene of strange ruin he scatter'd around,
> Where cliffs pil'd on cliffs in rude majesty frown'd.
> . . . . . .
> Countless moons have now roll'd in the long lapse of time,

Cultivation has softened those features sublime;
. . . . . .
Yet the stranger still gazes with wondering eye,
On rocks rudely torn, and groves mounted on high;
Still loves on the cliffs' dizzy borders to roam,
Where the torrent leaps headlong embosom'd in foam. (162)

By building suspense, Alexander Wilson achieves a high degree of emotional impact with his description of Niagara. Finding themselves only five miles from their long awaited goal, the young travelers of "The Foresters," amazed that they are unable to hear the roar of the cataract, decide that Niagara has been overrated: "Here, nameless hardships, griefs and miseries past,/ We find some mill-dam for our pains at last." But soon they hear the sound, and as "expectation throbb'd in every breast," they hasten to the prospect. What they find they were totally unprepared for:

Above, below, where'er the astonish'd eye,
Turns to behold, new opening wonders lie,
Till to a steep's high brow unconscious brought,
Lost to all other care of sense or thought,
There the broad river, like a lake outspread,
The islands, rapids, falls, in grandeur dread,
The heaps of boiling foam, th' ascending spray,
The gulf profound, where dazzling rainbows play,
This great, o'erwhelming work of awful Time,
In all its dread magnificence sublime,
Rose on our view, amid a crashing roar
That bade us kneel, and Time's great God adore. (185)

No other description of a waterfall in this period matches the verbal fireworks of this passage, yet Wilson could show almost equal enthusiasm for rugged mountain

scenery. Several exclamations punctuate his description of the view from Blue Mountain, where as morning mists dissolve, he sees before him the autumn foliage of the great hardwood forests of the Appalachians, broken intermittently by clearings:

> But such a prospect!--such a glorious show!
> The world, in boundless landscape, lay below!
> Vast colour'd forests, to our wandering eyes,
> Seem'd soften'd gardens of a thousand dyes.
> Long lakes appear'd; but at the increase of day
> Assum'd new forms, and roll'd in mist away.
> Scoop'd from the woods unnumber'd spots were seen
> Embrown'd with culture, or with pastures green;
> Some cottage smoke mov'd slow, and dimly white;
> But ev'ry hut had dwindled from the sight.
> In long trail'd fogs, that all its windings show'd,
> For many a league the distant Delaware flow'd;
> And all beyond seem'd to the ravish'd eye,
> One waste of woods, encircling earth and sky. (185)

The magnificent scenery along the lower Hudson Valley--the wide, placid river contrasting with rugged bluffs and mountains rising from either bank--inspired the kind of mountain madness which was characteristic of some of the noblest successes of the Romantic period and some of its most obvious failures. One of the latter is Mrs. Faugeres' description of the Hudson heights below West Point:

> Soon as the ridgy mountains leave the eye,
> Tall mural rocks shoot proud into the air;
> In shapes fantastic lift their turrets high,
> Fit for the shadowy forms who revel there.
> The hardy pines that on their steep sides grow,
> . . . . . .
> Appear like shrubs to the strain'd eyes below.
> The wandering goat adventures to the brink
> And peeps across the fretted edge with care;
> Then from the awful precipices she shrinks,
> As though relentless Ruin hover'd there.
> Yet there, when Night hath bid the world be mute,

The sleepless sailor often clambers high
And from some shadowy nook his sonorous flute
Sends mournful accents to the neighbouring sky. (105)

Mrs. Faugeres' mother, Ann Eliza Bleecker, had also tried her hand at describing sublime scenery along the Hudson. Like her daughter she uses the same machinery of Gothic horror that Mrs. Ann Radcliffe would exploit more skillfully a year later in The Mysteries of Udolpho:[7]

Rough mountains now appear while pendant woods
Hang o'er the gloomy steep and shade the floods;
Slow moves the vessel, while each distant sound
The cavern'd echoes doubly loud rebound:
A placid stream meanders on the steep,
Till tumbling from the cliff, divides the frowning deep.
O tempt not Fate on those stupendous rocks,
Where never shepherd led his timid flocks;
But shagged bears in those wild deserts stray,
And wolves, who howl against the lunar ray:
There builds the rav'nous hawk his lofty nest,
And there the soaring eagle takes her rest;
The solitary deer recoils to hear
The torrent thundering in the mid-day air. (180)

John D. McKinnon's description of the same section of the Hudson Highlands is distinguishable from the two ladies' by its avoidance of melodrama, but because of its awkward diction and tortured inversions it deserves no particular commendation:

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[7]The "ruin" passages in both Mrs. Bleecker's and Mrs. Faugeres' descriptions of the Hudson River region (published in 1793) bear striking resemblance to prose descriptions in Anne Radcliffe's novel (published 1794), as well as to several verses of Mrs. Radcliffe's own composing interspersed throughout the novel. According to Professor S. H. Monk, The Sublime (p. 218), Mrs. Radcliffe held the belief, common of her age, that intense terror can produce sublime emotions.

> Gigantic, vast,
> O'ershadowing mountains soar, invested thick
> Their shaggy waists, and to their summits far
> A wilderness unbounded to the eye,
> Profuse and pathless, unsubdued by toil.
> Diminutive beneath, the Hudson, deep
> Coerc'd by rocks, and silent, penetrates
> The solitudinous and woodland scene;
> His former course disorder'd, winding through
> Uncertain, struggling for a passage. (108)

McKinnon was capable enough of appreciating rude aspects of nature provided that they were viewed in contrast with more artfully contrived scenery:

> What though
> No finish'd culture has adorn'd the fields
> With living hedge-rows, no laborious care
> Drawn off the rancid waters, or reliev'd
> The glebe from wrecks of lacerated rocks;
> The ruder grace of Nature, unsubdued,
> Prevailing oft amid the furrow'd scene--
> Contrasted charms! (94)

He was, however, too much under the influence of the picturesque tradition ever to value untamed nature for its own sake, and if, unlike many of his contemporaries, he avoided confusing sublimity with theatrics it was only because he was insensitive to the power of grand scenery to animate the soul. His inability to know what to do with such scenery is revealed in the apology he offered his readers for not writing more extensively about the Hudson region: although he claimed that he had wanted to extend his poems before their publication, "the very confined views which the country in its uncleared state afforded beyond German-Flats [on the Mohawk], rendered it but little susceptible

of poetical description, without a constant recurrence of similar images."[8] Here was a poet suffering want in the midst of plenty, for the forested wilderness of America was an instrument waiting to be exploited in the interests of literary nationalism. But to McKinnon and most of his contemporaries there was nothing picturesque and thus nothing poetic in mile after mile of lonely forest broken only by an occasional settler's cabin.

If any river of the East besides the Hudson was to inspire sublime poetry, it should have been the Potomac, which west of Tidewater cut its way through majestic ridges of the Alleghenies and Blue Ridge.[9] Yet the one passage describing this region (found in an anonymous hill poem) is disappointingly unoriginal:

> But now Plantations and the Fields are past,
> And my long view is o'er the Forests cast,
> Whose verdant summits with thick leaves o'erspread,
> Seem to the eye like one continued mead;
> Till o'er the level the Blue Ridges rise,
> Whose azure heights appear among the skies.
> The lofty oaks, that on their steep-sides grow,
> The lumb'ring pines that shade their awful brow,
> In distance wrapt, we scarcely can descry,
> And one blue landscape rushes on the eye.
> Then, since the view no more from hence extends
> For mortal sight, and the long prospect ends,
> Let the mind's eye yet unrestricted rove
> The houseless plain and unfrequented grove.
> Let her, thro' these, her devious course pursue,

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[8]Preface to John D. McKinnon, Descriptive Poems, Containing Picturesque Views of the State of New-York (New York: 1802).

[9]In Notes on the State of Virginia (1784) Thomas Jefferson remarked, "The passage of the Potomac through the Blue Ridge is, perhaps, one of the most stupendous scenes in nature."

Till wide Patowmack rises to her view;
Where he in awful majesty sits crown'd,
The fearful hills and forests trembling round;
Where o'er rough rocks, his thund'ring cataracts roar,
And drive their boiling eddies to the shore;
Where first his stream in headlong course descends,
Beneath the waves a length of stones extends,
O'er which they dash and urge their wild career,
While the black billows streak'd with white appear.
But where his waters rush in steepest Fall,
Vast piles of rocks the gazer's mind appal,
Thro' whose wide clefts, by rapid billows torn,
The madd'ning stream in sweepy torrents borne,
Tumble, loud sounding down the steep Cascade,
Shines to the sight with sparkling foam o'erspread,
While these, o'er lofty craggs, with mighty force
From high are driv'n, in fierce resistless course. . . .(15)

Although this passage lacks some of the more awkward embellishments of a Bleecker or Faugeres, it could have been written just as easily by a McKinnon or a Wilson, who, even if they were able to keep their eyes on the object, still found in nature nothing that they could identify in terms of their own experience. If American scenery was to provide the material for a genuinely American literature, radically new ways of interpreting the relationship between man and nature would have to be forthcoming.

VII. CONCLUSION: TRADITION AND THE CLAIMS OF NEWNESS

It is paradoxical that a body of poetry whose main characteristic is a spirit of localization should appear within a literary tradition borrowed without mofification from another country. Yet the preceding chapters reveal the disturbing ease with which American topographical poetry can be defined, typed, and classified within the context of English topographical poetry. Unoriginal in form, style, and content, this poetry does nothing to upset previous evaluations of the period. The general charge of imitation can be upheld so easily that a conclusion to this study might seem superfluous; one simply could refer the reader to the history of the "back to nature" movement in English poetry. Such a procedure does, in fact, suffice for American nature poems which possess no spirit of localization--and there are many eclogues, elegies, and imitations of Thomson and Ossian that are completely unlocalized--but the fact that topographical poets attempted, even while failing, to create a national literature demands a closer look at, first, the effect of the American physical environment on the treatment of nature within the established tradition and, secondly, the most frequently recurring themes arising from this tradition.

In late eighteenth-century America the geography of the Atlantic coastal region was markedly dissimilar from that

of the wilderness to the West. In the temperate latitudes between the Appalachian chain and the Atlantic Ocean lay an area easy of access and suitable for cultivation. Following the Revolution, this section filled quickly. Cities arose on the many natural harbors along the coast as well as farther inland at the Fall Line. As there were no particular obstacles to the spread of agriculture or the transportation of goods, the countryside soon took on an appearance of prosperity. Farms, estates, villages, groves, meadows, fields, and gentle hills combined to form a landscape that poets could assimilate easily into their ideas of the beautiful, sublime, and picturesque. To the west, however, the rugged topography of the Appalachian mountain system discouraged agriculture and obstructed transportation. Nature had not been tamed; great forests, rapid rivers, abundant wildlife, and vast solitudes awaited the pioneers who were pushing the frontier toward the fertile plains west of the mountains.

The physical environment of the East conformed so well with that of cultivated areas of Europe that American poets found it easy to write their local poems using the language, form, and emphasis of the European picturesque tradition. The "neat enclosure" alternated with the "happy shade" to present countless scenes of idyllic beauty. On the frontier, however, Art and Nature were out of balance, and there was little that the eye could seek out as beautiful. Until such country is put into a "state of complete cultivation,"

it would be, in Timothy Dwight's estimation, "imperfect."[1] This belief, by and large, determined American poets' attitudes toward nature on the frontier, and it accounts for the relatively few poems written under its influence. It seems, in fact, that poems actually concerned with the frontier often exhibit a more entrenched conventionality than those describing more settled areas. Lacking a tradition with which to deal with the wilderness, American poets could react to its strangeness only with tried and proven responses. Not all reacted identically, of course, since not all were affected identically, but the difference in response is one of degree, not kind. Least affected were the hardy pioneers who saw the frontier as just another obstacle to the advance of Art, Industry, Agriculture, and similar personifications of progress. Their attitude, probably the most prevalent,

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[1]In describing the White Mountains in Travels in New-England and New-York (1821, II, 128-29), Dwight sums up the conservative attitude toward frontier nature: "The present imperfect state of the settlements in this region will, I am well aware, prevent many persons from forming just views concerning the splendour of its scenery. In so vast an expansion the eye perceives a prevalence of forest, which it regrets; and instinctively demands a wider extent of smiling scenes, and a more general establishment of the cheerful haunts of man." This "temporary defect" he can overlook, because soon "the slough will be covered with a causey; and the marsh, by draining, be converted into a meadow. In a word, whatever is rude, broken, and unsightly . . . will, within a moderate period, be levelled, smoothed, and beautified, by the hand of man. Where nature . . . is now naked and deformed, she will suddenly . . . be ornamented by culture with her richest attire. The meadow will glow with verdure, and sparkle with the enamel of flowers. Flocks and herds will frolic over the pasture, and fields will wave with harvests of gold."

finds stereotyped repetition in prose as well as poetry; its essential optimism is represented by a passage from John Filson's The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke (1784):

> Thus we behold Kentucke, lately an howling wilderness, the habitation of savages and wild beasts, become a fruitful field; this region, so favourably distinguished by nature, now become the habitation of civilization, at a period unparalleled in history. . . . Here, where the hand of violence shed the blood of the innocent; where the horrid yells of savages, and the groans of the distressed, sounded in our ears, we now hear the praises and adorations of our Creator; where wretched wigwams stood, the miserable abodes of savages, we behold the foundations of cities laid, that, in all probability, will rival the glory of the greatest upon earth. And we view Kentucke situated on the fertile banks of the great Ohio, rising from obscurity to shine with splendor, equal to any other of the stars of the American hemisphere.[2]

The conventionality of this response is indicated by the pastiche of themes found not only in prose tributes such as this one but in topographical poems as well: there is the implied tribute to agriculture, the "ruin" sentiments of horror and destruction, the art-nature contrast, the prophecy of future glory, and the praise of a river. Time after time, in countless commencement addresses, Fourth of July orations, and "future glory" poems, this stock gospel of progress was spouted by these early-day civic boosters, who were determined that the orderly way of life they had inherited should not give way to the disintegrating forces

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[3]Quoted in Thomas D. Clark, Frontier America: The Story of the Westward Movement (New York, 1959), p. 80.

of the frontier. In popular rhetorical theory of the day they found the formula for their confident amor patriae. What moved the reader, or listener, was "elevation of thought, sublimity of sentiment, boldness of figure, grandeur of description, or embellishment of imagination."[3] Because rhetorical theory applied to any discourse where praise or persuasion were uppermost, they made only the slightest distinction between oratory, or "eloquence," and poetry; many held that rhyme, meter, and poetic diction were enough in themselves to render a discourse poetic.[4] By letting style take precedence over content, they wrote verse which, if it inspired their contemporaries, bores the modern reader. An arch example of florid rhetoric distorting experience is the versified address delivered by Return Meigs on the first anniversary of the founding of Marietta in the Old Northwest Territory. Applying practically all the common stylistic heightening devices, the author makes the frontier community sound as staid and as prosperous as the most conventional of New England villages:[5]

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[3]From an article on the similarities of prose and poetry in The Lady's Magazine and Repository of Useful Information, I (1792), 151-59. See Gordon E. Bigelow, Rhetoric and American Poetry, p. 38.

[4]Bigelow, Rhetoric and American Poetry, p. 38.

[5]According to Lord Kames (Elements of Criticism, Chapter 4), the heightening devices were circumlocution, inversion, , epithet, poetic diction, and figures--especially the strong figures of hyperbole, personification, apostrophe, and interrogation. See Bigelow, p. 67.

> Along our banks, see distant villas spread--
> Here waves the corn--and there extends the mead--
> Here sound the murmurs of the gurgling rills;
> There bleat the flocks upon a thousand hills.
> Fair opes the lawn--the fertile fields extend,
> The kindly shower from smiling Heaven descends. . . .[6]

For some Americans--principally those lacking involvement in the frontier experience--the wilderness was a place which civilized men avoided. As outsiders, they disdained the possibilities of progress in such rude regions, and they made light of the crudities of frontier life. In topographical poetry the "anti-nature" poem well represents their skepticism, but the attitude is probably most apparent in prose travel narratives of the period, both native and foreign.

> For the most part, travelers came looking for a mature society, and were unable to evaluate what they actually found because of their lack of experience in viewing a virginal country coming under the control of a civilization which was for the moment primitive. Essentially, the great mass of travelers came to see how well American democracy was working as it spread itself over the continent. Scores of them believed that . . . it had become completely submerged under the inert layer of uncouth informality and general rudeness which the traveler encountered. They disliked the frontiersman's food, his outspoken individuality, his lumpy beds, crowded tavern common rooms, muddy roads, the pallidness of the natives, the unattractive womenfolk, the frontiersman's loud boasting, his pugnaciousness, political attitudes, extreme nationalism, and narrow religious views.[7]

Like the writers of the prose narratives, most topographical poets critical of the frontier found a

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[6]Return J. Meigs," Extract from an Oration Pronounced at Marietta, on the 4th of July, 1789"(53). For further discussion of this poem, see Chapter III under "Town Poems."

[7]Clark, Frontier America, p. 377.

focal point for the criticism in the frontiersman. Even Alexander Wilson, who had eyes open to the beauties of wilderness scenery, thought that frontiersmen were crude and ignorant, an attitude quite at odds with the rising romantic belief in the worth and potentialities of the common man. Through their resourcefulness and initiative men like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett soon became symbols of the advance of civilization westward or of the freedom of self assertion over social restraint, but in early American topographical poetry this idealization of the frontiersman was notably absent.[8]

To a small group of topographical poets the frontier was a real presence, and they avoided alike the skepticism of the detached observer and the superficiality of the prophets of progress. With their eyes open to the realities of frontier life, it seems that they should have been the least influenced by convention. Yet they were unable to

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[8]Firsthand acquaintance with the frontiersman made such idealization difficult. Far removed from the realities of frontier life, Lord Byron (in Don Juan, Canto 8) made Daniel Boone into a Noble Savage:

> "Crime came not near him--she is not the child
> Of Solitude; Health shrank not from him--for
> Her home is in the rarely trodden wild."

The same duality existed in early attitudes toward the American farmer. The "innocent swain" in the literature of rural simplicity was often accused by serious observers of American agriculture of knowing little and caring less about the potentialities of the land. See Richard Bridgman, "Jefferson's Farmer before Jefferson," American Quarterly, XIV (Winter, 1962), 567-77.

square what they found in the wilderness with their inheritance of the eighteenth-century picturesque tradition, in which the joys of nature were equated with the joys of rural simplicity. Because they thought of the out-of-door world as a place of retreat, they had no categories into which to fit nature which did not conform to the patterns of "soft" primitivism. Hence they rejected the wilderness in much the same way that William Cowper--that great apostle of rural contentment--pictured Alexander Selkirk as rejecting his wild island domain:

> Oh, solitude! where are the charms
> That sages have seen in thy face?
> Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
> Than reign in this horrible place.[9]

"Out of humanity's reach," he longs for "society, friendship, and love." The religion of nature is not for him; alone on his tropical island, he painfully reminds himself that "the sound of the church-going bell/ These vallies and rocks never heard." Nowhere in this poem are the beauties of nature delineated. To poets nurtured by the picturesque tradition, the "desert" or wilderness could furnish images only of terror, isolation, or monotony: hence the sketches of a world in ruins, populated by ravens, owls, wolves, and

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[9]William Cowper, "Verses Supposed to be Written by Alexander Selkirk, During His Solitary Abode in the Island of Juan Fernandez," 1782.

bears; hence the mournful introspection of frontier elegies by "Matilda" and James Elliot; and hence John D. McKinnon's rejection of the scenery of western New York as too uniform for poetic representation.[10]

For the fraction of American poets who had discovered the Romantic appeal of wild and sombre scenery, the frontier offered material for what they conceived to be "sublime" poetry. Unlike Cowper and other poets of rural contentment, they could appreciate the "wild ecstacies" of untamed nature. Like Wordsworth, they felt free to "let the misty mountain-winds" blow against them, and with considerable enthusiasm they described mountains, cataracts, and other awe inspiring spectacles of the American wilderness. Unfortunately, however, none of them had the perception or control to keep their "mountain madness" from degenerating into bombast. The frontier was so unlike their preconceived ideas of the sublime as gleaned from the whole picturesque tradition that they fell back on responses that were secondhand and hackneyed.[11]

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[10]Although a poet of the picturesque tradition, Philip Freneau does not consistently reject the wilderness, if the term is construed to include the tropical scenery of the West Indies that he so often wrote about. N. F. Adkins (Philip Freneau and the Cosmic Enigma, 1949, p. 74) suggests that the pagan sensualism in "The Beauties of Santa Cruz" is indebted to the naturalistic hedonism of Royallist poets such as Herrick and Waller.

[11]Even William Cullen Bryant's "The Prairies" (1832), one of the few good early poems on frontier nature, achieves its distinction from uniqueness of subject matter, not originality of treatment.

Neither the staid poets of rural retirement nor the enthusiastic recorders of the sublime met the frontier on its own terms. The victory of authority over experience in fixing attitudes toward nature on the frontier was first observed by Professor Leon Howard in his investigation of the literary style of Mrs. Sally Hastings, a pioneer poetess of the Pennsylvania wilderness.[12] Although she was "capable of observing nature and was interested in recording her observations," her formal literary expression was "frozen in stiff artificial patterns":

> The Moss, the Ivy and the Vine
> Increase the awful gloom profound;
> Whilst Hills and lonely Wilds combine
> To shed fantastic Terrors round.[13]

This failure to reconcile a Neoclassic literary background with the "vulgar experiences of real life" on the frontier repeated itself time and again. As long as poets conceived of nature in terms of eighteenth-century ideas of the beautiful, sublime, and picturesque, they would continue to compose picturesque prospects, to indulge in "ruin" horrifics, and to become emotionally wrought over sublime scenery. This construction of nature singly resulted in a gaudy, artificial, and sentimentalized poetry; it led not to Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, but to the poets of the Gift Books and to Mrs.

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[12] See Leon Howard, "Literature and the Frontier: The Case of Sally Hastings," ELH: A Journal of English Literary History, VII (March, 1940), 68-82.

[13] Sally Hastings, Poems on Different Subjects. To Which is Added a Descriptive Account of a Family Tour to the West; in the Year 1800, 1808. Cited in Howard, "Literature and the Frontier," p. 70.

Lydia Sigourney, ingloriously known as the Felicia Hemans of America.

The ease with which poets of this period found goodness in nature contributed to the intellectual confusion and rigidity of form that marked their efforts to depict the frontier. The whole Enlightenment background sanctioned a belief that the natural world, made according to God's plan, exhibited "permanence, stability, balance, beneficence, law, and order."[14] Although rationalistic trust in plenitude, continuity, and gradation in nature had begun to weaken in the late eighteenth century, the new emphasis on change, growth, and diversity in no wise hindered the belief that Nature is the "kindly mother of us all." The wilderness facing the American settlers, however, provided a number of disquieting hints that nature could be indifferent or even opposed to man's welfare. In a famous essay Aldous Huxley claimed that Wordsworth's pantheism could not have developed in the tropics or "even in the forests of Germany," places where it is impossible for "a human being to feel himself at ease within their enormous glooms."[15] Such nature, which flourishes beyond the control of man, inspires not sublime reaching for the Infinite but the "uneasy feeling that he is an alien in the midst of an innumerable throng of hostile

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[14]Nye, Cultural Life of the New Nation, p. 12.

[15]Aldous Huxley, "Wordsworth in the Tropics," Collected Essays (New York, 1959), p. 2.

beings." Even though it can be argued that Wordsworth's mysticism embraced the dichotomies of nature that Melville was later to symbolize so well in Moby Dick, Huxley's thesis goes far to suggest the absence of a meaningful treatment of frontier nature by poets nourished, as Melville was not, by the picturesque tradition. In short, for truthful delineations of nature in the American wilderness, one looks not to poets but to essayists, writers of travel narratives, and folk artists.

If topographical poets were unable to cast aside worn ideas and language in delineating indigenous American nature, they achieved at least a degree of originality by using American place names and by describing native flora and fauna. Even as the idea of a Great Chain of Being was being supplanted by an organic or growth concept of nature, American poets were busy showing that the Great Architect had created a universe in which is actualized every possible form. In demonstrating the fullness and variety of nature, American poets were also refuting a popular conception in European science of the eighteenth century that American nature was inferior to European. The Abbé Raynal wrote that all things in America "shrink and diminish under a niggardly sky and in an unprolific land, peopled with wandering

savages."[16] In the interests of literary nationalism, even so conservative a poet as Timothy Dwight would resort to superlatives in describing his native Connecticut.

The widespread currency of poems that delineated the variety and grandeur of American nature lays open to doubt claims that Philip Freneau was the "pioneer nature poet of America"[17] and that he "heralded our literary independence, so far as themes are concerned, by bringing into poetry for the first time truly Americannature."[18] After the Revolution it became a cliché for critics to announce that Americans wanted to see the scenery of their own country in verse before any other, and as this study has disclosed, American poets were quick to answer the call. Following the War of 1812 demands for a national literature became even more insistent. A reviewer of Wordsworth's Poems in 1818 had "no doubt that the Delaware, the Mississippi, or the Ohio would flow as

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[16]Quoted in Nye, Cultural Life of the New Nation, p. 56. The theory of degeneracy in America was developed and popularized by the Abbé de Pauw, the Count de Buffon, and the Abbé Raynal. Thomas Jefferson ably refuted their claims in his Notes on the State of Virginia.

[17]F. L. Pattee in The First Century of American Literature (1935, p. 41) makes this claim on the basis that everywhere in Freneau's poems are used "the flora and fauna of his native land."

[18]Harry Hayden Clark (ed.), The Poems of Freneau (New York, 1929), p. xlix. Clark also said that in "an age of generality and abstraction Freneau was a pioneer . . . in turning, as a poet, to the concrete and particular."

harmoniously through American lyrics as the Tweed, the Thames, or the Avon."[19]

The use of rivers by this reviewer to represent the totality of American nature suggests the regard in which they were held.[20] No other kind of place names appeared with more frequency. The grandeur of American rivers was matched by the grandeur and originality of their names, whether Indian, Dutch, French, or English, and their associations with regional legend and history considerably enriched their connotative appeal. They appeared as symbols of progress and, just as easily, symbols of primitivism, for their currents directed the advance of civilization and their shores hid the simple lover of nature from the distractions of a contentious world. Declaimers of national glory called them up in long catalogues, apostrophized them in formal rhetoric, and made them representative of national unity amid geographical diversity. For those poets who increasingly saw nature reflecting inner states of mind, rivers became symbols of the vicissitudes of life and the confidants to whom they addressed their most secret longings.

The emphasis on rivers was quite within the picturesque tradition. English poets, including Wordsworth, described

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[19]Anonymous review in the Analectic Magazine, XII (1818), 69. Quoted in Sedgwick, "The Materials for an American Literature," 161.

[20]In The Quest for Nationality (p. 49) Benjamin Spencer states, "Decade by decade successive literary centers proclaimed the quantitative and hence aesthetic superiority

the Wye, Cam, Severn, or Derwent in much the same manner as American poets. In fact, nearly all attempts to describe native American scenery and flora and fauna were influenced by the picturesque interpretation of nature. The tendency to see nature in terms of landscape painting came to American poets through the influence of Thomson and Dyer and a host of their English followers, many of whose poems were verbal imitations of

> Whate'er Lorrain light-touch'd with softening Hue,
> Or savage Rosa dash'd, or learned Poussin drew.[21]

Joseph Addison, who lent his prestige to the picturesque interpretation, classified the qualities in landscapes that give pleasure. Greatness, Novelty, and Beauty are Pleasures of the Imagination "which arise from the actual View and Survey of outward Objects." His aesthetic demanded that a distinction be made between Art and Nature, and in Spectator No. 414 he explained that the most pleasure arises when they are balanced:

> If the Products of Nature rise in Value, according as they more or less resemble those of Art, we may be sure that artificial Works receive a greater Advantage from their Resemblance of such as are natural; because here the Similitude is not only pleasant, but the Pattern more perfect.

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of their regional streams to those of Europe." Later literary nationalists, notably Walt Whitman, Thomas Wolfe, and Hart Crane, would give American streams over greater literary prominence.

[21]From James Thomson, "The Castle of Indolence"(1748).

The conventional hill poems of the period, with their formal prospect-pieces, best exemplify the picturesque in American topographical poetry, and they help explain why this tradition impeded the poetic representation of truly American nature. Because what poets should see in nature was so authoritatively set forth, most of them saw the same things, whether on a hill in Lancashire or in Connecticut. Timothy Dwight, for instance, emphasized elements in the landscape of his "much-lov'd native land" that hardly distinguished it as American. Except for place names, the prospect from Greenfield Hill could be as easily English as American. Even didactic elements, wherein the "romance of local history" was set forth, did little to individualize American hill poems. Although the Indian and the American Revolution supplied most of the history, the didactic portions were simply embellishments, which, instead of being integrated with the description, stood apart as things extraneous.

Most English prospect poems included a ruin-piece, usually a description of a moss and ivy-covered Gothic cathedral,castle, or similar ancient and decaying structure, the representation of which symbolized the vanity of human wishes and the emptiness of worldly pride and induced in the reader a not unpleasant sensation of terror. American poets likewise sought out ruins, but had little success in finding great, solid-looking structures from the past which

showed the ravages of time. Fortifications built during the French and Indian War and earlier, such as Crown Point and Ticonderoga, sufficed as conventional ruin imagery, as did towns in the process of being burned by the British in the Revolutionary War. But these man made ruins were relatively scarce; the ruins of nature, on the other hand, were everywhere apparent. According to Bishop Burnet's Sacred Theory of the Earth (1697), a book that enjoyed considerable vogue in the eighteenth century, the world is a damaged paradise; and the irregularity and chaos in nature result from God's displeasure at man's sin. Evidence of the fallen state is everywhere, for although the physical world is

> . . . handsome and regular enough to the eye in certain parts of it, single tracts and single Regions; yet if we consider the whole surface of it, or the whole Exteriour Region, 'tis as a broken and confus'd heap of bodies, plac'd in no order to one another, nor with any correspondency or regularity of parts: And such a body as the Moon appears to us, when 'tis look'd upon with a good Glass, rude and ragged. . . . They are both in my judgment the image or picture of a great Ruine, and have the true aspect of a World lying in its rubbish.[22]

The wildness of much American topography mirrored well the ruins of the world, and into these ruins poets introduced natural terrors that matched the vogue for Gothic or graveyard horrifics. All the conventional beasts--owls,

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[22]Quoted in Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background (London, 1940), p. 29.

bats, ravens, wolves, plus rattlesnakes and bears--prowl through ruins formed mostly of stone-strewn mountain slopes, gloomy forests, and yawning precipices. Despite the originality achieved through use of indigenous ruin material, the total effect is that of a coup de théâtre. None of these precursors of the supernatural had the mastery of technique needed to create Poe's "ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir" nor the insight into the beauty and terror of the natural world that Blake symbolized in his "Tyger! Tyger! burning bright/ In the forests of the night. . . ."

For a few topographical poets wild and irregular scenery offered more than material for ruin pieces; to them, as to Byron, high mountains were a feeling, and they seriously sought to depict the grandeur in American nature, an effort which they believed would result in truly sublime poetry. But the picturesque tradition, emphasizing as it did the theatricality of nature, provided neither a language nor a philosophy of nature adequate for achieving the sublime. Whatever it was that enabled Wordsworth and Coleridge to transcend tradition and to give substance to the depiction of wild and irregular scenery was not to be found in American poets, who depicted Niagara Falls, Passaic Falls, or the Hudson Valley with the flamboyance and artificiality that characterize modern calendar art.

Certainly the failure of these poets to exploit sublime American nature arose not from a lack of material but from an inability to cast aside the language and conventions of the late eighteenth-century didactic-descriptive tradition and to confront nature with the imaginative insight that would distinguish writers of the forthcoming American Renaissance, such as Melville in prose and Whitman in poetry.[23] In "Passage to India" (1871), Walt Whitman fuses imagery from an industrial America, represented by the new transcontinental railroad, with imagery of the great American West into a dynamic and richly suggestive expression of progress. Such unorthodox use of topographical images must have puzzled most of his contemporaries, who had willingly inherited the old forms and themes of the picturesque tradition:

> Passage to India!
> . . . . . .
> I see over my own continent the Pacific railroad surmounting every barrier,
> I see continual trains of cars winding along the Platte carrying freight and passengers,
> I hear the locomotives rushing and roaring, and the shrill steam-whistle,
> I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest scenery in the world,
> I cross the Laramie plains, I note the rocks in grotesque shapes, the buttes,
> I see the plentiful larkspur and wild onions, the barren, colorless, sage-deserts,

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[23]Howard Mumford Jones in O Strange New World (New York, 1964) reviews the failure of Americans of the early national period to cast aside "genteel stylistic ideals" of Neoclassicism. See Chapter X, "American Landscape," pp. 351-59.

I see in glimpses afar or towering immediately above me the great mountains, I see the Wind river and the Wahsatch mountains,
I see the Monument mountain and the Eagle's Nest, I pass the Promontory, I ascend the Nevadas,
I scan the noble Elk mountain and wind around its base,
I see the Humboldt range, I thread the valley and cross the river,
I see the clear waters of lake Tahoe, I see forests of majestic pines,
Or crossing the great desert, the alkaline plains, I behold enchanting mirages of waters and meadows,
Marking through these and after all, in duplicate slender lines,
Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,
Tying the Eastern to the Western sea,
The road between Europe and Asia.

Proof of the dominance of the picturesque tradition in American topographical poetry comes most convincingly from the prevalence of the rural retirement theme. As this study has disclosed, the theme has ample precedent in English poetry, Neoclassic, pre-Romantic, and Romantic. The type of retirement advocated in Pomfret's "The Choice" is Horatian--a life of contentment and moderation on a modest country estate. Subsequent poets, like Anne, Countess of Winchilsea, combined the classical love of retirement with an eye for the loveliness of hills and streams and meadows. In the latter half of the century the poets of sensibility brought into the theme a note of introspective melancholy, and their penchant for cultural primitivism democratized the retreat into a simple husbandman's dwelling or hermit's cave.

Literary precedent alone, however, cannot account completely for the popularity of the theme in American poetry. An urge for the simplicity of rural life stands out as a

prominent facet of late eighteenth-century American culture. The new republican ethic called for a repudiation of luxury and ostentation, for classical history gave ample evidence that if luxury was the curse of nations, frugality and simplicity were virtues that led to greatness.[24] Rural living, coupled with active pursuit of agriculture, provided the right condition for the development of these virtues and for the acquisition of equanimity with which to counter the complexities posed by a new form of government and by an increasingly commercial and urban culture. Both the career and aspirations of George Washington illustrate the faith of Americans in the land and the kind of life available to a farmer of competence, as Timothy Dwight used the term. Washington was nurtured under the practical philosophy that rural contentment should be a guide and limit to man's ambition. As a boy of thirteen he had carefully copied into his school exercise book an anonymous effusion entitled "True Happiness," which in imitation of the theme of Horatian retirement in Pomfret's "The Choice" urged "a good estate on healthy Soil," as well as "Prudent Simplicity, constant Friends," and "a will to be but what thou art." These "things . . . once Possess'd/ Will make a life that's truly blessed."[25] Throughout his life there is evidence

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[24]Jones, O Strange New World, pp. 248 and 327.

[25]Quoted in John C. Fitzpatrick, George Washington Himself (Indianapolis, 1933), p. 30.

that Washington wanted a life patterned after "nature's simple plan." Soon after settling down following his service in the French and Indian War, he wrote to an English kinsman who had invited him to visit London: "I am now I believe fixed at this Seat with an agreeable Consort for Life. And hope to find more happiness in retirement than I ever experienced amidst a wide and bustling World."[26] For the remainder of his life, he considered his public service as interruptions of his real calling, that of a gentleman farmer, and he thought that the end of the Revolutionary War meant an end of his public life:

> I am at length become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac, where under my own Vine and Fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp and the intrigues of a court, I shall view the busy world with calm indifference, and with serenity of mind, which the Soldier in pursuit of glory, and the Statesman of a name, have not leisure to enjoy.[27]

That the propensity for retirement should be so strong in an active and robust man of affairs suggests the extent to which Americans had assimilated the idea. Other founding fathers, notably John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, cherished rural contentment.[28]

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[26]Letter to Richard Washington, 1759, in The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, D. C., 1931), II, 336.

[27]Letter to Marquis de Chastellux, 1784, in The Writings of George Washington (Washington, D.C., 1938), XXVII, 314.

[28]Jones, pp. 246-47.

Jefferson, in fact, based his political theory on rural simplicity, for which he found a rationale in "environmentalism," the Enlightenment doctrine that the natural and social environment profoundly influences human nature.[29] Specifically he believed that the American countryside nourished virtuous characteristics in men and that democracy would flourish among a society of freeholders. In Notes on the State of Virginia (1785) he called farmers "the chosen people of God . . . whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue."[30] The chief enemy to the attainment of good government he believed to be great cities, which are "pestilential to the morals, the health and the liberties of man."[31]

Before the industrial revolution had so thoroughly complicated the individual's relationship to society, rural simplicity, as an ethical ideal, became strongly etched in the American grain. Civilized man has ever sought to escape disquieting complexities induced by the pursuit of material progress through retreat to a simpler mode of existence.

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[29]Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York, 1943), pp. 165-66.

[30]The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Paul Leicester Ford, III, 268-69. Cited in Dumas Malone, Jefferson the Virginian (Boston, 1948), p. 384.

[31]Letter to James Madison, Dec. 20, 1787, Quoted in Charles Maurice Wiltse, The Jeffersonian Tradition in American Democracy (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1935), p. 102.

In late eighteenth-century America political and social problems increased as the new country filled and as class lines disappeared. The agitation over British colonial policy, the War, and the uncertainties attendant on establishing a new government produced an atmosphere of crisis inimical to social stability. The insecurity of the times seemed to bode ill for a "return to normalcy." With their country a virtual Garden of the World, Americans looked both forward and backward--back to primitivistic rural simplicity and forward to the promise of progress in the inevitable rise of civilization in a virgin land.

The juxtaposition of progress and primitivism in eighteenth-century literature gave rise to considerable confusion of the two ideas.[32] Paradoxically the rural retirement theme in topographical poetry exists side by side with the prophecy of future glory, a poetic convention which holds the same relation to the idea of progress that

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[32]See Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore, 1934) for an exposition of the currency of the two ideas in English popular literature of the eighteenth century. In a preface to this book, Professor Arthur O. Lovejoy gives a typical example of the coexistence of the two ideas in the same author and the same poem (pp. xviii-xix). Explaining that the "opposition between the two tendencies was less often a conflict between different minds than a fluctuation of moods within the same mind," he notes that Thomson on one page yearns for "'the blissful groves/ Where . . . innocence and joy forever dwelt'" and on the next celebrates "the glorious triumphs of Britain's commerce and the blessings 'of wealth, of trade, of cheerful toiling crowds.'"

rural retirement holds to primitivism.[33] The "future glory" prophecy, like the retirement theme, appears as a highly stereotyped convention in both prose and poetry of the period. Essentially the theme expresses confidence in the progress of American civilization toward the greatest good for the greatest number. The United States had vast material and spiritual resources for these achievements, as many Fourth of July orators proudly boasted:

> He, who casts his eye over our happy land, must perceive that we form a little political world in ourselves: that our country seems, as was said of Laconia, to be but the patrimony of a band of brothers: that we appear to be another favored race, sent out by Heaven, from the storms and miseries of Europe, to dwell in this land of promise . . . . If we begin with our own State [South Carolina], we shall behold our political and civil institutions continually improving; religion and knowledge more widely diffused; civilization extending in the country, and refinement in the city; discordant parts successively assuming the uniformity of the whole, and confusion gradually subsiding into order. Travel through each of our sister States, and you may observe with pleasure and surprise the operation of similar principles. . . . Then conceive yourselves elevated to an eminence, whence the eye may embrace the wide circuit of our happy land. Think what it was when we first became a nation; consider its present state, and mark the gradual advancement of prosperity and power. See the forest retiring, and the village expanding into the populous town: see this in turn swelling into the magnificence and greatness of the city. . . . Behold the genius of enterprise collecting his bands of adventurers, and leading them to the western wilds. Behold! . . . the gloomy spirit of solitude retires before them, and the grateful wanderer builds the verdant altar to agriculture and peace.[34]

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[33]The "future glory" theme as used here also includes the conventional praises of commerce discussed in Chapter V of this study.

[34]From an oration delivered by Thomas Smith Grimké in St. Philip's Church, Charleston, S.C., on July 4, 1809. Quoted in Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, The American Spirit (New York, 1942), pp. 151-52.

According to Professor Lois Whitney, the curious mating of primitivism and progress resulted from the imperfect comprehension of the ideas by those who expounded them in popular literature.[35] Whatever the reason, one finds this paradox of compatible contrarieties not just in topographical poetry from 1783 to 1812 but in other forms of literature which both antedate and postdate the period. In Bishop George Berkeley's famous poem on the New World, the march of civilization westward will be accompanied by a return to simplicity. For, in America,

> . . . the seat of innocence
> Where nature guides and virtue rules,
> Where men shall not impose for truth and sense
> The pedantry of courts and schools:
>
> There shall be sung another golden age,
> The rise of empire and of arts,
> The good and great inspiring epic rage,
> The wisest heads and noblest hearts.[36]

As Bishop Berkeley's prophecy fulfilled itself in the Western movement of American settlers, the same interplay of progress and primitivism shaped attitudes toward pioneers such as Daniel Boone. To apostles of progress like John Filson, the Kentuckian was a hero fulfilling the American destiny of taming the wilderness, but to a few,

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[35]Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, pp. 331-32.

[36]From "Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America," 1752.

notably those not actually involved in frontier life, he was a fugitive from civilization seeking a simple life in nature. Later in the century, the conflicting ideas existed side by side in the same work, as in Timothy Flint's The Life and Adventures of Daniel Boone (1833).[37] Ideas involving primal innocence and worldly experience extended beyond regional literature to influence all artists seriously engaged in defining the American dream. According to Professor R. W. B. Lewis, the most representative image in American literature between 1820 and 1860 was that of the American Adam, "a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities."[38] Paradoxically the image involved "the notion of progress toward perfection and the notion of primitive Adamic perfection," with both ideas overlapping and intertwining.[39] This jangle of contrary tendencies, Professor Lewis believes, arose from a dualism implicit in human thinking, which was "demonstrated afresh in early nineteenth-century America, when a denial of the past generated, by compensation, a new nostalgia, a new veneration

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[37]The attitudes toward Boone are treated at length in H. N. Smith's Virgin Land (Chapter V: "Daniel Boone: Empire Builder or Philosopher of Primitivism"), pp. 51-58.

[38]R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago, 1955), p. 1.

[39]Ibid., p. 5.

for the past in its pastness."[40] It would require but little investigation to discover that even in the twentieth century, American idealism faces the dilemma of trying to maintain the integrity of the past in areas of spiritual and moral progress where the past seems of little use.

In its most obvious Neoclassic form the rural retirement theme has little in common with that eighteenth-century mode of thought and feeling known as sensibility. Rural contentment, as conceived by Pomfret and his American imitators, presupposes a rational attempt by a gentleman of leisure, neither stoic nor hedonist, to achieve the golden mean. As previous chapters of this study have disclosed, however, the retirement theme is more often sentimental than rational. The retreat becomes not the pattern of a life of competence and moderation but a temporary escape from painful existence in a setting close to "natural" nature. Solitude, evening, and other Graveyard paraphernalia often complicate the simple setting of a pleasant "seat," and melancholy intrudes in the form of love plaints, philosophic world sorrow, and moralistic musings on death and mutability.

Novelists, as well as poets, share the responsibility for sentimentalizing the retirement theme. In most early American novels, characters imbued with sensibility nourished

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[40] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

the delicate susceptibilities of their hearts by isolating themselves in retreats, such as summer houses on estates, sylvan groves (often improved by art), or rocky glens.[41] In The Power of Sympathy (1789), the first American novel, one finds an estate furnished with a statue of "Content," one hand pointing in the direction of a summer house, called the Temple of Apollo, and the other to some inscribed verses welcoming those who "fly Ambition's guilty cares" to the "calm retreat" where Innocence dwells.[42] Although this sort of nonsense represents the nadir of the retirement theme, the same novel demonstrates that the vogue for contentment could have more substance; for the cult of sensibility, if it encouraged sentimentalism, also made men more subtly aware of the spiritual offices of nature:

> A peaceful, recluse life is suited to my temper--there is something in the soft breath of Nature--in the delicacy of smiling meadows and cultivated fields--in the sublimity of an aged wood--of broken rocks--of rivers pouring along their lucid waves, to which the heart always gives a ready reception--there is something within us congenial to these scenes; they impress the mind with ideas similar to what we feel in beholding one whom we tenderly esteem.[43]

By the late eighteenth century the tendency to equate sensibility with sensitivity to natural beauty was leading to

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[41]Herbert Ross Brown, The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860 (Durham, N. C., 1940), pp. 135-39.

[42]Letter VII: Mrs. Holmes to Miss Harrington.

[43]Letter XIII: Worthy to Myra.

the decline of the didactic-descriptive poem and the rise of subjective lyrics. American topographical poetry, particularly the river poems, became vehicles for the same sentimental themes that Eleanor Sickels traces in English poetry of melancholy between Gray and Keats. From her classification of love elegies, for example, one discovers that English and American poets followed the same primrose paths of dalliance: there is the invitation motif (Damon invites Sylvia to share in rural retirement); the absence motif (fate has torn the lover from his beloved); and the fickleness motif (Cynthia has moved to town and now scorns her rustic swain).[44] Moreover, she finds sensibility so compatible with melancholy that the two themes often merge. An invocation to sensibility, which she quotes entire, shows a quite typical blend of delicate feeling, pathos, and moody scenery. One cannot escape noticing the similarity of the sentiments and the surroundings in which they are uttered to those in a great many American topographical poems contemporaneous with it:

SENSIBILITY[45]

Nymph of the glist'ning eye, I know thee well;
The jarring world is not thy favor'd sphere,

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[44]Eleanor M. Sickels, The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy from Gray to Keats (New York, 1932), p. 185.

[45]From Gentleman's Magazine, April, 1795. Quoted in Sickels, The Gloomy Egoist, p. 200.

Thy silent tears alone thy sorrows tell;
   Thy sighs responsive to the gales I hear.
Thou liv'st to weep, the giddy world will say,
   By moss-grown tow'rs, or by the lucid stream,
To melt and sigh thy pensive soul away,
   While musing in the yellow moon-light beam.
. . . . . .
The tearful eye, the mantled cheek are thine,
   The pointed anguish throbbing at the heart,
The thrill of rapture, ecstasy divine,
   Which Angels to their favor'd Saints impart.
Then fly to Solitude's deep-russet shade,
   Where zephyrs gently wave the roseate bow'r;
. . . . . .
With fancy trip the mountain's shaggy brow,
   And view the silver ocean's briny wave:
Which dashes restless on the rocks below,
   Or tends the sea-nymph to her coral cave.

The ascendancy of sensibility in the eighteenth century was bound up with the increasing economic importance of the middle class, the rise of women in social and literary importance, the "moral sense" philosophy of the third Earl of Shaftesbury, and primitivism as popularized by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[46] In its purest usage sensibility meant "extreme delicacy and keenness of feeling and ultra-refinement of sensitiveness to beauty both natural and moral."[47] Although sensibility nourished humanitarian impulses which flowered in scores of nineteenth-century reforms, indulgence of the emotions too often became an end in itself, and benevolence, sympathy, and pity degenerated into morbidity. As reflected in popular taste of late eighteenth-century America,

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[46]Sickels, The Gloomy Egoist, p. 194.

[47]Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, p. 99.

sensibility meant emotionalism, either the sentimentalism pervading poetry, drama, and the novel or the excessive displays of piety that accompanied religious revivalism. In the 1790's the "Second Great Awakening" of American Protestantism produced the frontier camp meeting at which evangelists

> . . . preached a muscular, shirt-sleeves religion of fear and hope that attracted roughhewn frontiersmen and their women folk. Hankering for emotional release . . ., they welcomed, sometimes hysterically. . ., the huge get-togethers where tense nerves and repressed feelings found satisfaction in emotional debauches in the name of God.[48]

Restraining themselves from such direct emotionalism, the more sedate among the population, primarily middle-class females, gained their thrills vicariously through the sentimental novel, a popular new diversion which combined into a highly successful formula "the seduction motif, sentimental exploitation of irresponsible emotion, and sententious moralism."[49] Pamela, by Samuel Richardson, was both the prototype and the first in popularity, and Laurence Sterne's A Sentimental Journey, which received seven printings in America between 1768 and 1795, further made intensity of feeling a virtue.[50] Despite cautions from moralists that such novels

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[48]Curti, Growth of American Thought, p. 201.

[49]Edwin H. Cady (ed.), Literature of the Early Republic (New York, 1960), p. 300.

[50]Hart, The Popular Book, pp. 55 and 60.

weakened character, practically all the thirty odd American novels of the late eighteenth century contain strong elements of sensibility.[51] "Hail sensibility! Ye eloquent tears of beauty!" exclaims one of the letter writers in The Power of Sympathy, and subsequent novelists were sometimes hard pressed to "discover unhackneyed phraseology to describe the tears which drip in well nigh every volume."[52]

The vogue for sensibility affected not only susceptible females but men of affairs as well. Frequently lauded for his acute sensibility, General Washington "shed his distinguished tears in public" at a New York production of Isaac Bickerstaffe's The Maid of the Mill,[53] and Thomas Jefferson, although a foe of fiction, was moved to pronounce "The writings of Sterne . . . the best course of morality that ever was written."[54] With the tides of taste so clearly directed toward sensibility and sentimentalism it is no wonder that American topographical poets between 1783

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[51]Tremaine McDowell, "Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century American Novel," Studies in Philology, XXIV (July, 1927), 383.

[52]Ibid., p. 385.

[53]Brown, Sentimental Novel, p. 92.

[54]Cited in Brown, Sentimental Novel, p. 77. Jefferson and the editor Joseph Dennie, a staunch Federalist, were in accord on at least one point: Sterne's sensibility, Dennie wrote in 1796, was "worth a million cold homilies."

and 1812 could so easily afford the "sad luxury of woe."

In England the cult of sensibility helped bring about the triumph of Romanticism, heralded by the publication in 1798 of Lyrical Ballads. No such dramatic metamorphosis occurred in American poetry, however. The lag in the advent of Romanticism in the two countries sometimes has been laid to the slowness in transmission of ideas across the Atlantic. This charge might be true were it not a fact that the popularity in America of Scott, Byron, Campbell, and Moore was contemporaneous with their popularity in England. The early sluggishness of Romanticism in America results from other causes. American poets borrowed literary themes and conventions that were not congenial to a raw, undeveloped land. Refinement of feeling and picturesque-sublime subject matter did not accord with conditions of American life. Bombast and artificiality were the inevitable results of feelings that could find no focus in actual experience. The harshness of the frontier, the Philistinism of the rising middle class, and the pragmatic and utilitarian temper of the times delayed the American Renaissance.

American Romanticism would come of age some twenty years or so later than English, but with significant differences. Whereas the great English Romantics were almost exclusively poets, most of the important American Romantics--Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, and Hawthorne--attained lasting

fame only in the essay and novel. The failure of Emerson and Melville as formal poets and their success as "prose poets" has been an often noted inconsistency of their careers. Even the two major poets, Poe and Whitman, owed little to the eighteenth-century English background. Whitman created his own highly individualistic interpretation of American nature, and Poe's aestheticism led him to a world of artifice that had little relevance to either the English background or the American scene. In short, the really significant attitudes toward American nature developed independently of British Romanticism. It was the "Fireside" or "Schoolroom" poets--Bryant, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, and Longfellow--who directly inherited the literary forms and conventions of sensibility and the picturesque. All the shortcomings which modern critics find in these poets have their origin in the poetic tradition exemplified by American topographical poetry of the period 1783-1812. Professor George Arms has identified these shortcomings as sentimentalism, superficial didacticism, "poetical-picturesque" subject matter, and literary language in the "neoclassical tradition of Dryden and Pope, with the modifications proposed by Wordsworth for simplicity."[55]

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[55]The Fields Were Green (Stanford, California, 1953), pp. 3-6.

Overall, this survey of topographical poetry makes it clearer than ever that the United States, late in the eighteenth century, had the makings of a Romantic revolution in poetry which never did quite come off. American poets had become increasingly responsive to feeling, and they were looking ever more closely at the outdoor world they knew and loved. But neither superfluity of feeling nor abundance of concrete imagery by themselves makes great poetry. The Romantic interpretation of reality involves a reciprocity between the poet and the "life" which he projects into the world around him.

> It is one of the common tenets of English romantic criticism that the imagination is capable, through an effort of sympathetic intuition, of identifying itself with its object; and, by means of this identification, the sympathetic imagination grasps, through a kind of direct experience and feeling, the distinctive nature, identity, or "truth" of the object of its contemplation.[56]

For the natural world to acquire spiritual significance through the power of imagination requires a sureness of the validity of individual insight that American poets lacked, mainly because of the discrepancy between their environment and the literary tradition in which they felt compelled to work. The environment was all new, democratic, and undisciplined; the tradition was all aristocratic, moralistic, and orderly. The resulting play of opposites is hardly surprising in light of the continual tension in American

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[56]Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England (Cambridge, 1946), p. 132.

intellectual life between the claims of freedom and authority and between the past and the future.

That the opposing tendencies produced a dualism in poetic practice of the nineteenth century is borne out by the following critical evaluation of the state of American poetry at the turn of the century:

> Formal poetry in America in the year 1900 seemed benighted in every sense: it was imitative, sentimental, and "genteel." Its relationship to the vigorous elements in the culture which surrounded it . . . was superficial. Its relationship to the vigorous poetic talents which only recently had ceased functioning was weak; both Whitman and Melville . . . had died in obscurity, and the brief flurry of interest in the poems and letters of Emily Dickinson . . . had already died out. The weight of British Victorian tradition lay heavily upon American poets in general; and the strong native moralizing bent of the American poets of the school readers--Bryant, Whittier, and Longfellow--still operated.[57]

The ease with which this evaluation can be applied to the state of American poetry in the year 1800 demonstrates a century-long failure of American poets to cope with the discrepancy between the demands of tradition and the need for freedom in interpreting their environment. The freedom provided by the intuitive-symbolic construction of the external world sanctioned in Emerson's Nature had little influence on the course of American poetry; poets of the didactic-picturesque tradition held undisputed sway.

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[57]Louise Bogan, Achievement in American Poetry: 1900-1950 (Chicago, 1951), pp. 3-4.

Because the great English poets of the nineteenth century generally maintained a balance between tradition and license, their poetry divides itself into historical periods corresponding to important trends in national life. The dichotomy in American poetry, however, resulted in a static dualism rather than stages of historical development. Perhaps instead of labeling American topographical poets as Neoclassic, pre-Romantic, or Romantic, one might better use such terms as "Genteel Traditionalist" and "Transcendentalist," opposing categories which would better reflect the dualism.[58] Whatever classification one uses, the fact remains that this survey of American topographical poetry from 1783 to 1812 has discovered no genius "with tyrannous eye" who, in Emerson's words, "knew the value of our incomparable materials."

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[58]Frederic I. Carpenter uses this terminology in American Literature and the Dream (New York, 1955).

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Bridgman, Richard. "Jefferson's Farmer before Jefferson," American Quarterly, XIV (Winter, 1962), 567-77.

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Dennie, Joseph. "Miscellaneous Paragraphs," Port Folio, V (May 18, 1805), 148.

_____. "Panegyrick on Thomson," Massachusetts Magazine, I (February, 1789), 361.

_____. "Review of Gertrude of Wyoming," Port Folio, II (August, 1809), 153-170.

Howard, Leon. "Literature and the Frontier: The Case of Sally Hastings," ELH: A Journal of English Literary History, VII (March, 1940), 68-82.

Humphreys, David. "A Poem on the Happiness of America," American Museum, I (1787), 250.

McDowell, Tremaine. "Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century American Novel," Studies in Philology, XXIV (July, 1927), 383-402.

Moore, Cecil A. "The Return to Nature in English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century," Studies in Philology, XIV (1917), 243-291.

"Parody of the Sonnet, On a Country Seat near Philadelphia," Weekly Magazine, I (April 7, 1798), 316.

Peal, John. "The Varied Landscape," Columbian Magazine, III (July, 1789), 416.

"Schuylkill Side," New American Magazine, I (June, 1758), 143-44.

Sedgwick, William Ellery. "The Materials for an American Literature: A Critical Problem of the Early Nineteenth Century," Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, XVII (1935), 141-62.

Simpson, Lewis P. "Federalism and the Crisis of Literary Order," American Literature, XXXII (November, 1960), 253-66.

"Sketches from Nature: A Landscape," Port Folio, IV [n.s.](November 28, 1807), 239-40.

"Some Conjectures Respecting the First Peopling of America," American Museum, X (1791), 261-64.

"Winter," American Magazine, I (November, 1788), 872.

Woolley, Mary E. "The Development of the Love of Romantic Scenery in America," American Historical Review, III (October, 1897), 56-66.

UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

Bates, Mary Dexter. "Columbia's Bards: A Study of American Verse from 1783 through 1799." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 1954.

Flewelling, H. Lloyd. "Literary Criticism in American Magazines, 1783-1800." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1931.

Sylvester, H. E. "The American Museum: A Study of Prevailing Ideas in Late Eighteenth Century America." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1954.

APPENDICES

A. CHECKLIST OF AMERICAN TOPOGRAPHICAL POEMS, 1783-1812

The list is composed of seven main sections--Hill, Estate, Town, Region, River, Natural Phenomena, and Journey. Poems are assigned to each section on the basis of the type and physical extent of the features described. The seven categories are treated in detail under appropriate headings in Chapter III. Because the Schuylkill and Hudson Rivers and Passaic Falls stand above all other specific physical features in popularity, poems featuring these subjects are grouped under appropriate sub-headings within the sections River and Natural Phenomena.

Within each section (and the three sub-sections), poems of known authorship are entered alphabetically. For convenience of cross reference among the various sections, an author index is included at the end of the checklist. Poems of unknown authorship, which immediately follow the alphabetical entries, are arranged chronologically on the basis of their first appearance within the period 1783-1812. It was found impractical to alphabetize all listings within each section. Of the 187 total entries, 20 are anonymous and 63 are either signed with outlandish pseudonyms or are initialed. Little would be gained from alphabetizing the pseudonyms and initials; only seven appear more than once and only one more than twice: "Matilda"

signed three poems delineating nature on the Great Lakes frontier.

Subsequent reprints and republications of individual poems are noted under initial entries. Items are annotated only (1) if the title of a poem does not clearly indicate the reason for its inclusion within a particular section; (2) if textual or other vagaries occur in republication; or (3) if there seems to be some discrepancy in bibliographical data between poems appearing both in this checklist and the one accompanying R. A. Aubin's Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England (1936). For the few poems which have not been examined firsthand, reference is made to the bibliographical source which served as the authority in making the entry.

In each entry certain symbols and abbreviations impart four kinds of information:

1. Appearance in Aubin's checklist

An asterisk (*) at the head of an entry denotes that the poem was previously included in R. A. Aubin's checklist of English and American topographical poetry.

The following notations appear within parentheses at the end of each initial entry:

2. Locality

Standard abbreviations identify by state (if known) the locality described in the poem.

3. Stanzaic and metrical forms

10-ers --- decasyllabic couplets
8-ers --- octosyllabic couplets
herq --- decasyllabic quatrains (the form of Gray's "Elegy")
ballad --- ballad stanzas ($a^4b^3c^4b^3$)
quat --- quatrains of any other sort (typically octosyllabic meter rhyming abab)
b.v. --- blank verse
stz --- stanzas of any other sort

4. Some common themes and conventions of Eighteenth-Century Topographical Poetry

(a) Conventions arising largely from the influence of Thomson, Denham, Dyer, and Pope:

A --- Prospect
B --- Rural Retirement
C --- Invocation to Muse
D --- Catalogue
E --- Praise of Commerce
F --- History
G --- Moralizing
H --- Condemnation of Historical Misdeeds Enacted Locally
I --- Honorable Mention of Estate
J --- Nymphs and Other Sylvan Deities
K --- Graveyard or Ruin Sentiments
L --- Apostrophe to River
M --- Prophecy of Future Glory

Symbols A, B, D, E, K, M are treated in detail in Chapter V under separate headings corresponding to the labels above. Symbols F, G, H are collectively discussed in Chapter V under the heading The Didactic Urge. Symbols C, I, J, L are briefly described in Chapter V under the heading Other Conventions.

(b) Conventions first appearing in quantity in late eighteenth-century descriptive poetry which became common property of nineteenth-century Romantic poets:

S --- Childhood or Early Recollections
T --- Address to or Mention of Person Dear to Poet
V --- Solace Sought in Nature over Personal Misfortune
W --- Delineation of Wild, Rugged Scenery
X --- Sentimental Introspection

All of these symbols are treated individually and at length in Chapter VI under headings closely corresponding to the labels above.

HILL POEMS

1. *Allen, James, "An Intended Inscription, Written for the Monument on Beacon-Hill, in Boston, and Addressed to the Passenger," American Poems, Selected and Original. Edited by Elihu H. Smith. Litchfield: Collier and Buel, 1793, I, 199-201 (Mass., 10-ers, A. E. F, H).
   Reprinted with same title in The Columbian Muse. New York: J. Carey, 1794, pp. 146-47, and in New-England Quarterly Magazine, I (1802), 283-84. Reprinted in shortened form as "Beacon Hill," in Emerald; or, Miscellany of Literature, I (November 8, 1806), 330-31. R. A. Aubin lists separately the poem in the Emerald.

2. *Deane, Samuel. Pitchwood Hill: A Poem, Written in the Year 1780. Portland, Maine: 1806 (Me., 8-ers, A, B, C, D, E, H, I, J, K).

3. *Dwight, Timothy. Greenfield Hill: A Poem, in Seven Parts. New York: Childs & Swaine, 1794 (Conn., 10-ers, b.v., 8-ers, stz, A, B, D, E, F, G, H, K, L, M).

4. *Freneau, Philip. "Neversink," Poems Written between the Years 1768 & 1794. Monmouth, New Jersey: At the Press of the Author, 1795, p. 386 (N. J., stz, A, B, F).
   A farewell to the sea from the heights near Sandy Hook.

5. Hopkinson, Francis. "Extrempore Verses from the Top of Mount Parnassus, a Lofty Hill in Lancaster County," The Miscellaneous Essays and Occasional Writings of Francis Hopkinson, Esq. Philadelphia: Dobson, 1792, III, 112-13 (Pa., ballad, A, E, T).

6. *[Lisle, Henry Maurice]. Milton Hill; a Poem. Boston: E. Lincoln, 1803 (Mass., 10-ers, A, C, E, F, G, J).

7. *[Morton, Sarah Wentworth]. Beacon Hill: a Local Poem, Historic and Descriptive. Boston: Manning & Loring, 1797 (Various states, 10-ers, A, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, M).

8. *Philenia [Morton, Sarah Wentworth]. "Lines Written At the Request of a Friend, on the View from Beacon-Hill, near Boston, Where a Sumptuous Monument Has Lately Been Erected to Perpetuate the Principal Events of the Late Revolution," American Museum; or, Universal Magazine, IX (1791), app. i, 3 (Mass., 10-ers, A, E, F).
Revised and lengthened version reprinted as "Descriptive Lines, Written at the Request of a Friend, upon the Surrounding Prospect from Beacon-Hill in Boston," in American Poems, Selected and Original. Edited by Elihu H. Smith. Litchfield: Collier and Buel, 1793, I, 176-79 (A, E, F, H, M).

9. Russell, John Miller. "The Village Cliff," The Pastoral Songs of P. Virgil Maro. To Which Are Added, Poems Sentimental and Descriptive. Boston: 1799, pp. 31-37 (Mass., b.v., A, B, F, G, K, S, T).
Poet's favorite hill overlooking Boston and Charlestown is the scene of recollections in tranquillity.

10. *Topliff, Nathaniel. "Mount Potosi," Poems, Moral, Descriptive, and Political. Boston: J. Belcher, 1809, pp. 43-46 (Mass., 8-ers, A, D, E, G).

11. *Z. A. [anon.] "The Agreeable Prospect; or, A View of Charlestown, from the Adjacent Hills of Boston; Interspersed with Moral Reflections," Boston Magazine, II (August, 1785), 309-12 (Mass., 10-ers, A, D, E, G, H, M).

12. Linus [pseud.]. "A Summer's Day," Massachusetts Magazine, VII (July, 1795), 251-52 (Mass., b.v., A, K, W).
Poet follows day's progress atop "Mount Jauconick."

13. S. D. E. [anon.] "Lines, Supposed to be Written on Beacon-Hill, Boston, in the Year 1799," Hive (Lancaster, Pa.), I (November 16, 1803), 88 (Mass., 10-ers, A, B, F, H, J).

14. [Anon.]. "Green Mountain," Port Folio, II [n. s.] (October 4, 1806), 203 (Vt., stz, F, W).
This lyric pays tribute to the progress of the seasons on Green Mountain.

15. [Anon.]. "Verses Written at Mount Radnor, April, 1764," Extracts in Prose and Verse, by a Lady of Maryland . . . Annapolis: Frederick Green, 1808, II, 172-85 (Md., 10-ers, A, B, C, D, G, T, W).

ESTATE POEMS

16. Arnold, Josias Lyndon. "Lines Written at the Rural Retreat of Mr. J. Page, Smithfield, Rhode-Island," Poems. Providence: Carter and Wilkinson, 1797, p. 125 (R. I., sonnet, B).

17. Bleecker, Ann Eliza. "Return to Tomhanick," Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker. New York: Swords, 1793, pp. 260-64 (N. Y., 10-ers, B, D).
Poetess, returning to her home in upstate New York, catalogs the delights of nature around her "peaceful mansion."

18. *Hopkinson, Francis. "Hermitage: a Poem, Inscribed to Mr. Jacob Duché, Jun.," The Miscellaneous Essays and Occasional Writings of Francis Hopkinson, Esq. Philadelphia: Dobson, 1792, III, 11-17 (N. Y., ballad, A, B, C, I, T).
Description of the estate of Josiah Martin on Long Island.

19. *Humphreys, David. "Mount Vernon: an Ode, Inscribed to General Washington, Written at Mount Vernon, August 1786," Worcester Magazine, II (November, 1786), 376 (Va., stz, B, F, G, I).
Reprinted: New-Haven Gazette and the Connecticut Magazine, (November 16, 1786), 314; Columbian Magazine; or, Monthly Miscellany, I (1787), 246-47; American Museum, III (May, 1788), 482; David Humphreys. Poems. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1789, pp. 57-59; The Miscellaneous Works of Colonel David Humphreys. n. p., Hodge, Allen, and Campbell, 1790, pp. 68-70; American Poems, Selected and Original. Edited by Elihu H. Smith. Litchfield: Collier and Buel, 1793, pp. 123-126; The Columbian Muse. New York: J. Carey, 1794, pp. 116-19.

20. Searson, John. "Thoughts on Mount Vernon, the Seat of His Excellency George Washington," Poems on Various Subjects. Philadelphia: Snowden & M'Corkle, 1797, pp. 90-91 (Va., 10-ers, B, C, I).

21. *_____. "Mount Vernon; A Poem, Rural, Romantic and Descriptive," Mount Vernon: A Poem, Being the Seat of His Excellency George Washington, in the State of Virginia. Philadelphia: Folwell, 1800, pp. 9-26 (Va., 10-ers, A, B, G, I, X). [Book title is misleading; this volume is a collection of separate poems. Aubins listing assumes Mount Vernon is a volume comprising a single poem.]

22. _____. "Thoughts in Mount-Vernon Garden," Mount Vernon: A Poem, Being the Seat of His Excellency George Washington, in the State of Virginia. Philadelphia: Folwell, 1800, p. 28 (Va., 8-ers, B, X).

23. _____. "Acrostic on Mount-Vernon, the Seat of His Excellency George Washington," Mount Vernon: A Poem, Being the Seat of His Excellency George Washington, in the State of Virginia. Philadelphia: Folwell, 1800, pp. 37-38 (Va., 8-ers, I).

24. Swanwick, John. "Lines Written at a Country Seat near This City, on Seeing Crouds [sic] Passing to the so justly Celebrated Garden of Messrs Grays," Poems on Several Occasions. Philadelphia: F. and R. Bailey, 1797, pp. 102-104 (Pa., quat.).
Poet offers tribute to Gray's Garden on the Schuylkill, where art and nature have been successfully combined.

25. [Wilson, Alexander]. "The Invitation. Addressed to Mr. C[harle]S O[r]R," Literary Magazine, and American Register, II (July, 1804), 265-67 (Pa., 10-ers, B, D, T, X).
An invitation to Wilson's cottage at Gray's Ferry.

26. *_____. "A Rural Walk, the Scenery Drawn from Nature." Literary Magazine and American Register, II (August, 1804), 377-79 (Pa., quat, A, D, I).
A catalogue of the "plants and fruits, and flowers" at William Bartram's farm.
Reprinted with same title in Port Folio, V (April 27, 1805), 126-27.

27. Blandulus [pseud.]. "Reflections on Viewing the Seat of Jos. Barrell, Esq.," Massachusetts Magazine, VI (November, 1794), 693-94 (Mass., b.v., A, G, H, I).

28. Carlos [pseud.]. "Grange, A Descriptive Rural Poem," Philadelphia Minerva, I (March 21, 1795), 2 (Pa., 10-ers, A, B, D, J).
Grange, on the Schuylkill River, was the seat of John Ross.
Reprinted with minor variations in Evening Fire-Side; or Weekly Intelligence, I(April 6, 1805), 132.

29. [Anon.]. "On a Country Seat near the City of Philadelphia," Weekly Magazine, I (March 31, 1798), 285 (Pa., sonnet, I).

30. H. [anon.] "The Excursion," Weekly Magazine, II (June 30, 1798), 287 (Pa., 8-ers, A, B, G, I, T).
A trip by boat to Whitehill, a "rustic mansion" which is "the residence of Quietude."

31. E. O. [anon.] "Poplar Grove," Baltimore Weekly Magazine, I (May 17, 1800), 32 (Md. [?], 10-ers, A, B, C, D).
Poet catalogs the flora at Poplar Grove, a "rural seat."

32. L. [anon.] "A Sketch of Lemon-Hill, the Summer Residence of H_____ P_____," Port Folio, II (December 25, 1802), 408 (Pa., 10-ers, A, G, I, L, W).

33. Headley [pseud.]. "Lines Occasioned by the Author's Leaving the Hermitage," Port Folio, V (June 15, 1805), 184 (Pa. [?], herq, B, S, T, X).

34. [Anon.]. "Lines of the House at Alveston Changing it's Possessors," Port Folio, V (July 20, 1805), 224 (Pa. [?], herq, S, V).

35. Laura [pseud.]. "The Woodlands," Port Folio, I [n. (3rd) s.] (1809), 180-81 (Pa., 10-ers, B. I, J).
"Peace" and "taste" reside at Woodlands, William Hamilton's country home near Philadelphia.

36. Eugene [pseud.]. "Mount Hope," Monthly Magazine, II (October, 1809), 96 (Pa. [?], quat, B, J).
At this "towering mansion" taste and virtue "meet with love."

TOWN POEMS

37. Lodinus [Blauvelt?, Abraham]. "Written on Elysium's Vale, a Beautiful Seclusion, near Union Hill, West-Chester," Port Folio, V (February 2, 1805), 30 (N. Y., stz, B).

38. Brackenridge, Hugh Henry. "A Masque, Written at the Warm-Springs, in Virginia, in the Year 1784," Gazette Publications. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Alexander & Phillips, 1806, pp. 35-40 (Va., stz).
Personified rivers of America band together in praise of George Washington and the spa.

39. Ella [Faugeres, Margaretta V.]. "Silence," New-York Magazine; or, Literary Repository, III (July, 1792), 439-440 (Pa., stz, A, B, J, V, X).
Evening reflections inspired by a prospect near Philadelphia.

40. _____. "To Miss M[a]S[o]N, at New Rochelle," New-York Magazine; or, Literary Repository, IV (July, 1793), 441-42 (N. Y., stz, S, T, W, X).
Reprinted: Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker. New York: Swords, 1793, pp. 355-57.

41. Freneau, Philip. "To the Memory of the Brave Americans, under General Greene. . ., Who Fell in the Action of September 8, 1781," Poems (1786), pp. 229-30; (1795), pp. 192-93; (1809), II, 70-71. See Lewis Leary, That Rascal Freneau, p. 425 (S. C., quat, G, H, K).
Commemorates the dead at Eutaw Springs.

42. _____. "Log-Town Tavern," Poems Written Between the Years 1768 & 1794. Monmouth, New Jersey: At the Press of the Author, 1795, pp. 301-303 (N. C., quat).
Contempt for a "dejected place" presumably in the pine barrens of North Carolina.
Reprinted: Philip Freneau. Poems Written and Published during the American Revolutionary War. Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1809, II, 203-206.

43. _____. "Lysander's Retreat," Poems Written between the Years 1768 & 1794. Monmouth, New Jersey: At the Press of the Author, 1795, p. 320 (unknown, stz, E, D).
Description of "Sylvania," a "dreary" town where bears break into stores.
Reprinted as "The Pilgrim's Progress," Poems Written and Published during the American Revolutionary War. Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1809, II, 218-19.

44. _____. "Hatteras," Poems Written between the Years 1768 & 1794. Monmouth, New Jersey: At the Press of the Author, 1795, pp. 308-310 (N. C., stz, E).
The pilot of Hatteras leaves his cottage of content to guide ships through dangerous shoals.

45. [George, Lucas]. "Elegy on the Grave of a Stranger Written at Obendaw, in South-Carolina," Monthly Magazine, (November, 1800), 397 (S. C., 10-ers, K).
Reprinted as "Elegy over the Grave of an Unknown, in the Woods of Owendaw," in John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States. London and New York: 1803, pp. 120-22.

46. *Humphreys, David. "An Elegy on the Burning of Fairfield, in Connecticut, Written on the Spot . . .," New-Haven Gazette, and the Connecticut Magazine, I (June 29, 1786), 159 (Conn., herq, F, K).
Reprinted: Worcester Magazine, II (July, 1786), 180; American Museum, I (March, 1787), 229; Columbian Magazine; or, Monthly Miscellany, I (1787), 93-94; David Humphreys. Poems. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1789, pp. 1-2; The Miscellaneous Works of Colonel David Humphreys. New York: Hodge, Allen, and Campbell, 1790, pp. 111-13; American Poems, Selected and Original. Edited by Elihu H. Smith. Litchfield: Collier and Buel, 1793, pp. 117-20; The Columbian Muse. New York: J. Carey, 1794, pp. 112-14.

47. Johnson, Jr., Thomas. "Danville," The Kentucky Miscellany. Lexington: 1796 (Ky., 10-ers). See Townsend, J, W. Kentucky in American Letters: 1784-1912. Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1913, I, 21.
Dispraise for Danville, a "detested spot."

48. *[Knapp, Francis?]. "Poems on Fresh Pond, in Cambridge," Massachusetts Magazine; or, Monthly Museum, VI (July, 1794), 441-43 (Mass., 10-ers, A, B, D).
Printed originally in New England Weekly Journal, June 28, 1731.

49. Ladd, Joseph Brown. "The Journey," Poems of Arouet. Charleston: 1786, p. 87 (S, C., 8-ers, G, K).
Poet, sightseeing on Eutaw battlefield, picks up bones of the unburied dead.

50. *[Law, Thomas.] "Address to the Springs," Ballston Springs. New York: S. Gould, 1806, pp. 6-7 (N. Y., 8-ers, G, T).
[Aubin's listing assumes Ballston Springs comprises a single poem; the volume is a collection of separate poems.]
Praise for the spa at Ballston.

51. Low, Samuel. "On the Prospect from New-Utrecht Bath," Poems. New York: T. & F. Swords, 1800, II, 88 (N. Y., sonnet, A, V, X).

52. *McKinnon, Daniel [John]. "Description of the City New York and Its Amusements in the Winter," Descriptive Poems, Containing Picturesque Views of the State of New-York. New York: T. & J. Swords, 1802, pp. 57-79 (N. Y., b.v. B, D, G).

53. Meigs, Return F. [J.] "Extract from an Oration Pronounced at Marietta, on the 4th of July, 1789 . . .," (Ohio, 10-ers, A, C, E, G, H, I) Literary Tablet, I (March 22, 1804), 68 (Ohio, 10-ers, A, C, E, G, H, I).
Laudatory description of the Marietta countryside.

54. [Moore, Thomas]. "Farewell to Philadelphia," Literary Magazine, and American Register, III (January, 1805), 27-28 (Pa., quat, S, T, X).
Reprinted: Philadelphia Repository, V (February 2, 1805), 40; Port Folio, V (August 31, 1805), 271; Huntingdon Literary Museum and Monthly Miscellany, I (August, 1810), 382.

55. * P[richard], W[illiam]. "The Beauties of Harrowgate," in [John Parke] Lyric Works of Horace, Translated into English Verse; to Which Are Added a Number of Original Poems. Philadelphia: 1786, pp. 318-19 (Pa., 10-ers, B).
Harrowgate, a resort near Philadelphia, excels European spas.
Reprinted with variations in American Museum, I (February, 1787), 168.

56. _____. "Written in the Hermitage, near Mount Holly in the Year 1776, whilst the Hermit Was Gone to the Adjacent Spring to Fetch a Drink of Water for the Author," Columbian Magazine; or Monthly Miscellany, I (April, 1787), 392-93 (N. J., 10-ers, E).

57. Scott, John W. "Stanzas, Addressed to a Poetical Friend Leaving Philadelphia on his Return to his Native Home, in the Western Part of the United States," Poetical Recreations of John W. Scott. Philadelphia: 1809, pp. 93-96 (Pa., herq, B, S, T).

58. Searson, John. "City Washington," Mount Vernon: A Poem, Being the Seat of His Excellency George Washington in the State of Virginia. Philadelphia: Folwell, 1800, pp. 40-41 (D. C., 10-ers, G. I, M). Title Mount Vernon is misleading; the book contains several poems on different subjects.

59. _____. "Alexandria," Mount Vernon: A Poem, Being the Seat of His Excellency George Washington, in the State of Virginia. Philadelphia: Folwell, 1800, pp. 38-39 (Va., 10-ers, G).

60. _____. "George-town," Mount Vernon: A Poem, Being the Seat of His Excellency George Washington, in the State of Virginia. Philadelphia: Folwell, 1800, p. 39 (D. C., 10-ers, G. I).

61. *[Swanwick, John]. "Lines Written at Bethlehem, June, 1787," Columbian Magazine; or Monthly Miscellany, I (June, 1787), 507-508 (Pa., 10-ers, B, E, G).
Reprinted with variations: John Swanwick. Poems on Several Occasions. Philadelphia: F. and R. Bailey, 1797, pp. 74-75.

62. Warren, Mercy [Otis]. "To Honoria, on Her Journey to Dover, 1777," Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous. Boston: Thomas & Andrews, 1790, pp. 216-18 (Mass., 10-ers, C, F, J, M).

63. Selim [Woodworth, Samuel]. "Lines Written in a Country Burial Place, in Scituate, Massachusetts," Monthly Anthology and Boston Review, IV (August, 1807), 318-320, (September, 1807), 354-56 (Mass., herq, K).

64. *_____. New-Haven, A Poem, Satirical and Sentimental, with Critical, Humorous, Descriptive, Historical, Biographical, and Explanatory Notes. New York: Printed for the Author, 1809 (Conn., 10-ers). See Oscar Wegelin. Early American Poetry. New York: Peter Smith, 1930, p. 216.

65. *K. K.[anon.] "The Beauties of the Mall, Inscribed to the Patronage of the Ladies," Gentleman and Lady's Town and Country Magazine, I (1784), 265-66 (Mass., 10-ers, B, C, J).

66. [Anon.]. "Verses upon Gray's Ferry," Columbian Magazine; or, Monthly Miscellany, I (August, 1787), 607 (Pa., 10-ers, A, B, D, J).

67. Damon [pseud.]. "The Complaint; Or the Lancaster Maiden in Philadelphia," Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine, V (October, 1790), 268 (Pa., B).

68. *Sylvia [pseud.]. "Lines Occasioned by the Writer's Walking One Summer's Evening in the Graveyard of the Church of Wicacoe, in the Southern Environs of the City of Philadelphia, on the Banks of the Delaware," Universal Asylum, and Columbian Magazine, VII (August, 1791), 121-23 (Pa., 10-ers, B, G, K, T). Aubin in error gives title as Columbian Magazine; or, Monthly Miscellany.

Reprinted as "Thoughts in Walking through the Burial Ground at Wicacoa," Weekly Magazine, III (August 4, 1798), 27-28.

69. W. [anon.] "Description of a Winter Morning in Philadelphia," Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine, VIII (February, 1792), 126-27 (Pa.).

A humorous and satirical sketch.

70. [Anon.]. "The Landscape. Written in View of New-York," American Museum, XII (1792), app. i, 33-34 (N. Y. quat, A, B, G).

71. Alcadour [pseud.]. "Rural Retirement. Written upon Leaving Boston," Massachusetts Magazine; or Monthly Museum, VI (May, 1794), 312-13 (Mass., L, G).

72. Louisa [pseud.]. "Inscription, On a Mall at Cambridge," Massachusetts Magazine, VIII (June, 1796), 349-50 (Mass., herq, J).
Reprinted: A Family Tablet: Containing a Selection of Original Poetry. Edited by Abiel Holmes. Boston: William Spotswood, 1796, pp. 30-31.

73. Valentine [pseud.]. "Lines on the City of New-York," New-York Weekly Magazine; or, Miscellaneous Repository, I (February 10, 1796), 264 (N. Y., 10-ers, E).

74. [Anon.]. "An Ode to Melancholy, Written on the Eve of My Departure from Charleston," South-Carolina Weekly Museum, I (January 21, 1797), 89 (S. C., X).

75. E. C. [anon.]. "Composed in August 1796, When at the Seashore, in Shrewsbury, New-Jersey," Methodist Magazine, I (February, 1797), 95-96 (N. J., 10-ers, W).

76. *Cornelia [pseud.]. "The Ruins of Crown-Point: an Elegy," New-York Magazine; or, Literary Repository, II, n. s. (February, 1797), 101-103 (N. Y., herq, E, K, S, V, W, X).

77. _____. "On a Prospect of Fort Lee," Weekly Visitor, or Ladies' Miscellany, II (August 18, 1804), 368 (N. J., stz, F, K, W).

78. C. C. [anon.] "Verses Written May 27th, 1798, on Taking a Survey of Burlington Church-Yard," Weekly Magazine, II (June 2, 1798), 157-58 (N. J. [?], K).

79. Lorenzo [pseud.]. "Lines Written on Leaving New-York," Port Folio, III (March 12, 1803), 88 (N. Y., herq, A, S, X).

80. [Anon.]. "Written after a Visit to Philadelphia," Western Missionary Magazine and Repository of Religious Intelligence, I (1805), 479-80 (Pa., quat, B, G, V, X).
Reprinted: The Assembly's Missionary Magazine; or, Evangelical Intelligencer, I (February, 1805), 104.

81. [Anon.]. "Colebrookdale--A Song," Port Folio, V (March 16, 1805), 80 (Pa., ballad, E).

82. [Anon.]. "Written in a Bower at Abbeville, near Clonnel," Evening Fire-Side; or Literary Miscellany, II (July 12, 1806), 223 (S. C., ballad, B, V, X).

83. Guiandot [pseud.]. "Elegy, Written in St. Paul's Church-Yard, Augusta, Georgia, Feb. 1806," Port Folio, II [n. s.] (July 19, 1806), 32 (Ga., stz, K, X).

84. [Anon.]. "Inscription for a Hermitage at Scituate," Port Folio, II [n. s.] (September 20, 1806), 175 (Mass., 8-ers, B, J).

85. [Anon.]. "A Letter Written by a Student of William & Mary College, Aged 14 Years, to His Sister in the Country," American Cleaner and Virginia Magazine, I (July 18, 1807), 205-207 (Va., 8-ers, A, B, S, T).
The student would like to foresake the town for the country, but "learning" orders him to stay in Williamsburg.

86. E. [anon.] "Lines, Written at Hempstead, L. I.," Lady's Weekly Miscellany, (May 30, 1807), 248 (N. Y., 10-ers, B, G).

Region Poems

87. Campbell, Thomas. Gertrude of Wyoming; a Pennsylvanian Tale. New York: D. Longworth, 1809 (Pa., stz).
A narrative of rural innocence and ease upset by hostile Indians.

88. *[Dore, John?]. "An Essay Upon Great Ossipee's Northern Prospect," Massachusetts Magazine; or, Monthly Museum, VII (August, 1795), 315 (N. H., 10-ers, A, D, K, W).
A catalogue of wilderness horrors.

89. Dwight, Timothy. "New-England Described," The Columbian Muse. New York: J. Carey, 1794, pp. 199-204 (New England, b. v., D, E).
An excerpt from Part I of Greenfield Hill.
Reprinted: Rural Magazine, I (February 9, 1799), 4; New England Quarterly Magazine, I (April-June, 1802), 275-78.

90. * Freneau, Philip. The Rising Empire, ca. 1795. See F. L. Pattee (ed.). The Poems of Philip Freneau. Princeton, New Jersey: The University Library, 1907, III, 5-18 (R. I., Conn., Mass., N.Y., Pa., Md., Va., 10-ers, E, L).

An eight-part poem, mainly satirical, which Freneau never completed.

The eight parts appeared as separate poems in the 1795 and 1809 editions of Freneau's poetry: "On American Antiquity," Poems (1795), pp. 17-18; Poems (1809), I, 38-40. "A View of Rhode Island," published only in newspapers. "Terra Vulpina" ("Description of Connecticut"), Poems (1795), pp. 307-08; Poems (1809), II, 210-11; printed earlier in American Museum, VIII (1790), app. i, 4-5. "Massachusetts," Poems (1795), pp. 383-84; Poems (1809), II, 256-58, "A Batavian Picture" ("Sketch of the Long Island Dutch"), Poems (1795), pp. 18-19; Poems (1809), I, 40-41. "Pennsylvania," Poems (1795), p. 376; Poems (1809), II, 237-38. "Maryland," Poems (1795), pp. 355-56; Poems (1809), III, 246-47; printed earlier as "A Descriptive Sketch of Maryland," American Museum, VIII (1790), app. i, 16. "Old Virginia," Poems (1795), pp. 380-81; Poems (1809), II, 253-54.

91. Honeywood. St. John. "Lines Addressed to a Friend. Written at Schenectady," Poems. New York: T. & J. Swords, 1801, pp. 104-107 (N. Y., 10-ers, D, G, T).

Poet invites friend to scenic New York state.

92. Ladd, Joseph Brown. "Prospect of Carolina. For July," The Poems of Arouet. Charleston: Bowen & Markland. 1786, pp. 83-84 (S. C., 10-ers).

Carolina heat breeds "abhorred disease."

Reprinted: American Museum, II (November, 1787), 516-17.

93. *Mr. Lewis [Lewis, Richard?]. "A Description of Maryland, Extracted from a Poem, Entitled, Carmen Seculare, Addressed to Lord Baltimore," American Museum, VI (November, 1789), 413-14 (Md., 10-ers, E, F, J).

Originally printed in Gentleman's Magazine, III (1733), 209-210. See R. A. Aubin, p. 368.

94. *McKinnon, Daniel [John]. "Description of the Scenery in the Vicinity of New-York in the Month of October," Descriptive Poems, Containing Picturesque Views of the State of New-York. New York: T. & J. Swords, 1802, pp. 39-56 (N. Y., b.v., A, D, F, K).

95. Parke, John. "Virginia: A Pastoral Drama . . .," Lyric Works of Horace, Translated into English Verse; to Which Are Added a Number of Original Poems. Philadelphia: 1786, pp. 324-34.
A masque honoring Washington's return to his "blest retreat" on the Potomac.

96. Smith, Joseph. "An Indian Eclogue. Scene, The Banks of the Ohio," Beauties of Poetry, British and American. Philadelphia: Carey, 1791, p. 244 (Ohio?, 10-ers, V).
Chief Mingo, relating the sorrows of his spurned love, vows to become a wanderer.
Reprinted: The Columbian Muse. New York: J. Carey, 1794, pp. 180-81.

97. *[Anon.]. "A Scene in Rhode Island," American Magazine, I (July, 1788), 595 (R. I., quat, A, B, S, W, X).
Reprinted with minor variations as "Verses Composed on Pettiquamscut, Point Judith, Rhode-Island," in American Museum, X (1791), app. i, 7-8; and in Evening Fire-Side; or Weekly Intelligence, I (May 25, 1805), 186.

98. [Anon.]. "General Description of America. Extract from a Poem Spoken at Dartmouth College, on Commencement Day, 1795," Columbian Orator. Edited by Caleb Bingham. Boston: Manning & Loring, 1797, pp. 237-39 (eastern U.S., 10-ers, A, E, G, M).

99. [Anon.]. "The Back-Woods' Man; An American Eclogue," Lady's Magazine and Musical Repository, III (February, 1802), 113-18 (Ky., 10-ers, A, W).
Vernon, a wanderer, rescues his wife and children from Indians in "the Wilderness of Kentucky."

100. Alonzo [pseud.]. "The Fair of Berkshire," Philadelphia Repository, and Weekly Register, IV (February 18, 1804), 56 (Mass., 10-ers, B, T, V, W).
A lover's lament over a lost girlfriend.

101. Lyricus [pseud.]. "Stanzas to the Hills on York-Island, Bordering on the North River," Evening Fire-Side; or Literary Miscellany, II (June 21, 1806), 190 (N. Y., quat, E, T, W).

102. T. G. [anon.] "Written in Camberwell Grove: Addressed to Mary," Charleston Spectator, and Ladies' Literary Port Folio, I (November 8, 1806), 168 (S. C. ?, Herq, E, V, T).

103. Dablerus [pseud.]. "A Pennsylvania Pastoral." The Gleaner; or Monthly Magazine, I (September, 1808), 30-31 (Pa., 10-ers).
The story of love-lorn Susan and fickle Thomas.

104. Juvenis [pseud.]. "On the State of New-York," Lady's Miscellany; or, Weekly Visitor, XI (June 30, 1810), 159-60 (N. Y., 10-ers, C, E, G).

RIVER POEMS

Hudson River

105. *Faugeres, Margaretta V. "The Hudson," Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker. New York: Swords, 1793, pp. 358-75 (N. Y., various meters, D, E, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, W).

106. [Law, Thomas]. "On the Hudson," Ballston Springs. New York: S. Gould, 1806, pp. 5-7 (N. Y., 10-ers, E, G, I, L).

107. *Low, Samuel. "Inscription for Mr. Taylor's North-River Bath," Poems. New York: T. & F. Swords, 1800, I, 55-56 (N. Y., 10-ers, L).
Praise addressed to the Hudson.

108. *McKinnon, Daniel [John]. "Description of the Hudson River," Descriptive Poems, Containing Picturesque Views of the State of New York. New York: T. & J. Swords, 1802, pp. 1-13 (N. Y., b.v., A, C, G, F, H, I, W).

109. Matilda [pseud.]. "The Traveller Returned," New-York Magazine; or, Literary Repository, VI (June, 1795), 375-76 (N. Y., 8-ers, B, E, L, S, W, X).
After the "dread sublime" of the wilderness, the poet is glad to retire to the banks of the "soft-flowing" Hudson.

110. Alby [pseud.]. "Written on the Banks of the Hudson," Weekly Visitor, I (September 1, 1810), 271 (N. Y., quat, B, L).

111. Irene [pseud.]. "Banks of the Hudson. Written by a Gentleman on His Way from New-York to Albany," Weekly Visitor, II (April 27, 1811), 399-400 (N. Y., stz, A, T).
Previously printed under pseudonym Palemon as "Written in 1789, by a Gentleman on his Way from Fort Schuyler to Albany," New-York Magazine; or, Literary Repository, III (February, 1792), 118.
Both poems have identical texts except for two alterations in proper nouns. Mohawk, in the opening line of the earlier poem, becomes Hudson in the 1811 version; and the girl whose presence both poets long for changes identity just as easily: Delia in the one (1792) becomes Maria in the other (1811).

Schuylkill River

112. Freneau, Philip. "Hermit's Valley, a Rural Scene on the Schuylkill," Poems Written and Published during the American Revolutionary War. Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1809, II, 233-34. See F. L. Pattee (ed.). The Poems of Philip Freneau. Princeton, New Jersey: The University Library, 1907, III, 128 (Pa., stz, B, G).
Previously printed as "Hermit's Valley" in Poems (1795), pp. 248-49.

113. Smith, John [pseud.?]. "A Rural Poem," Evening Fire-Side; or Weekly Intelligence, I (April 20, 1805), 147-48 (Pa., 10-ers, A, B, D, G, S, X).
A catalogue of rural "pleasures" found in a "calm retreat" on the Schuylkill.

114. R. W. [anon.] "Meditations on the Banks of Schuylkill, Written in September, 1799," Philadelphia Repository, and Weekly Register, I (June 20, 1801), 256 (Pa., 10-ers, E, G, I, L).

115. Sixteen [pseud.]. "Reflections on the Banks of the Schuylkill, Written Some Time Ago," Philadelphia Repository, and Weekly Register, II (December 12, 1801), 40 (Pa., b.v., B, F, G, M).

116. Il Ritirato [pseud.]. "Lines, Written near the Schuylkill," Port Folio. IV (January 14, 1804), 16 (Pa., b.v., G, T, X).

117. P. [anon.] "Sonnet to Schuylkill," Assembly's Missionary Magazine; or Evangelical Intelligencer, I (September, 1805), 456 (Pa., sonnet, L, G, X).

118. Z. [anon.] "Written on the Banks of Schuylkill, on the East Side near the Falls," Port Folio, II[n. s.] (October 18, 1806), 239 (Pa., quat, B, W).

119. O. D. [anon.] "Verses Written on the Schuylkill," Eye (Philadelphia), II (December 29, 1808), 309-310 (Pa., stz, A, B, D, H, M).

120. Lorenzo [pseud.]. "An Evening Ramble," Eye (Philadelphia), II (September 22, 1808), 142 (Pa., herq, B, X).
Poet dreams of a cottage of content by the Schuylkill, but the "magic" is broken by thoughts of life's ills.

121. C. [anon.] "Lines Written on the Banks of the Schuylkill, Huntingdon Literary Museum, and Monthly Miscellany, I (January, 1810), 96 (Pa., stz,A,B).

Various Rivers

122. * [Arnold, Josias Lyndon.] "Ode to Connecticut River," Worcester Magazine, III (May, 1787), 95 (Vt., N.H., Conn., 8-ers, B, D, J, L, T).
Reprinted: Josias Lyndon Arnold. Poems. Providence: Carter and Wilkinson, 1797, pp. 68-69.

123. *_____. "Ode, Written on the Banks of Passumsick River (Vermont), "September, 1790," Massachusetts Magazine, VII (October, 1795), 441 (Vt., stz, B, D, G, H, L).
Reprinted: Josias Lyndon Arnold. Poems. Providence: Carter and Wilkinson, 1797, pp. 61-64.

124. Davis, John. "Coosohatchie," Monthly Magazine, and American Review, II (January, 1800), 80 (S. C., 10-ers, D, K, T).
Reprinted: John Davis. Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States. London and New York, 1803, p. 67.

125. _____. "Ode on Ashley River," Monthly Magazine, and American Review, II (February, 1800), 160 (S. C., quat, B, G).
Reprinted: John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States. London and New York, 1803, pp. 105-106.

126. _____. "Morning at Occoquan," Port Folio, I (November 7, 1801), 360 (Va., quat, A, G).
Reprinted with variations as "Morning at Occoquan. An Ode," in John Davis. Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States. London, and New York, 1803, p. 245.

127. _____. "Evening at Occoquan," Port Folio, I (November 7, 1801), 360 (Va., quat, A, B).
Lengthened version reprinted as "Evening at Occoquan. An Ode," in John Davis. Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States. London and New York, 1803, pp. 234-35. Revised version (which uses last stanza from "Morning at Occoquan" reprinted as "Evening at Occoquan") in Port Folio, I [n. (3rd) s.] 1809, 267-68 (Va., quat, A, B, G).

128. *_____. "Ode to the River Raritan," Port Folio, V (January 26, 1805), 16 (N. Y., 8-ers, B, L).
Revised and lengthened version reprinted under the pseudonym P_____ P_____ in Port Folio, V (December 21, 1805), 400. Reprinted anonymously without change from Port Folio (December 21, 1805, version) as "Ode to the River Occoquan," in George Bourne (ed.) The Spirit of the Public Journals; or, Beauties of the American Newspapers, for 1805. Baltimore: Geo. Dobbin & Murphy, 1806, pp. 291-92. Substitution of word Occoquan for Raritan in last line of the poem makes possible alteration in title.
R. A. Aubin's listing (p. 382) comprises only the anonymous version entitled "Ode to the River Rariton [sic]," in European Magazine and London Review, XLIX (May, 1806), 374.

129. _____? . "Burk's Garden Grave," Gleaner; or, Monthly Magazine, I (June, 1809), 471 (Va., stz, A, I).

Poet views the grave of John Daly Burk near the Appomattox River.

130. Duke, Rev. William . "Hymn XXXIX. Written on the Banks of the Monongahala, July 28, 1789," Hymns and Poems, on Various Occasions. Baltimore: Samuel and John Adams, 1790, pp. 62-63 (Pa., quat, A, G, W).

131. Elliot, James. "Elegy, Written at Fort Hamilton, on the Great Miami River, during an Indisposition--February, 1795," The Poetical and Miscellaneous Writings of James Elliot. Greenfield, Massachusetts: Thomas Dickman, 1798, pp. 67-69 (Ohio, herq, B, G, S, X).

132. _____. "Lines, Written at the City of Marietta, at the Confluence of the Ohio and Muskingum Rivers," The Poetical and Miscellaneous Writings of James Elliot. Greenfield, Massachusetts: Thomas Dickman, 1798, pp. 77-79 (Ohio, B, G, L, S. V).

133. Evans, N[athaniel]. "The Morning Invitation," American Museum, IV (September, 1788), 297 (N. J., stz, B, J).

In this lyric "nymphs and swains" retire to the banks of the Delaware.

134. Jaques [Ewing, Samuel]. "Reflections in Solitude," Port Folio, I (January 31, 1801), 40 (Pa., b.v., G, K, X).

The course of the Lehigh is compared to the vicissitudes of life.

135. Freneau, Philip. "The Bridge of Delaware," Poems Written between the Years 1768 & 1794. Monmouth, New Jersey: At the Press of the Author, 1795, p. 103 (N. J., 10-ers, D, E).

Description of skating on the ice "bridge" of the Delaware.

Reprinted: Philip Freneau. Poems Written and Published during the American Revolutionary War. Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1809, I, 158.

136. Johnson, William Martin. "An Ode, To the Beautiful River Sampit," Port Folio, II [n. s.] (July 26, 1806), 47 (S. C.,quat, C, J, K. L, V, X).

137. Ladd, Joseph Brown. "Sonnet: Humbly Inscribed to the Naiads of Ashley River. Tune--'Maid of the Mill'," American Museum, III (April, 1788), 383-84 (S. C., 4 quat, L, T, X).

138. Low, Samuel. "On a Spring of Water in King's County, Long-Island," Poems. New York: T. & F. Swords, 1800, II, 154-59 (N. Y., 8-ers, G, J).

139. *McKinnon, Daniel [John]. "Description of the Mohawk River," Descriptive Poems, Containing Picturesque Views of the State of New-York. New York: T. & J. Swords, 1802, pp. 15-37 (N. Y., b.v., A, B, D, F, V, X).

140 [Sharp,] Isabella Oliver. "Composed on the Banks of Conodoguinet," Poems, on Various Subjects. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: A. Loudon, 1805, p. 84 (Pa., herq, G).

141. Shaw, John, [no title], Poems. Philadelphia and Baltimore: Edward Earle and Edward J. Coale, 1810, p. 229 (Md., quat, S).
Childhood memories make the Severn River dear to the poet.

142. * [Smith, William Moore]. "An Ode to the River Leheigh," Poems on Several Occasions, Written in Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: Enoch Story, 1786, pp. 123-26 (Pa., stz, L, P, T, V, X).

143. Wright, Susannah. "A Copy of Verses, Written by S. Wright, on Removing from Chester to the Banks of Susquehannah, in the Year 1726 Where She Afterwards Lived near 60 Years," Literary Magazine, and American Register, II (June, 1804), 191-92 (Pa., ballad, G, S, V).

144. [Anon.]. "The Banks of Kentucke," American Museum, III (March, 1788), 280 (Ky., stz, B, G, L).
Reprinted: The Columbian Songster. New York: 1797, pp. 28-29.

145. *[Anon.]. "The Brandywine," American Museum, III (February, 1788), 186-87 (Pa., herq, B, C, E, J).

146. *Juvenis [pseud.]. "Ode, to Connecticut River," Massachusetts Magazine; or, Monthly Museum, III (October, 1791), 642 (Vt., N. H., Conn., stz, E, L).

147. Adeline [pseud.]. "To the Leheigh," New-York Magazine; or, Literary Repository, V(May, 1794), 314-15 (Pa., quat, B, L).
Reprinted with same title under pseudonym "Calista" in Monthly Magazine, and American Review, III (November, 1800), 399-400. Reprinted as "To the River Leheigh" by "Miss M_____" in Companion and Weekly Miscellany, II (July 19, 1806), 304.

148. Matilda [pseud.]. "Elegy--Addressed to the River St. Lawrence," New-York Magazine; or, Literary Repository, VI (July, 1795), 445 (N. Y., herq, G, L, S, T, V, W, X).

149. _____. "Elegy, Supposed to be Written on the Banks of Detroit River," New-York Magazine; or, Literary Repository, II [n. s.] (April, 1797), 217-18 (Mich., herq, F, H. K).

150. Anna [pseud.]. "To Clara," Time-Piece and Literary Companion, I (April 26, 1797), 78 (N. Y., stz, S, T).
In this "Della Cruscan" poem Anna and Clara remember their haunts along the Hossack and Hudson.

151. Z. [anon.] "Sketch of the Schoharie-Kill," Balance, and Columbian Repository, I (October 4, 1802), 316 (N. Y., 10-ers).

152. Damon [pseud.]. "Banks of Connestogoe," Hive (Lancaster, Pa.), I (August 10, 1803), 32 (Pa., 8-ers, L, T, X).

153. Lysander [pseud.]. "Rural Sketches--No. V: Malvon," Port Folio, III (August 13, 1803), 264 (Unknown, quat, B, X).
Poet seeks contentment by the "placid stream."

154. [Anon.]. "Written on the Banks of the Delaware. To Miss _____," Port Folio, III (December 24, 1803), 416 (Pa., N. J., stz, L, T).

155. *Frankly [pseud.]. "Address to the Rariton," Companion and Weekly Miscellany, I (April 27, 1805), 207-208 (N. J., herq, G, I, L, T).

156. Eugenio [pseud.]. "To Mira. On a Visit from Souhegan-Grove," Literary Tablet, III (January 1, 1806), 32 (Me., quat, E, T).

157. *_____. "Ode to Souhegan," Literary Tablet; or, A General Repository of Useful Entertainment, III (May 7, 1806), 68 (Me., quat, E, J, L).

158. Astolpho [pseud.]. [no title], Port Folio, V [n. s.] (April 9, 1808), 239 (Conn., 8-ers, E, T).
A kiss claimed near "Housatonick's winding stream."

159. Lothaire [pseud.]. "An Adieu to the Muse," Gleaner; or, Monthly Magazine, I (January, 1809), 226-27 (Pa., quat, G, S, X).
Poet bids farewell to the Leheigh, scene of his joyous youth.

160. Evander [pseud.]. "Written on the Banks of Conestoga," Gleaner; or, Monthly Magazine, I (May, 1809), 414-15 (Pa., quat, S, X).

NATURAL PHENOMENA

Passaic Falls

161. Freneau, Philip. "The Expedition of Timothy Taurus, Astrologer to the Falls of Passaic River, in New Jersey," Poems Written and Published during the American Revolutionary War. Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1809, I, 167-78 (N. J., stz).
Poems contain humor, satire, and caricature, but has little description of the "elegant scene."

162. [Irving, Washington.] "From the Passaic Album," Weekly Visitor; or, Ladies' Miscellany, IV (September 27, 1806), 370 (N. J., stz, W).
Reprinted as "Passaic Falls--A Tradition" in Pastime, II (May 28, 1808), 27-28; reprinted under pseudonym "Tobinus" [no title] in Ordeal, I (May 13, 1809), 298-99.

163. Low, Samuel. "On the Falls of Passaic," Poems. New York: T. & F. Swords, 1800, II, 160-68 (N. J., b.v., A, F, G, L, S, T, W).

164. *C. [anon.] "On the Falls of the Passaic," Weekly Magazine of Original Essays, I (April 21, 1798), 379 (N. J., herq, G, W).
Reprinted as "From Godwin's Passaic Album" in Lady's Weekly Miscellany, IX (July 1, 1809), 159.

165. *M. [anon.] "Lines by a Young Lady, Written at the Falls of Passaick, July, 1800," Monthly Magazine, and American Review, III (November, 1800), 399 (N. J., herq, G, L, W, X).
Reprinted with same title in Literary Magazine and American Register, II (June, 1804), 190-91; reprinted as "From Godwin's Passaic Album" in Lady's Weekly Miscellany, IX (August 12, 1809), 255.

166. Lodinus [pseud.]. "Lines Written at the Falls of the Passaic," Thespain Mirror, I (February 1, 1806), 52 (N. J., stz, G, W).
Reprinted with same title in Polyanthos, I (February, 1806), 203-204; reprinted as "On Passaic: from Godwin's Passaic Album" in Lady's Weekly Miscellany, IX (July 8, 1809), 176.

167. Lyricus [pseud.]. "Stanzas, Written at the Falls of Passaick," Evening Fire-Side; or Literary Miscellany, II (September 13, 1806), 289-90 (N. J., quat, L, W).

168. J. M'V. Jr. [anon.] "To the Passaic," Lady's Weekly Miscellany, IX (May 20, 1809),47 (N. J., quat, E, X).

169. [Anon.]. "From the Album at Passaick Falls," Ordeal, I (June, 17, 1809), 378-79 (N. J., 8-ers, B, X).

170. J. D____K. [anon.] "Lines Addressed to the Rocks Above the Falls," Lady's Weekly Miscellany, IX (July 22, 1809), 208 (N. J., stz).
Poet asks the rocks why they turn the Passaic's "calm to rage and noise."

171. H. P. [anon.] "On Passaic," Lady's Weekly Miscellany, IX (July 29, 1809), 223 (N. J., stz, W).
A few lines on "the dreadful grandeur" of the Falls.

Various Natural Phenomena

172. Davis, John. "The Natural Bridge," Port Folio, I [n. (3rd) s.] (1809), 82 (Va., quat).
The Natural Bridge treated as a decorative archway.

173. [Law, Thomas]. "Niagara," Ballston Springs. New York: S. Gould, 1806, pp. 8-10 (N. Y., herq, A, G, W, X).

174. Moore, Thomas. "The Lake of the Dismal Swamp." Port Folio,II n. s. (August 16, 1806), 90 (Va., stz).
The story of a distracted young man who wanders into the Dismal Swamp in search of his girl friend.

175. _____. "Lines, Written at the Cohoez, or Falls of the Mohawk River, Port Folio, V n. s. (January 23, 1808), 61-62 (N. J., 8-ers, B, V, X).
Reprinted: Guardian, I (October 15, 1808), 291.

176. *[Payne, John Howard]. "Written at the Falls of Mount Ida (near Troy,") Port Folio, IV (October 27, 1804), 344 (N. Y., b.v., W, X).
Reprinted: Pastime, I (June 6, 1807), 87-88.

177 *[Rose, Robert H.]. "Lines Written at Niagara," Port Folio, IV n. s. (July 11, 1807), 31-32 (N. Y., stz, G, L, W).
Reprinted with variations as "Stanzas, Written at Niagara," in Robert H. Rose. Sketches in Verse. Philadelphia: 1810, pp. 129-32.

178. Shaw, John. "Imitation of Petrarch, Written at the Falls of Niagara," Poems. Philadelphia and Baltimore: Edward Earle and Edward J. Coale, 1810, pp. 186-87 (N. Y., quat, S, V, X, X).

179. [Anon.]. "The Falls of Niagara," Medley; or Monthly Miscellany, I (1803), app., p. 251 (N.Y., herq, M, W).

TRAVEL POEMS

180. *Bleecker, Ann Eliza. "To Mr. Bleecker, on his Passage to New York," The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker. New York: Swords, 1793, pp. 232-35 (N. Y., 10-ers, A, D, E, I, T, W).
A Description of a trip down the Hudson to New York.

181. *Forrest, Michael. Travels through America: a Poem. Philadelphia: Johnston & Justice, 1793 (Mass., N. J., Md., Pa., S. C., 10-ers, B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, X).

182. *Freneau, Philip. A Journey from Philadelphia to New-York, by Way of Burlington and South-Amboy. By Robert Slender, Stocking Weaver, Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1787 (Pa., N. J,, N. Y., stz).
Poem caricatures such travelers as "Billy O'Bluster," but contains no description.
Reprinted: The Miscellaneous Works of Mr. Philip Freneau Containing his Essays and Additional Poems. Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1788, pp. 409-429; reprinted as "Slender's Journey," in Poems Written between the Years 1768 & 1794. Monmouth, New Jersey: At the Press of the Author, 1795, pp. 338-50; as A Laughable Poem; or Robert Slender's Journey from Philadelphia to New York, by Way of Burlington and South Amboy. Philadelphia: Printed for Thomas Neversink, 1809.

183. *Humphreys, David. "A Letter to a Young Lady in Boston, Dated at New Haven, April, 1780," Poems. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Carey, 1789, pp. 83-90 (Mass., Conn., stz).
A burlesque of conventional travel poems.
Reprinted: The Miscellaneous Works of Col. David Humphreys. New York: Hodge, Allen, and Campbell, 1790, pp. 90-97.

184. *[Lewis, Richard]. "A Journey from Patapsco to Annapolis," American Museum, IX (1791), app. i, 9-16 (Md., 10-ers, A, B, D, G, S, V).
Originally printed as "Description of the Spring: A Journey from Patapsco in Maryland to Annapolis, April 4, 1730," in Gentleman's Magazine, II (March, 1732), 669-71. See R. A. Aubin, Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England. New York, 1936, pp. 245-46.

185. *[Wilson, Alexander]. "The Foresters: a Poem, Descriptive of a Pedestrian Journey to the Falls of Niagara, In the Autumn of 1804," Port Folio, I [n. (3rd)s.] (1809), 538-44. The poem appeared serially in the following additional issues: II (1809), 70-77, 141-47, 273-78, 367-73, 452-58, 561-65; III (1810), 159-68, 176-87 (Pa., N. Y., 10-ers, A, B, D, E, G, K, L, M, W).
A brief extract from "The Foresters" was printed in Literary Magazine, and American Register, IV (August, 1805), 155-57.

186. _____. "The Pilgrim, A Poem; Descriptive of a Voyage and Journey from Pittsburg to New-Orleans, In the Spring of 1810," Port Folio, III [n.(3rd)s.] (1810), 512-19 (Pa., quat, D, X).

187. Maria [pseud.]. "A Trip to Burlington; Written in the Year 1781," Evening Fire-Side; or Literary Miscellany, II (July 5, 1806), 210-211 (N.J., 10-ers, A, B, J).

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B. TEXT OF "THE VILLAGE CLIFF"

Come, haste my friend, and leave the cares of life;
The toil of tedious study throw aside;
And in the mild and clear autumnal sun,
Let us in social mood together rove,
Where yon stupendous height invites us forth,
To take the freshness of the morning air.

O'er lawns and heaths and woodlands we proceed,
'Till having gain'd the summit of the mount,
With slow and cautious steps we now approach
The utmost verge of this high tow'ring Cliff;
Nor without shudd'ring view the gulf below.
From such a height as this, (fam'd Dover's Cliff)
Two bold, advent'rous heroes took their flight;
Blanchard and Jeffries,* who with silken sail,
Launch'd their gay bark into the buoyant air,
And o'er the sounding waves that foam'd beneath,
Made good their passage to the Gallic shore.
From hence, when gentlest zephyrs breathe around,
And all the groves in vernal dress appear,
We've seen the far off mountains tipp'd with snow,
That lift their hoary heads in northern skies:
The rear of winter lagging still behind,
On grand Monadnock and Wachusett heights,
And where the still more distant ridges rise
What time the waning autumn comes around,
In pure cerulean skies and temp'rate airs,
Those snow-clad heights again salute the eye.
The van of winter, (shiv'ring to behold!)
Presaging tempests and dire chilling blasts;
And soon (ah! how unlike this beauteous morn!)
The ruthless forces of the North arrive,
Howl through the groves, and darken all the air.

Now change the scene where other prospects rise,
And see what pleasing objects glad the sight.
The eye with level glance at distance kens
The bluey ridge that bounds the southern view:
But let the eye that loves, when unconfin'd,
Quick as the light, to stretch its pow'r as far
As human optics reach, draw nearer home,
And mark the pleasing images in view.

---

*Dr. John Jeffries, an American gentleman, now a resident of Boston.

The spires of Boston o'er the eastern hills,
And Charlestown's lofty steeple meet the eye;
Around sweet interchange of hill and dale,
The yellow fields of corn and fading woods;
The curling smoke that marks the frequent farm,
Where plenty dwells in this th[r]ice happy land.
The ruddy lass engag'd in rural toil,
In jocund mood of heart, or want of thought,
Sings blithe along the plain. Her notes ascend;
And, wafted gently on the passing gale,
They reach my list'ning ear. Oh happy maid!
No care disturbs thy peace: The busy train
That seek for pleasure at the midnight board,
The crowded theatre, or the splendid hall,
Taste not the pure delights that dwell with thee.
Finish'd thy daily round of wholesome toil,
Forth hies the fav'rite lad in neat array,
And joyous leads thee to th' appointed place,
Where soon the lads of all the village meet,
"Each by the lass he loves;" to spend the eve
In pawns, (sweet rural sport!) or lively dance.
Oft here, when savage war assail'd our land,
And Britain's troops by gallant host besieg'd,
Were close shut up in Boston's narrow bounds,
The peasants did repair; and here secure,
At distance saw the flaming bombs ascend,
Like meteors gleaming through the nightly air.
A long suspense--deep silence reigns throughout
The solemn dusk; when strait the lengthen'd sound
Breaks dull and rumbling on the list'ning ear.
Here too they heard the loud tumultuous roar,
When Breed's green heights was chang'd to sanguine hue,
And one continual thunder rent the skies.
The burning domes of Charlestown here were seen;
The Temple's lofty turret wrapt in flames,
Looking o'er all, a pyramid of fire.

Barlow! whose genius, equal to the task,
Hast drawn that scene so awfully sublime,
In vivid colours of immortal hue,
Thou art th' American Homer; yet in thee
We see the majesty of the Grecian bard
Combin'd with Virgil's elegance and ease.

How often with a rural virgin troop
I rov'd the woodland path, or upland heath,
In careless innocence still passing on,
While laughter loud re-echo'd through the grove,

And wanton freaks of merriment were shown.
At length the place of blackberries is found,
When o'er the fields the jocund damsels stray,
And each one gathers up the sav'ry fruit:
While oft with sly and sportive female hand,
The juice deep blushing from the finger's end
Is swift injected in the swain's broad face,
Heedless, nor thinking of his lass so near.
These artless rural sports are form'd to please,
Emblems of youthful innocence and ease.

In yonder little snug and neat abode,
Full many pleasing moments have I pass'd.
Alone, and seated in an elbow chair,
Giv'n up to calm reflection's soothing pow'r,
The blazing hours have pass'd away unheeded;
While the sweet strains of the AEolian harp,
Now softly sighing to the passing breeze,
And now in fullest concert swelling out,
With magic pow'r, as by the fairy touch,
They gently soothe the wearied soul to rest.
Full oft I've been diverted with the looks
And list'ning wonder of the honest swain,
Who, when this soft aërial music play'd,
Has chanc'd to come within my magic room;
Sweet sounds he hears, but no musician sees;
He thinks 'tis distant music; then again
The strain comes out in full; it must be near:
He looks now this way, that way, till at last
The cause of this sweet melody is found.

As at my open sash I frequent sit,
When summer heats prevail, to taste the breeze,
The smooth and round ascent just shooting forth,
Into the blue expanse, presents a scene
Not much unlike to that, when o'er the main
The concave's airy bound'ry meets the eye.

My musing friend or peasant oft I see
Patrol the brow of this romantic hill;
Who, to the fancy, whimsically seem
On clouds to walk, or on the ocean's brim.

How finely shows that calm and lucid pond;
Its high romantic bank thick set with trees
That overarch the flood. And in the midst
A beauteous island rising from the wave,
With shady arbors crown'd, that yield retreat

To those, who in the blazing summer's sun
Have patient toil'd, to catch the finny race.
There underneath those thick embow'ring shades
They rest their weary limbs; and, pronely stretch'd,
Inhale the cooling breeze that floats along
The wide encircling surface of the deep.

Now far below the village spire appears,
An ancient simple structure, unadorn'd
With curious painting or the carver's skill:
Around this sacred dome alternate rise
The goodly mansion and the humble cot.
The village tavern near at hand is seen,
Where news and rural politics are heard,
Discuss'd by twenty mouths, all op'd at once;
While sober reason, if perchance she's by,
Stands fix'd in silence, at a loss to say
On which side ignorance the most prevails.

My jocund friend, in this old inn would mark
The scene of Tony Lumpkin's wild exploits;
Could see the ancient landlord, and the gang
Composing Tony's train and fav'rite club.
Here, too, his lively fancy oft would trace
In many a phiz, a look observ'd before,
By the mind's eye alone, in comic page,
Romance, or poem, or true history.
Bardolph's red nose, and Falstaff's portly front,
The Knight of De la Mancha's tall lank form,
With Sancho's thick-set trunk and chubbed face,
Would often meet his idly roving eye,
And strait provoke the sympathetic laugh.

Sweet village! where pure simple pleasures dwell;
Among thy groves and on thy swelling hills,
The first faint dawnings of the gentle Muse
Illum'd my youthful breast. And oh! may I,
A village bard, of simple ones the chief,
Ne'er rue the day, when first with thoughtless mind
I gave the soft emotion free access.
Farewell sweet village! and with thee, farewell
My pleasant friend! The spring of youth is past,
And sober manhood opens on our view.

The gay delights of life we here enjoy'd,
Must we forego; and though the task is hard,
The voice of prudence summons us to part,

And enter the great theatre of life,
There to perform our several parts assign'd.
Yet, though we part in different scenes to move,
Still may our social union ne'er dissolve,
But grow yet stronger with increasing years,
And be a spring of comfort in our souls,
When far asunder on the world's broad stage.