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William Howard Gardiner (1796-1882) wrote the first critical notice of an American novel to appear in the North American Review (July 1822). This review of James Fenimore Cooper's The Spy, A Tale of the Neutral Ground, includes a number of ideas and theories which comprise a major statement about the modern American historical romance. At the conclusion of the review Gardiner named Cooper America's first distinguished novel writer.

With a view toward isolating Gardiner's critical theories, this study unites his reviews of Cooper, James McHenry (1785-1845), and William Hickling Prescott (1796-1859), all of which appeared in the North American Review. Since many of Gardiner's critical remarks, particularly those about Cooper, are as valid in the twentieth century as they were in the nineteenth, this discussion will provide an analysis of the influences that shaped his conception first of America, and then of the kind of fiction he wanted writers to develop during the second decade of the nineteenth century.

This analysis of Gardiner's literary criticism will disclose that his ideas about the modern American historical romance found their way into the mainstream of American literature and contributed to the development of many of the major American fictional characters; therefore indicating that William Howard Gardiner exerted a major influence on the birth, direction and promotion of American literature.

THE LITERARY CRITICISM OF

WILLIAM HOWARD GARDINER

by

Lee W. Kinard

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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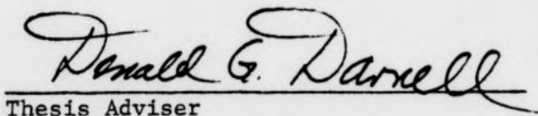

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APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Dedicated to Dr. Charles E. Davis who first awakened my interest in American Literature with his discussions of Wallace Stevens, and to Dr. Donald G. Darnell whose inspiring interpretations of American Literature of the nineteenth century turned my attentions to a new realization of American literary heritage, and to the discovery of William Howard Gardiner.

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CHAPTER I

WILLIAM HOWARD GARDINER

The first critical notice of an American novel in the North American Review appeared in a July 1822 appraisal of The Spy, A Tale of the Neutral Ground, by James Fenimore Cooper. The review was written by William Howard Gardiner, a young Boston lawyer. The article contains a selection of ideas and theories which comprise a major statement on the suitability of native materials for development in historical fiction. These national, romantic, associational and psychological concepts shape a seminal article on American literature. Gardiner concluded his review of The Spy by according Cooper a singular honor: "He has laid the foundations of American romance, and is really the first who has deserved the appellation of a distinguished American novel writer."[1]

The Boston critic believed that literary independence from England was as necessary as political freedom from the mother country. In his estimation, this Republic of Letters could begin in fiction with the romantic portrayal of the diverse personalities and the natural landscape which had uniquely shaped the spirit and tradition of a struggling, but politically united democracy. Gardiner's idealistic demand for "Americanism" in native fiction was presented in the twilight of the

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[1] W. H. Gardiner, "Book Review, The Spy, A Tale of the Neutral Ground," North American Review, 15 (July 1822), 250-82. Since the book reviews of W. H. Gardiner were all published in the North American Review, and numerous references will be made to the periodical, it will henceforth be abbreviated to NAR in the notes.

Neo-classical era, and at the height of the English romantic period when Walter Scott was the idol of readers and writers alike.

Gardiner was born in Boston on October 29, 1796, and died there on February 16, 1882. His father was the Reverend John Sylvester John Gardiner [sic], the rector of Trinity Church. Dr. Gardiner also operated a private school and taught classical literature. He is listed among the prominent founders of the Anthology Club, an exclusive organization of professional men who contributed to the beginning of American literary criticism.[2] During the years Will Gardiner attended his father's classes he developed a lifelong friendship with the future romantic historian, William Hickling Prescott.

Gardiner matriculated at Harvard where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. At his commencement in 1816 he delivered an oration on "The Comparative Importance of Classical and Scientific Attainments." A member of the audience praised the address as "superminuit omnes . . . a manly and ingenious defense of classical literature finely delivered."[3] In 1819 Gardiner stood again at Harvard to present his MA oration. On this occasion the same commencement observer noted that Gardiner's topic,

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[2] George E. DeMille, "The Birth of the Brahmins," Sewanee Review, 37 (April 1929), 172. For a concise biography of the senior Gardiner, consult Scott H. Paradise, "John Sylvester John Gardiner," Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Dumas Malone, vol. 7 (New York: Scribners, 1928-37), 137-38.

[3] Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1889-1890, Second Series, vol. 5 (Boston: Harvard Univ. Press, 1890), 181. This recollection is attributed to a Dr. John D. Pierce who regularly attended Harvard commencements. Future references to this publication will refer to MHS, volume number and page.

"The influence of Commerce Upon Letters," was overshadowed by the preceding speaker, Edward E. Law (1801-1889).[4]

Gardiner received his law training in the offices of Judge William Prescott, his best friend's father. He specialized in the administration of trust property and organized a firm which included a son Charles P., and operated until 1908.[5] While Gardiner's social position was firmly established by his father's preeminence in Boston, the young lawyer improved his financial standing by marrying Caroline Perkins, the daughter of Colonel T. H. Perkins, one of the city's wealthiest citizens. Caroline and William lived near Perkins in Temple Place just off Tremont Street.[6]

The patriotic enthusiasm for American romance which characterizes Gardiner's book reviews has not inspired a major study or biography. Although he has been quoted extensively, Herschel M. Sikes has published the only article about Gardiner in an American journal.[7] Prescott's major biographers, George Ticknor (1864), and C. H. Gardiner (1969), discuss the critic's relationship to their subject, but offer little biographical information. Donald G. Darnell, the author of a recent (1975) critical study of Prescott suggested to the author of this paper that William Howard Gardiner was a literary figure worthy of examination.

The Boston reviewer has attracted the attention of William Charvat and R. W. B. Lewis, who quote extensively from the North American reviews,

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[4] MHS, 5 (1890), 186.

[5] MHS, 48 (1915), 125.

[6] C. Harvey Gardiner, William Hickling Prescott: A Biography (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1969), p. 239.

[7] Herschel M. Sikes, "William Howard Gardiner and the American Historical Novel," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 46 (May 1962), 290-96.

but provide little biographical information.[8] There is no mention of Gardiner in either the Literary History of the United States, or in Parrington's Main Currents in American Thought.[9] A careful study of two collections of Gardiner memorabilia could probably provide the material to flesh out the reviewer's skeletal biography. Maps of Boston and letters, including those from Prescott, are located at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston. A "box" in the Harvard University Library Archives reportedly contains some four hundred items including Gardiner's published Phi Beta Kappa address (1834).[10]

For many years W. H. Prescott served as the only introduction to Gardiner, but his reviews of James Fenimore Cooper indicate that this novelist may provide the more valuable critical approach to the enthusiastic Bostonian. Research and evaluation by George Dekker and John P. McWilliams reveals that William Howard Gardiner was a zealous critic whose conception of American literature projected him beyond the experimental American novels of the 1820's.[11] Indeed, as Herschel M. Sikes suggests, it is

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[8] William Charvat, The Origins of American Critical Thought, 1810-1835 (1936; rpt. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1961), pp. 191-92. Future references will be to Charvat ACT; also see R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 85-86.

[9] Robert E. Spiller, ed. et al, Literary History of the United States, 3rd ed., rev. (New York: MacMillan, 1963), and Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought: The Romantic Revolution 1800-1860, 11 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927).

[10] The author of this paper has not yet had the opportunity to study either of the Gardiner collections. The information related in the text was received in correspondence with a clerk at the Harvard University Archives, and with the librarian at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston.

[11] George Dekker and John P. McWilliams, Fenimore Cooper, The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

possible that "Gardiner's work deserves a larger place in the history of the American literary mind than it has hitherto received."[12]

This study intends to suggest that Gardiner was more than just another Boston professional man who dabbled in literary matters for the aesthetic pleasure of an elegant exercise. Possibly, he is the first self-conscious American literary critic. His spirited patriotism, resulting in a demand for "Americanism" in native fiction, and the magisterial tone he adopted to point the way characterize a critical acumen of judicial and creative proportions. Gardiner's reviews of James Fenimore Cooper and James McHenry indicate a recognition of the American pastoral legend at a time when it was in an early stage of development.

Gardiner argues in his 1822 review of The Spy that the materials for American romances are present in the native character of the people, in the events of the past, and in the natural landscape. This novel about a series of incidents during the Revolutionary War satisfies one of his criteria for national historical fiction by depicting an epoch he considered worthy of aesthetic development. In addition to the Revolution, Gardiner suggested that "the times just succeeding the first settlement," and the "era of the Indian wars" were satisfactory milieus for presentation in romantic histories.

The Revolution also serves as the setting for The Pilot. The critique of this novel which appeared in the North American Review is attributed to Willard Phillips, one of the founders and later an editor of the periodical.

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[12] Sikes, p. 290.

However, the inclusion of references to Gardiner's review of The Spy, and to certain topics he discussed in 1822, plus an 1826 reference to the Pilot review, leaves the impression that the Pilot article probably was written by Gardiner. For these reasons it has been included in this study. It also provides a necessary critical transition between Gardiner's first notice of Cooper in 1822 and his last appraisal in 1826.[13]

If the criticism of William Howard Gardiner is cloaked in anonymity, the novels of James McHenry occupy an equally obscure corner of literary history. In 1824 Gardiner attacked The Wilderness, or Braddock's Times, A Tale of the West, and The Spectre of the Forest or Annals of the Housatonic. Satirizing the unAmerican qualities of these romances, Gardiner objected to the Irish immigrant McHenry's attempt to adapt American scenes to a product written for the English fiction market.[14]

In "Cooper's Novels" (1826) Gardiner is primarily concerned with The Last of the Mohicans, not The Pioneers which had been published for some time (1823). The reviewer is preoccupied with Cooper's presentation of American Indians, who figured so prominently in another of the acceptable

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[13] Willard Phillips, "Book Review, The Pilot, a Tale of the Sea," NAR, 18 (April 1824), 314-29. Mr. Phillips is another of the early American literary figures whose work has not been adequately studied. Biographical information on Phillips is provided in Charles Fairman, "Willard Phillips," Dictionary of American Biography, xiv, ed. Dumas Malone (New York: Scribners, 1934), 547-48. Also William Charvat, ACT, pp. 175-77, in George DeMille, "The Birth of the Brahmins," pp. 172-73. For a listing of NAR articles attributed to Phillips consult Harry Hayden Clark, "Literary Criticism in the North American Review," Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters Transactions, 32 (1940), 299-350.

[14] William Howard Gardiner, "Book Review, The Wilderness, or Braddock's Times, A Tale of the West, and The Spectre of the Forest, or Annals of the Housatonic, A New England Romance," NAR, 19 (July 1824), 209-23.

historical epochs. Gardiner's meager notice of The Pioneers is devoted to the Leatherstocking, an American natural whom he quickly recognized as an "original" creation. The review of these novels provided him with the opportunity to display his conception of a balanced work of American fiction, one that combined romantic elements with historical events to present an identifiable reproduction of the people and scenery of the republic in a given time.[15]

In 1837 Gardiner relinquished time from his law practice to compose an eighty-nine page review of William Hickling Prescott's History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic. The critical value of this highly informed article is to a degree compromised by the reviewer's life-long association with the author.[16]

The literary criticism of William Howard Gardiner appears to reflect two major nineteenth-century doctrines, nationalism and Associational Psychology. The feeling of political unity which followed the War of 1812 contributed to a patriotic desire for the development of a truly American literature. This nationalistic spirit was most evident in Boston where the sons of the Bunker Hill victors, lawyers, ministers and professors, engaged in a "paper," or literary war with their English counterparts. Yet, these Boston literati did not present a unified front. They were divided by opposing interpretations of the doctrine of Associational Psychology.

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[15] William Howard Gardiner, "Cooper's Novels," NAR, 23 (July 1826), 150-97.

[16] William Howard Gardiner, "Book Review, History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic," NAR, 46 (January 1838), 203-91.

This theory was originally expressed by Archibald Allison. According to R. E. Streeter: "Allison held that a person experienced emotions of beauty and sublimity only when the initial strong feeling caused by an object leads to a train of associated ideas or images. Always Allison insisted that mere material forms, colors and designs, have no intrinsic qualities of beauty or sublimity; only if these forms, colors and designs become associated with regular and consistent trains of ideas will they acquire aesthetical significance."[17] William Tudor, founder and first editor of the North American Review, was probably the first to suggest the use of national themes in literature.[18]

Gardiner interpreted this theory to suggest that the diversity of the American character and the American landscape could be artistically developed in modern historical romances. Opposed to this thoroughly national concept were classicists who tempered their impulse for nationality in literature with the argument that universality was a more appropriate form of American expression. The spatial problem of an immense American frontier with its alien inhabitants, and its variety of new experiences, was a demanding challenge for the artist as well as the colonist. And, if there were "American Adams" challenging the wilderness, there were, at the same time, intellectual Adams interpreting and evaluating frontier

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[17] R. E. Streeter, "Associational Psychology and Literary Nationalism in the North American Review," American Literature, 17 (Nov. 1945), 245. Additional discussions of this doctrine are provided by Darwin Shrell, "Nationalism and Aesthetics in the North American Review: 1815-1850," rpt. in Waldo McNeir and Leo B. Levy, eds., Studies in American Literature (Baton Rouge: L. S. U. Press, 1960), pp. 10-21. Also see Benjamin T. Spencer, The Quest for Nationality (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 92-93.

[18] Streeter, pp. 246-47.

experiences for reproduction in literature. Gardiner's estimation of the intrinsic value of American history and the yet youthful psyche, and the vastness against which it was matched, places him among that company of visionaries who contributed to the development of a national literature.

Since the articles attributed to William Howard Gardiner all appear in the North American Review it is impossible to discuss the critic apart from the major literary magazine of the period. Its origin is immediately traceable to the Anthologians who met in 1814. They first contributed articles and financial support to the ultimately unsuccessful Monthly Anthology, and were associated to a lesser degree with another unfortunate periodical, the Repository.[19] The Anthologians had grown weary of the dominance and oppressive tones of British literary magazines like the Edinburgh Review. They were looking for a way to achieve literary independence from foreign journals. They were also interested in developing "a really American literature smacking of the soil, purged of old world influences."[20]

These determined Bostonians were formulating plans to publish a new periodical when William Tudor arrived from Europe fired with enthusiasm to challenge the alien magazines with a strong American journal. He won the respect of the aristocratic Anthologians who supported his editorship of the North American Review. The periodical's first issue was published

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[19] Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, 1850-1865 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1938), p. 220.

[20] DeMille, p. 172. Spencer, p. 76. These authors comment on the nationalistic background of the NAR.

in May 1815. While the "Old North," as it was affectionately known, has been characterized as Bostonian, Harvardian, Unitarian, provincial and parochial, scholarly evidence indicates that it contributed significantly to the development of American literature by demanding the production of better books.

George DeMille, who refers to the founders of the North American Review as "the schoolmasters of a new literature," points out that, in America, literary criticism preceded the development of a national literature. This criticism was patterned after the "magesterial air" characteristic of English periodicals. In conformity with this tradition, Gardiner's criticism is judicial, but it is also creative, particularly that directed at James Fenimore Cooper. DeMille quite accurately notes that Gardiner, and other early American literary critics, utilized a book review "as a mere text for a sermon on all things in general."[21]

The decade beginning in 1820 marks a developmental era in American literature. A profusion of ideas appear to converge at a time when major events of the American past achieved the aesthetic distance necessary to enhance their reproduction in some form of literature. A windswept New England coast had been conquered; swampy southern settlements had survived pestilence and starvation; the Indians were collapsing along a steadily shrinking frontier, and England had been twice defeated. These events had now become the materials of romance. As Benjamin T. Spencer notes: the largest tally of national associations fell, not surprisingly, around the Revolution. But many writers who felt a further remoteness in the past

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[21] DeMille, p. 176.

to be necessary for a proper exercise of the imagination--and especially of the moral imagination--preferred Indian legends or antiquities."[22]

Spencer suggests that the concept of American nationalism was influenced by the earlier German enthusiasm for nationalism. He speculates that the Hegelian aspects of American literature include principles which are the "cultivated antithesis of foreign modes," as opposed to being "purely native growths."[23] This appears to be the case with Cooper, McHenry and Prescott. Cooper's infatuation with the English novel form is well documented, McHenry's is obvious, and Prescott admitted that Madame de Stael was instrumental in influencing him to repudiate "neoclassic [sic] rules," and accept "national differences in taste as 'the beautiful variety of nature.'"[24] This study will indicate, however, that when it came to popularity and sales, Prescott wished to write in a manner acceptable to the British. Gardiner admitted that a variety of tastes existed for history and located his in England, but his taste for fiction is decidedly nationalistic in thought, diction and material.

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[22] Spencer, p. 93. Harry Hayden Clark, "Nationalism in American Literature," University of Toronto Quarterly, 2 (July 1933), 492-519. Clark suggests these reasons for the rise of literary nationalism: (1) hostility toward an enemy country as in time of war; (2) changes in religious views; (3) Walter Scott, who influenced American writers to appreciate the local scenes of grandeur. Streeter, p. 243. He suggests that nationalism resulted from "the pleas for a termination of literary vassalage to England; the insistence on the excellance for fictional or poetic purposes, of our early history and our present scenery; the running battle with the mostly unimpressed British travelers and reviewers; the trust in America's form of government as a guarantee of the utmost social happiness."

[23] Spencer, p. 81.

[24] Ibid., p. 91.

H. H. Clark's clinical analysis of the literary articles which appeared in the North American Review during the periodical's first two decades, confirms the nationalistic tone of the Spy and Pilot reviews.[25] It is now possible to move beyond Professor Clark and characterize Gardiner's satirical attack on McHenry as nationalistic. Additionally, the reviewer's criticism of Cooper's excessive romanticism in The Last of the Mohicans underscores the nationalistic aspects of that article as well. The national tone of this final review of Cooper is also enhanced by Gardiner's recognition of Nathaniel Bumppo's natural qualities. In contrast to some of his critic-associates who wrote for the North American Review W. H. Gardiner emphasized the elegant aspects of American literature rather than its moral value.[26] He suggests that Cooper be read for entertainment, for the sheer enjoyment of the narrative interest.

The important questions which remain to be answered about William Gardiner involve the extent of his literary seriousness. Is he a self-conscious critic, or did he merely dabble in literature as an intellectual exercise; what specific doctrines, theories or experiences are discernible in the romantic jargon of the reviews; to what extent did he contribute to the birth, growth, direction and promotion of American literature? Time has enhanced the romances of Cooper and the literary history of Prescott, whose praises Gardiner sung. It has swallowed up the tales of the immigrant Irishman James McHenry whose "creations of the brain"

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[25] Clark, "Literary Criticism in the NAR," pp. 300-1.

[26] Sikes, p. 292.

Gardiner abhorred. It is the purpose of this study to indicate that, in many respects, William Howard Gardiner is as much a part of American literature today as he was in July of 1822.[27]

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[27] Dekker and McWilliams, p. 5. The authors discuss those judgments of William H. Gardiner which are echoed in modern criticism.

CHAPTER II

THE MODERN AMERICAN HISTORICAL ROMANCE

"The era for the making of the new literature had arrived by 1820, but no one knew the rules or had the blueprints. The air was alive with energy and experiment."[1]

Literary Attitudes

Americans spent nearly two and a half million dollars for books in 1820 when seventy percent of the market was dominated by British publishers. Of this total perhaps a million was expended for fiction, or at least for literature other than that of an educational, classical, theological, legal or medical nature.[2] It was an era when the tone and quality of the novel incited attacks from literary critics and self-styled moralists. Studying the period 1789 to 1810, G. H. Orians discovered that while many novels were read, "down to the time of Cooper a definite prejudice against them existed particularly in New England."[3] An earlier indifference toward fiction had matured into a fear of its influence. As Orians records:

> Attacks on the novel in America became noticeable as soon as the novel seemed likely to 'obtain a considerable rank in the world of belles-lettres.' When a conviction of this crystalized early in the nineties, it became incumbent upon the censors of literary amusement, so they

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[1] Robert E. Spiller et al., ed., <u>Literary History of the United States: History</u> (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 239. Hereafter <u>LHUS</u>.

[2] Ibid., p. 228.

[3] G. H. Orians, "Censure of Fiction in American Romances and Magazines, 1789-1810," <u>PMLA</u>, 52 (1937), 211.

thought, to examine the 'latent tendency of these alluring compositions as they related to ethics, morality and prudence.' This the magazinists were eager to do, and a series of somewhat plangent outcries against fiction resulted.[4]

James Fenimore Cooper

William Howard Gardiner's review of The Spy in the July 1822 number of The North American Review indicates that James Fenimore Cooper succeeded in moderating some of the hostility toward fiction in New England. His second novel was thematically more American than the sentimental literary excesses which preceded it, and a review in the prestigious Boston periodical was a significant literary event. The review also marked the beginning of a critical relationship between two nationalists which would eventually involve several novels.[5] Gardiner, then, was one of the first to recognize in Cooper the promise of a great American figure. Howard Mumford Jones suggests that, as a writer, Cooper "influenced the development of fiction from Russia to the United States." According to Jones, Cooper was, "in

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[4] Orians, p. 213, is quoting The American Monthly Review; or Literary Journal (February 1795), 172.

[5] W. H. Gardiner, "Book Review, The Spy, a Tale of the Neutral Ground," by James Fenimore Cooper, NAR, 15 (July 1822), 250-82. Unless otherwise noted all references in this chapter will relate to this specific review and will be represented by page numbers only in the text. The prestigious position of the NAR is discussed in Albert D. Van Nostrand, ed., Literary Criticism in America (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), p. x. Van Nostrand indicates that publication in the NAR "constituted public authority," and, "the criticism in this journal about the responsibilities of the critic, about the primacy of the audience, and about a native literature hardened into an official ars criteria." William Charvat, The Origins of American Critical Thought (Philadelphia: 1936, rpt. A. S. Barnes, New York, 1961), p. 136, notes that prior to 1822 the NAR did not recognize or list novels among the notices given to new books. Hereafter references to this volume will note Charvat, ACT.

succession to Franklin, Washington and Jefferson, the American who achieved the greatest international repute in his own lifetime."[6]

The Boston Critics

In the decade preceding The Spy certain literati in Boston, who were not in every case literary men by profession, began to develop in their fledgling periodicals the rules and blueprints for a native literature. As was earlier suggested, these men did not present a unified front. They were divided over the question of whether or not the materials for historical romances existed in America. Among those who believed that the republic provided the ingredients for modern fiction was William Howard Gardiner.

Gardiner's position opposed that of Edward T. Channing. In 1819 Channing concluded that materials of a romantic and realistic nature for inclusion in a national literature did not exist in America. He surmised that a novelist's attempt to utilize American scenes for fiction would result in "embarrassments." Channing found that America's "busy streets and the commodious apartments of our unromantic dwellings," did not compare favorably with the intriguing mysteries of an ages-old European past, "wonders and adventures which we have been accustomed to associate exclusively with the mouldering castles and unfrequented regions of older countries."

In addition to the absence of "romantic incidents, situations and characters," Channing suggests that American readers lacked the sensibility to appreciate those romantic associations which a novelist might

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[6] Howard Mumford Jones, "Prose and Pictures: James Fenimore Cooper," Tulane Studies in English, 3 (1952), 133.

devise from native scenes and familiar personalities. He suggests that poetry might be a more acceptable medium as opposed to a "history of living men and a sketch of ordinary society," and concludes by observing that American society "offers very imperfect materials" for romantic fiction.[7] E. T. Channing's position represents a group of North American Review contributors who applied Archibald Allison's theory of Associational Psychology to argue for the absence of suitable romantic materials in America. This theory was shared by [his brother] Walter Channing, George Bancroft and Jared Sparks. Ironically, Sparks was editing the North American Review in 1822 and evidently approved Gardiner's review of The Spy with its rebuttal to E. T. Channing.

An American Argument

Though William Gardiner once admitted writing a review like a lawyer's brief, his style approximated that of critics writing for British literary magazines. Obviously opinionated, his criticism is judicial, creative, and couched in forensic maxims. A classical education, and Gardiner's knowledge of persuasive techniques for the practice of law reinforce and elevate the didactic tone of his reviews. The novels are often standpoints from which he moves to present his personal conception of American literature. Dekker and McWilliams argue that ante-bellum reviews adhere to an almost standardized format indicating that Gardiner's critical approach was basically

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[7] Edward T. Channing, "Book Review, The Life of Charles Brockden Brown," by William Dunlop, NAR, 9 (June 1819), 58-77. See particularly pages 64-68. Also consult R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 82-85; H. H. Clark, "Literary Criticism in the North American Review," Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Letters and Transactions, 32 (1940), 299-350; and Charvat, ACT, pp. 142-45.

conventional.[8] He begins his discussion of The Spy by challenging Channing's opinion that Americans are unromantic, a classless, colorless society:

> Is there any assimilation of character between the high minded vain-glorious Virginian, living on his plantation in baronial state, an autocrat among his slaves, a nobleman among his peers, and the active, enterprising, moneygetting merchant of the East, who spends his days in bustling activity among men and ships, and his nights in sober calculation over his ledger and daybook? Is the Connecticut pedlar, who travels over mountain and moor by the side of his little red wagon and half starved pony, to the utmost bounds of civilization, vending his 'notions' at the very ends of the earth, the same animal with the long shaggy boatman 'clear from Kentuck,' who wafts him on his way over the Mississippi, or the Ohio? Is there nothing of the Dutch burgomaster yet sleeping in the blood of his descendants; no trace of the prim settler of Pennsylvania in her rectangular cities and prim farms? Are all the remnants of Puritanism swept out of the corners of New England? Is there no bold peculiarity in the white savage who roams over the remote hunting tracts of the West; and none in the red native of the wilderness that crosses him in his path? (p. 252)

Later critics have noted that Gardiner anticipated many of the major characters and themes in American fiction;[9] however, he was also interested

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[8] George Dekker and John P. McWilliams, Fenimore Cooper, The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 2, note that:

> Books were evaluated according to their ethical content and their ability to entertain. Literary qualities were of decidedly secondary importance, and little effort was made to judge an author according to his success in realizing his own intentions. Nearly every American review of Cooper's novels follows the same format. The reviewer opens with a personal commentary upon the largest questions raised by Cooper's works as a whole. He then proceeds to distinguish the good and the bad qualities of the specific novel under review. He concludes with lengthy extracts of especially worthy or unworthy passages. These passages are fleshed out with plot summaries and character analyses to form a descriptive summary for readers unable to purchase or unwilling to read Cooper's novels. The heart of the review is the opening evaluation of Cooper's works.

Also see Charvat, ACT, pp. 142-45. The edition of the novel referred to in this work is James Fenimore Cooper, The Spy, A Tale of the Neutral Ground (New York: Hafer Press, 1960). All textual references will refer to Spy.

[9] R. W. B. Lewis, p. 86, n. 4. Lewis suggests that these themes have been explored by Simms, Faulkner, Warren, Dreiser, Welty, Miller, Twain and Melville. Consult Dekker and McWilliams, pp. 3-4.

in how the landscape was depicted. The virgin-like vitality of America was a problem for the romantic writer accustomed to European gothicism:

> Here are no 'gorgeous palaces and cloud capped towers:' no monuments of Gothic pride, mouldering in solitary grandeur; no mysterious hiding places to cover deeds of darkness from the light of the broad sun; no cloistered walls, which the sound of woe can never pierce; no ravages of desolating conquests; no traces of the slow and wasteful hand of time. You look over the face of a fair country and it tells you no tale of days that are gone by. You see cultivated farms and neat villages, and populous towns full of health and happiness. You tread your streets without fear of the midnight assassin, and you perceive nothing in their quiet and orderly inhabitants, to remind you of misery and crime (pp. 252-53).

Gardiner intends for the novelist to mask "familiarity and freshness," by seeking settings where nature has been most extravagant; "mighty lakes, vast cataracts, stupendous mountains and measureless forests," offer satisfactory scenes for the development of American fiction. Here is evidence of an ambition for American literature greater than sentimental romances or imaginative adventures. The "wildest creations of romance," are acceptable in their own ideal world, but the gothic castle is not the structure Gardiner suggests as a symbol of American romance:

> We are not ambitious that scenes so purely imaginery should be located on this side of the Atlantic, when they cannot from their very nature, partake of anything of the character of the soil and climate which gave them birth; although we are by no means sure that a first rate horror, of the most imaginative kind, might not be invented without the aid of Gothic architecture, or Italian scenery.--While for these reasons, which do not peculiarly affect ourselves, we have no particular longing after this species of American castle building, we do hope to see the day, when that more commodious structure, the modern historical romance, shall be erected in all its native elegance and strength on American soil, and of materials exclusively our own. The truth is, there never was a nation whose history, studied with that view, affords better or more abundant matter of romantic interest than ours (pp. 253-54).

Expanding his defense for the presence in America of materials for romantic fiction, Gardiner shows how "remoteness," or the simple passage

of time, can affect "objects which have not in themselves . . . become heightened by contrast." Admitting that "smiling cornfields," and modern cities lack the romantic qualities associated with ruins, he suggests that it is possible to write a successful romance by returning to the time when America was a "howling wilderness" populated by "savages and outlaws." Anticipating Nathaniel Bumppo, his heroic frontiersman is a "stern enthusiast, voluntarily flying the blandishments of more luxurious abodes . . . fearlessly marching with his chosen band into . . . dreary and dangerous solitudes." Astonished by the rapidly changing face of America, Gardiner notes that drastic alterations in society and environment can occur within a single human generation (pp. 254-55). He concludes his argument for the modern historical romance by calling attention to Walter Scott's success with historical fiction. Then, he identifies the American periods which he believes are most promising as settings for native fiction:

> There seem to be three great epochs in American history, which are peculiarly well fitted for historical romance;--the times just succeeding the first settlement--the era of the Indian wars, which lie scattered along a considerable period--and the revolution. Each of these events, all pregnant with interest in themselves, will furnish the fictitious historian with every variety of character and incident, which the dullest imagination could desire or the most inventive deserve (p. 255).

Demonstrating a lawyer's orderly consistency, Gardiner argues that the colonization of America and the historic figures involved are superior to foreign dramatizations: "What is there," he asks, "in the rebellions and wars of the Scotch covennanters, to compare with the fortunes of the sterner Puritans" (p. 255)? Developing a lengthy set of comparisons, he shows that in all exemplary human qualities the pioneering early Americans are superior to their foreign cousins. Admitting that only their humanness prevented

their election to sainthood, he sharply emphasizes the picturesque qualities of settlers epitomized by John Smith (pp. 255-56). Gardiner continues his argument for the modern historical romance by suggesting that contrasting and contradictory societies in the north and the south might, through "poetical license," be linked together by the New Netherlands for presentation in a national work of fiction. Here he seems to be anticipating the kind of romantic historical narrative that William Hickling Prescott and other Brahmins would develop in the following decade. A narrative of the scope designed by Prescott to reflect the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella would have been a suitable conveyance for the presentation of the history of the United States.

It is obvious that these ideas suggest he saw the historical romance as more than entertainment for the reading public. The critic is apparently aware that this sort of fiction can offer "the additional value of developing the political history of the times," and beyond that can perhaps isolate "the first beginnings . . . of those conflicting sectional interests," which he apparently found so perplexing in 1822. Ideally, the modern American historical romance would convey a patriotic attitude in its dramatization of American society. Gardiner was interested in seeing American "originals" reproduced in fiction. These subjects might be the colorful eccentrics, unique adventurers, the non-conformists whose shadowy and sometimes controversial movements along the frontier created an air of mystery during the colonial era. Later, the Leatherstocking will fulfill his request for a truly native individual.

Throughout his criticism Gardiner remains sympathetic to the presentation of the Indians best expressed by their transitory qualities. Personal

observations however, have convinced him that Indians have no place in white society. They appear to be unable to conform to the social amenities, and a naive acceptance of Christianity does not indicate an understanding of its tenets. American Indians are consistently savages, beings ideally suited for development in romantic fiction. He provides this assessement of their fate:

> Gradually receding before the tread of civilization, and taking from it only the principle of destruction, they seem to be fast wasting to utter dissolution; and we shall one day look upon their history, with such emotions of curiosity and wonder, as those with which we now survey the immense mounds and heaps of ruin in the interior of the continent, so extensive that they have hardly yet been measured, so ancient that they will lie buried in their own dust and covered with the growth of a thousand years, forcing upon the imagination the appalling thought of some great and flourishing, perhaps civilized people, who have been so utterly swept from the face of the earth, that they have not left even a traditionary name behind them.

Having dramatically framed the element of mystery surrounding the Indian's history and heightening an air of gothicism to elevate their savage stature, he suggests how the novelist might treat them:

> At the present day enough is known of our aborigines to afford the groundwork of invention, enough is concealed to leave full play for the warmest imagination; and we see why not these superstitions of theirs, which have filled inanimate nature with a new order of spiritual beings, may not be successfully employed to supersede the worn out fables of Runic mythology, and light up a new train of glowing visions, at the touch of some future wizard of the West. At any rate we are confident that the savage warrior, who was not less beautiful and bold in his figurative diction, than in his attitude of death . . . is no mean instrument of the sublime and terrible of human agency (pp. 257-58).

The Spy

A third romantic epoch suggested by Gardiner as suitable for depiction in the modern historical romance is the American Revolution. The Spy, A Tale of the Neutral Ground represents the validity of this era for fictional

development. Tangible evidence of public acceptance of The Spy lies in the fact that the novel was in its third printing when Gardiner's review appeared. He does not suggest that the novel is a perfect statement of his ideas, but he does point out that the work exudes that "interest," which is the major requirement of a romance.

The reviewer locates the probability of The Spy in the historical record of General Washington's sponsorship of an extensive espionage system. He also offers evidence of Washington's involvement in at least two covert incidents. While it is probable that the general promoted and direct clandestine activities, it is unlikely that he ever operated in disguise as Cooper suggests in The Spy through Mr. Harper, the mysterious gentleman traveler. Therefore, while Gardiner endorses the suitability of the epoch for fiction, he deplores this distortion of the historical George Washington. A later critic suggests that Cooper transformed Washington into "a kind of a fairy godmother."[10] Gardiner does not go that far, but he does comment on the impracticality of Washington's ever attempting to move in disguise:

> The whole character of Washington is against it. His station, his trust, than which none could be higher, are against it. The opinion of those most intimate with him, by their official relations, is entirely against it. Nay, it was almost physically impossible. His remarkable stature and physiognamy, his lofty carriage, the unbending dignity of his whole demeanor, and, above all, the notoriety of his person making detection almost certain, rendered him the most unfit of all men to practice such a deception. We are compelled to believe, therefore, that our author has deviated from historical accuracy, in a point where he should most scrupulously have adhered to it (p. 261).[11]

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[10] Stanley T. Williams, "James Fenimore Cooper," Literary History of the United States: History, ed. Robert E. Spiller et al., 3rd ed. rev. (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 259. Hereafter cited as Williams, LHUS.

[11] An additional discussion of this characterization is provided by Warren S. Walker, Introduction, The Spy, A Tale of the Neutral Ground (New York: Hafer Press, 1960), pp. 9-12.

At this point, Gardiner suggests how historical American figures should be treated in romantic fiction; the emphasis in characterization should be on the general as opposed to the particular:

> When such a personage as Washington is made to move in the scenes of fiction, so recently too after the termination of his conspicuous career, he should appear, if he would appear safely, only as his countrymen have known and must ever remember him, at the head of armies or in the dignity of state. Our imagination will hardly consent to follow him through the mere common courtesies or grosser familiarities of life; and where our author attempts so to represent him, he undertakes a task, under which greater and more practised abilities would sink (p. 261).

Gardiner and Cooper were to remain divided over the contradictory commands of verisimilitude and romance. The argument would haunt their literary relationship until Gardiner became completely disgusted by the series of romantic conventions Cooper strings together in _The Last of the Mohicans_. Ironically, Gardiner saw the hope and promise of a truly native spirit in Cooper while the author of _The Spy_ was not at all concerned with American literary independence: "So far as tastes and forms alone are concerned," Cooper wrote, "the literature of England, and that of America must be fashioned after the same models." The one difference Cooper saw separating American and English literature was the difference in political systems.[12]

Gardiner appreciated the romantic narrative, and the fact that Cooper had created a story peculiarly American, but he seemed to prefer a Neo-classical concept of characterization: "the power of creating interest in a work of fiction, so far as it arises from the development of character, lies in the generalizing principle which substitutes classes for individuals"

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[12] Williams, _LHUS_, p. 256.

(p. 251). Exaggeration in characterization, action and description are anathema to a reviewer who detected Cooper's inability to successfully imitate society, pointing up "the great stiffness and inelegance, relieved by a little vulgarity of his high life."

In The Spy, the Wharton family, Mr. Harper, and some of the American officers represent this aristocratic group. The reviewer suggests that Cooper's problems begin when he shifts from action to dialogue: "The author has got more dignity upon his hands than he knows how to manage; and accordingly it is starched up with stiff bows, awkward courtesies and glum looks" (pp. 262-63). Harper's mock dignity results in a ludicrous portrait; moreover this same flaw distorts many of the novel's upper-class figures. Gardiner's analogy is supported by Vernon L. Parrington who suggests that all of Cooper's upper-class characters are a "race of squires that never existed outside his pages."[13]

Gardiner's criticism of Cooper's characterization prompted R. W. B. Lewis to suggest that his primary interest lay in character, "and not with the perfectly fulfilled fable."[14] Lewis begs the question: the fable is perfectly established for Gardiner if the characters speak and act consistent with their class. The problem is Cooper's for creating "bright uniformed officers and high-bred maidens, strange blends of musical comedy and convent."[15]

Gardiner's astuteness is also evident in his choice of the skinner's hanging as the most powerful scene in the novel. Because of the "feeling of

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[13] Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought: The Romantic Revolution, II (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927), p. 222.

[14] R. W. B. Lewis, p. 85.

[15] Williams, LHUS, p. 257.

unmixed horror it excites" this event reminds the reviewer of the drowning of Morris in Rob Roy. Gardiner is quick to qualify this statement indicating that he is in no way suggesting a comparison of Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper. He prefaces his summary of The Spy by attempting to establish his impartiality or universality as a critic:

> Such is our hasty epitome of the Spy;--a work, which, with numerous and great blemishes, has yet redeeming merit to give it a respectable station in the ranks of historical romance. We have no fondness for indiscriminate censure or praise; and we should humbly trust, we shall never award that palm, which we should withhold from a foreign production, to the work of an American merely because it is such. There is no compliment, in that unmeaning adulation, which has styled the author of the Spy the Scott of America; nor do we think public sentiment, in this part of the country, will bear out a pretension so extravagant. At any rate, for ourselves, we do not hesitate to say, that although uncommon powers are here exhibited, from which we have a right to augur yet better things, we have discerned nothing in this production which draws the writer a step nearer to the author of the Waverly novels, than it does to Shakespeare himself. His faults, however, are in general those of inexperience, and we fear we must add haste (p. 275).

In a half dozen pages Gardiner berates Cooper for a multitude of "gross negligences." He lists those failures or indiscretions which mar the novel's "harmony and smoothness," substantiating his charges with copious examples of blemishes and bad taste.[16] Because many of these errors are directly related to the larger problem of adjusting realistic materials to a romantic narrative Gardiner challenges Cooper to control his imagination. He isolates the author's faults of style and diction: Cooper is inventive, but too imaginative; his extensive realism leaves nothing for the imagination to supply. Obviously, Cooper did not provide

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16 William Charvat, "Cooper as Professional Author," New York State Historical Association, New York History, 35 (October 1954), pp. 496-511. This is a scholarly examination of Cooper's creative spirit, which concludes with the opinion that, "Cooper had no very high regard for the niceties of style" (p. 500).

that fine finish in prose which Gardiner's training in rhetoric would have demanded. But these numerous mistakes are offset to some degree by Cooper's successes; the naturals like Caesar, Sergeant Hollister and Katy Haines. For Gardiner "these are all original sketchings, done with a masterly hand, and serve strongly to illustrate . . . the wide scope which our country affords for the exercise of this kind of talent" (p. 279):

> We have to thank our author for having demonstrated so entirely to our satisfaction, that an admirable topic for the romantic historian has grown out of the American Revolution; although we think it a less prolific source than our earlier history. If he has not done all that man can do, he has at least exhibited powers from which we have everything to hope. *The Spy of the Neutral Ground* is not the production of an ordinary mind, and we will not presume to set limits to that capacity of improvement which the author of *Precaution* has evinced in this second attempt. He has the high praise, and will have, we may add, the future glory, of having struck into a new path--of having opened a mine of exhaustless wealth--in a word, he has laid the foundations of American romance, and is really the first who has deserved the appellation of a distinguished American novel writer (p. 281).

In 1822 Gardiner suggested that, as a novelist, Cooper had only two possible competitors. Charles Brockden Brown had been dead a dozen years, and Washington Irving had not yet written a romance. Noting Brown's increased popularity, the critic pointed out his attachment to foreign themes: "His agents are not beings of this world; but those dark monsters of the imagination, which the will of the master may conjure up with equal horror in the shadows of an American forest, or amidst the gloom of long galleries and vaulted aisles. His works have nothing but American topography about them" (p. 281).[17] In his parting advice to America's first novelist Gardiner urged patience, discipline and prudence:

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[17] Charles Brockden Brown, 1771-1810, has been characterized as the first American writer to devote himself wholly to a literary career. His novels include: *Wieland* (1798), *Ormond* (1799), *Arthur Mervyn* (1799), and *Edgar Huntley* (1801).

> We hope to hear from him [Cooper] again--not too soon. We do not exactly
>
> 'drop in unwilling ears
> This saving counsel--keep your piece nine years,'
>
> But we must protest most seriously against modern rapidity of production; and really beg that he will be so good (for it is a virtue nowadays,) as just to write his book before he prints it; and it would do no harm if he were to read it over once into the bargain (p. 250).

What Cooper thought of this review and how he reacted to William Gardiner is recorded in a letter he reportedly wrote an acquaintance bragging that, "the North American and many of the old literati endeavored to lessen it [The Spy] in the public estimation, but it succeeded beyond a question." Dekker and McWilliams, the compilers of Cooper's critical heritage, suggest that Gardiner's article "is probably the most thoughtful, challenging and influential review that Cooper was to receive during his lifetime from any American journal." They add:

> If Gardiner's tone seems unnecessarily cool, as it did to Cooper, we should recall that The Spy was the first American novel which The North American Review had deigned to analyze and that Cooper's book was hardly faultless. Distinctive in its quality, Gardiner's review may also have influenced the direction of Cooper's writings. Gardiner's critique of The Spy constitutes a compelling defense of the sufficience of American materials for historical romance. Even more importantly, Gardiner suggests specific subjects and fictional methods which Cooper's later American romances were to adopt.[18]

The accomplishments of the Boston lawyer extend beyond this early recognition of James Fenimore Cooper. By supporting in his succeeding reviews the positive application of Associational Psychology to American events, character and landscape Gardiner anticipated some of the great

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[18] Dekker and McWilliams, p. 3. For a discussion of Cooper's reaction to the criticism of his novels, consult William Charvat, "Cooper as Professional Author," p. 511.

themes and major characters in national fiction. His recognition of the materials of romance and realism inherent in the American individual and the natural environment, and his suggestions for writing point up William Howard Gardiner as an American literary critic of more than minor importance.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM OF THE PILOT

Willard Phillips

A review of The Pilot, A Tale of the Sea, which appeared in the April 1824 number of the North American Review, is attributed to Willard Phillips.[1] As one of the founders of the periodical, this prominent Boston jurist also contributed a number of critical articles to the magazine. Phillips is remembered as "an eminent legal scholar in the fields of insurance, criminology and tariffs." He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and served as a member of the Massachusetts State Legislature (1825-1826).[2] William Charvat, noting that Phillips was "typical of his time in that he kept in touch with American culture throughout his career," analyzes this reviewer's perceptive qualities:

> As a critic, he was one of those rare people who could welcome the new without antagonizing lovers of the old. He had keen insight into the central problems of romantic modes and matters.

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[1] Willard Phillips, "Book Review, The Pilot, A Tale of the Sea," NAR, 18 (April 1824), 314-29. Unless otherwise indicated in the text or notes, all page references in this chapter refer to this specific article. Willard Phillips is identified as the author of this review in H. H. Clark, "Literary Criticism in the North American Review, 1815-1835," Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters Transactions, 32 (1940), p. 322, and by Kenneth Walter Cameron, ed. Research Keys to the American Renaissance (Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1967), p. 156.

[2] Charles Fairman, "Willard Phillips," Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Dumas Malone, xiv (New York: Scribners, 1928-37), 547-48. Willard Phillips was thirteen years Gardiner's senior. He was a tutor at Harvard during Gardiner's undergraduate years. It is possible that they met often as two of Boston's most prominent lawyers.

> Phillips was probably the first to recognize the beauty of "Thanatopsis," and it was he who accepted it for publication. It was he who urged Bryant to contribute to the Review articles on American poetry, and in his enthusiastic review of Bryant's 1821 volume he selected as his favorites the poems which have been best loved ever since.[3]

William Charvat provides additional details about Phillips' literary preferences: "Although it was the age of Scott, he preferred realism, and although he insisted on moral wholesomeness, he thought Miss Edgeworth and her moral lessons too obvious." Phillips stated his critical principle in 1816: "To judge rightly of an author, we must view objects from the position assumed by himself or that occupied by the generality of his readers. . . . We may condemn his choice of position, and pronounce his views to be false," but the judgment, fairly placed, must see the critic imaginatively in the author's position.[4]

The Problem of Authorship

Phillips' authorship of the Pilot review is questionable because certain references and allusions appear to associate it closely with Gardiner's review of The Spy (1822), as well as with his review of The Pioneers and The Last of the Mohicans ("Cooper's Novels," 1826). This circumstantial evidence, combined with the authorial anonymity practiced by the North American Review during this era, inspires the speculation that Gardiner, not Phillips, reviewed The Pilot in 1824.

The critic of The Pilot reiterates Gardiner's earlier argument for the presence of the materials of romance in America and acknowledges James Fenimore Cooper's preeminence among American novelists. There is evidence of a

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[3] William Charvat, The Origins of American Critical Thought, 1810-1835 (1936; rpt. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1961), p. 176.

[4] William Charvat, p. 176

critical attentiveness to problems of characterization echoing Gardiner's distasteful reaction to The Spy. The expression of patriotic fervor in the review is reminiscent of Gardiner, as is the continuing debate over the struggle to reconcile the materials of realism and romance.

"Negligence and haste," terms utilized to indicate the authorial untidiness Gardiner detected in The Spy, are again the faults of The Pilot. A judicious discussion of narrative action and character development focusing on dramatic narration and natural characterizations strikes a familiar note. Furthermore, the author of this review is as favorably disposed toward the naturals Coffin, Bolstrope, and Boroughcliffe, as the reviewer of The Spy was toward Harvey Birch, Caesar Wharton, Katy Haynes and Betty Flannagan. The critic of The Pilot is no more approving of the inclusion of a historical John Paul Jones in this novel than Gardiner was inclined to accept the earlier romanticization of George Washington.

Organization and Argument

The organization of the Pilot review is more orderly and less rhetorical than the Spy review. Following his introduction, the reviewer adheres to the novel's course of action as a method of explicating the plot. Extracts are adduced when interesting events occur or personalities are introduced. Indeed, six of the fifteen pages of the article are devoted to extracts. Allusions in the text indicate the author's awareness that many in his audience have read the novel and have formed their own opinions. In his introduction, the critic summarizes the state of literature in America and the challenge that awaits an energetic novelist:

> Our literature, to use a trite comparison, is like our territory, the greater part as yet uncultivated and wild. The yeoman who goes into

> our forests, and opens a little prospect of habitations, and fields of grain and grass, in the midst of the wilderness, may be regarded as a sort of peaceful conqueror; a champion, who subdues the land and makes it pay tribute. So the author of any literary work, upon a subject peculiar to ourselves, and truly American, undertakes a like enterprise; he peoples the regions of fancy and memory; he reclaims and makes fertile the intellectual waste; he opens the solitude to the light; and, under his hands, it begins to teem with life and action, and to present a thousand pleasing objects (p. 314).

This focus upon the artist-author isolates a "yeoman," who is perhaps related to the mystic R. W. B. Lewis later named the American Adam: "The poet par excellance, creating language itself by naming the elements of the scene about him."[5] The American experience, it may be suggested, created two yeomen; the first a frontiersman, explorer, conqueror of the wilderness, farmer, and later mechanic; the second a poet, whose mission it became to interpret and moderate the effect republican materialism exerted on the morality of the masses. This truth-maker attempts to reconcile the reality of the human condition with whatever mythology man accepts as he struggles to survive in a hostile environment. The yeoman of the field and the poet of the nation must each subdue the wilderness in his own manner; methods are immaterial as long as they are successful. The reviewer of The Pilot continues his analogy:

> Now, in the case of the woodsman, if he supplants the forest trees with fields of wheat and corn, the main purpose is effected, and we acknowledge that he has done a credible thing, and deserves well, without considering too critically, whether in his sowing and planting he has followed the broadcast or drill method. So in regard to original works of imagination and taste; if an author really succeeds in adding something to the permanent intellectual stock; if, on the whole, he produces objects worthy to remain and be admired, he is entitled to our good will and praise, and ought not to be judged by the minor imperfections, the quaedam maculae, from which no work of art is free (pp. 314-5).

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[5] R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1955), p. 5.

If these words are Gardiner's he has drastically altered his earlier demand for near perfection in imitation. The most questionable part of the analogy is the "broadcast or drill" procedure, about which it is only possible to make some far-ranging assumptions. The "broadcast" method could refer to the superimposition of accepted literary conventions over the features of the American experience. Perhaps this was Cooper's method in Precaution, The Spy, The Pilot and Lionel Lincoln. Or, the artist could allow his theme to develop organically as in the Leatherstocking Tales. Cooper drilled his way back into the past to create an entirely new American mythology.

The Pilot

In The Pilot the identity of John Paul Jones is masked from all but the major characters. Since he is cast as a deus ex machina, he cannot be accepted as a realistic character. The reviewer suggests that Cooper demands a great deal from Jones, or the pilot; he is called on not only to extricate men and vessels from certain disaster, but to save Cooper as well when the author has written everybody, including himself, into a corner. By serving to offset the novelist's poverty of invention, the pilot appears partly mechanical, partly metaphysical. The critic analyzed him in this manner:

> Characters of this description are substituted for what used to pass under the name of the machinery of epic poetry; for the gods of the ancient writers, and the witches, faries, and other supernatural beings, introduced into the older of the modern writers of fiction, to bring the other personages into situations, which would otherwise be too improbable, or help them out, when they could not retrieve themselves. But a giant, a wizard, or spirit, not excepting the White Maid of Avenal, makes but a sorry figure in a modern story, in which the author affects any regard to probability. Yet the reader must be interested, and his feelings must be disturbed by imminent perils,

> desperate situations, and hairbreadth escapes; and it is rude and artificial in the author, to resort only to good fortune in these emergencies. In the conclusion of the story, it is quite excusable to hurry to a happy result, with a flush of good luck, in the death of rich uncles, liberality of the government, exposure of knavery, clearing up of misunderstandings, the long deferred requittal of love, and other pleasing occurrences. But it shows poverty of invention to bring affairs into such a conjuncture in the midst of the action, that unless the wind changes, or some of the personages are killed off, the story must end. Some extraordinary and powerful agent is needed for the trying occasions, about whom the author casts something of mystery and obscurity, that the reader may magnify to himself everything belonging to this personage, and give credit to the prodigies told of him. The pilot is a personage of this description. He interposes in times of difficulty; and he is probably also intended by the author to give something of historical reality to the story. But to the reader he is quite a secondary character in the piece (pp. 315-16).

Here again is the problem which divided Gardiner and Cooper over the Spy, the reconcilement of realistic materials in a romance. The romance must project interest while sustaining probability, otherwise, the reader is unable to develop the illusions which establish his acceptance of the fiction. The Pilot's claim to probability is slight, but the work is saved from failure by original characters and imaginative scenes. The faults involve an abundance of epithet, and realistic minutiae which Gardiner objected to in 1822. The reviewer recalls that earlier objection:

> In regard to the style of execution, the work has one fault which was mentioned in our notice of The Spy; it is in some instances, and more especially where the author speaks in his own person, overloaded with epithets, and the details of particular circumstances. The author leaves too little to his readers, and from his solicitude to omit nothing of the quality, degree, and manner of everything related or described, he impairs the vivacity and force of the expression (p. 328).

As in the review of The Spy, the critic selects a death scene as the most remarkable in The Pilot. The schooner Ariel, one of two American vessels on a secret mission along the British coast, is destroyed when a gale forces her onto a line of shoals. The villain and one of Cooper's

natural heroes die when the ship breaks up and sinks. The deaths of Christopher Dillon, an American Tory of a "sallow, shriveled aspect, a lean unsightly figure and mean spirit," and Tom Coffin, the New England cockswain, are critically acceptable because of the quality of their aesthetic development and the preparation for their death provided by the author. By contrast the reviewer's taste is offended by references to the natural functions of the human anatomy. Uncleanliness may be inferred to establish the character of Betty Flannagan, but a perspiring hero detracts from the beauty and interest of romance. The critic of The Pilot suggests that American writers demonstrate a perversity for certain realisms which they should tastefully avoid:

> This, like the preceding stories of the author, is thoroughly American; in one respect too much so; as, for one instance, where Colonel Howard is said to take a little time, 'to remove the perspiring effects of the unusual toil from his features;' a sort of writing, which is too much in use with us, and may be said, perhaps, to constitute a national characteristic of our literature if there be such a thing. No doubt some readers have a liking for passages of this sort,--'the more's the pity.' But this is the only natural characteristic of the work, which does not add to its beauty and interest (p. 328).

If this realistic aspect of the novel is moderately offensive, the disappointment is relieved by the beauty and interest of Cooper's scenes of the sea. The novelist was able to paint the ocean firmly because of his naval service. His descriptions of storm and combat provide the most inspirational passages in The Pilot: "The dangerous situations, the combinations of incidents, the pictures of the heavens and the ocean, and the management of the vessels," the reviewer writes, "inspire the reader with intense interest and anxiety; while, at the same time, his imagination is filled with a succession of grand and vividly drawn images" (p. 316).

In The Pilot, as in The Spy, that "bold, free, and masterly style" of Cooper's which so vividly creates characters of middle and lower class fails with society's high life. As opposed to errors of negligence or haste in the development of these characters, the reviewer of The Pilot detects "difficulty and embarrassment in execution." This is most apparent in the presentation of the heroines. Here is another identifiable echo from the review of The Spy:

> But what we formerly said of some parts of The Spy is applicable to some of these scenes, in which the ladies bear a part, which sometimes labor and disappoint the reader (p. 318).

Colonel Howard, the Tory refugee from Carolina, and the ladies in his house are less successful than the action-oriented characters. The pilot's former sweetheart, Alice Dunscombe, "is not badly conceived, but is not sustained very successfully." The critic doubts that Katherine Plowden, one of the love interests, "is really so sprightly, free and debonair, as she affects to be." Cecelia Howard, another of Cooper's beauties, is a portrait which "bears marks of being done by an unpractised artist" (pp. 318-19). The reviewer criticizes the aristocratic dialogue Gardiner found so objectionable in The Spy. The conversation associated with the portrait must be consistent with the visual impression for the characterization to be aesthetically acceptable.

In 1822 Gardiner found his Americans in "active and adventurous communities, unshackled by forms, unfashioned by governments, and left freely to work out their own way." The reviewer of The Pilot writes about a subdued American, quieter in the celebration of his nation, and discusses the effect of the novel on this more reserved individual:

> The choice of incidents and actors, and the frequent allusions to our history, manners and habits, make the story strike deep into the feelings of American readers; and by implicating the tale with our naval history, the author possesses himself of one of the few positions from which our national enthusiasm is accessible. We are in general a cautious, prudent people, quite as ready to calculate as to feel, and quite as much disposed to study good economy, as to be borne away, regardless whither, by a torrent of enthusiasm. We have a commonplace, hackneyed sort of enthusiasm, on the subject of liberty, republican principles, &c.; but this is so common a theme of declamation in all assemblies, from Congress to the bar room, that it is ordinary and tame, except now and then, when raised, for the moment by some fortunate effort, or remarkable brilliancy. But on the subject of our naval skill and prowess, although we are not yet willing to confess it, we are, yet, real enthusiasts. This is a string to which the national feeling vibrates certainly and deeply; and this string the author has touched with effect (pp. 328-29).

Gardiner's authorship of The Pilot review is supported by the references, comparisons and allusions which have been suggested. The argument against him is raised on the elements of tone and style, and on the consideration of a critical principle expressed by Willard Phillips. Phillips' belief that "to judge rightly of an author, we must view objects from the position assumed by himself or that occupied by the generality of his readers," appears to oppose him to Gardiner who demanded that literature work solely to his satisfaction.

If the author of the Pilot review is Willard Phillips,then Phillips and Gardiner shared a similar admiration for James Fenimore Cooper, and many of the same ideas about American literature. It is possible that these ideas were discussed at the free-wheeling editorial sessions which preceded publication of the North American Review in its earlier years; however, since there is no record of the relationship between Phillips and Gardiner this remains pure speculation.[6] Final evidence for Gardiner's authorship

[6] James Russell Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton, eds., "The Semi-Centenary of the NAR," NAR 100 (January 1865), 315-30. In this article Judge Phillips reminisces about the early editorial conferences conducted

of the Pilot review is found in an 1826 article ("Cooper's Novels"):

> We have heretofore devoted a few pages to the Spy and the Pilot: but time and our author have not ceased to be at work, and Lionel Lincoln, together with the Pioneers and The Last of the Mohicans (which are linked together by our author and therefore by us), are before the world. The American novelist must be set down therefore, as having fairly entitled himself once more to the operation of a review; and we have it not in our hearts to deny any popular writer such a reasonable gratification as often as we can afford it (p. 151).

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by members of the NAR group. The meetings were held in the following manner, at least until 1818:

> "We held meetings weekly at Gallison's rooms, at which our own articles and those of our friends and correspondents were read and criticised and decided upon. Some of our literary friends attended our meetings by invitation to read their own contributions, or to hear those of others upon subjects in which those invited were skilled and supposed to take interest. We also solicited articles upon particular subjects from literary friends at a distance. These meetings were kept up with much interest, vivacity, and harmony, and the zeal and spirit of our association were by degrees infused into our correspondents, and resulted in the increase of our subscription list, and in contribution of articles" (p.319).

CHAPTER IV

THE ROMANCES OF JAMES MCHENRY (1824)

James McHenry

James McHenry (1785-1845), novelist, poet and critic, was a native of Larne, County Antrim, Ireland. He was a hunchback, whose physical deformity influenced him to forego the Presbyterian ministry for the practice of medicine. He earned his physician's certificate in Belfast and Glasgow, arrived in America with his wife and son in 1817, and lived in Baltimore, Pennsylvania, and in Pittsburgh, before settling in Philadelphia in 1824. In that same year he founded the American Monthly Magazine. The periodical was designed to compete with the North American Review, but it failed financially within a year.[1]

In 1823 McHenry published two of his six novels. The Wilderness: or the Youthful Days of Washington was introduced in London over the pseudonym Solomon Secondsight. The American edition, which William Howard Gardiner reviewed, was titled The Wilderness or Braddock's Times, A Tale of the West. Apparently the British publishers believed that a novel about Washington would be more successful than one alluding to Braddock's tragedy in the American wilderness. McHenry's second novel, The Spectre of the Forest, or Annals of the Housatonic, A New England Romance, dramatized events and lives of certain Connecticut Puritans. Gardiner devotes one paragraph to this work

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[1] Edward M. Hinton, "James McHenry," Dictionary of American Biography, 12, ed., Dumas Malone (New York: Scribners, 1927-28), 63-64. Hereafter DAB. Also see William Charvat, The Origins of American Critical Thought (1936 rpt. A. S. Barnes, New York, 1961), pp. 157-58.

which he finds entertaining but harmless to his concept of the modern American historical romance.

McHenry was familiar with the literary history of the United States. In the first number of his ill-fated periodical he discussed the prejudicial attitudes toward fiction which prevailed in America prior to the 1820's:

> To us it appears but yesterday, that the grave, the serious, the religious and the prudent, considered novel-reading as an enjoyment utterly beneath the dignity of the human mind. . . . Well do we remember to have often heard such an occupation stigmatized by men of reputation for both sound sense and good taste, as one which none but sickly sentimentalists, or extravagant misspenders of time would think of following. In those days it was almost as disreputable to be detected reading a novel, as to be found betting at a cockfight or a gaming table. Those who had sons would have supposed them forever incapacitated for any useful pursuit in life, if they had exhibited an inclination for novel reading; and those who had daughters who exhibited such an inclination, would have considered them as totally unfitted for ever becoming good wives or mothers; and if they found after due attempts at correction, that the evil was incurable, lest the report of it should ruin the young lady's marriage prospects, they uniformly endeavored to keep it as profoundly secret, as they would her exhibiting a propensity to dram drinking. How surprising is the change we now witness.[2]

According to William Charvat, McHenry's ideas were Popeian; he was presumably a major exponent of the unities even though he was apparently unable to confine his imagination within Neo-classical forms. What was called "The Dr. McHenry School of Romance," elicited this criticism from the Atlantic Magazine after the publication of O'Halloran, or the Insurgent Chief (1824): "The plot [of this novel] seems to be made up as it goes along,

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G. H. Orians, "Censure of Fiction in American Romances and Magazines, 1789-1810," PMLA, 52 (1937), 195-214. Edward M. Hinton, DAB, 12, pp. 63-64, reveals that after McHenry's collection of verse, The Pleasures of Friendship, reached a seventh edition (1836), the highly conservative poet was led to "attack Wordsworth, Scott, Byron and other romanticists of their respective schools in the most unmeasured terms. As leading poetry reviewer for the American Quarterly Review, he was led by his bias into extravagances so effectively rebutted by writers for Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine and the Athenaeum as to discredit him as a critic."

which is indeed the most natural way, and the same in which events usually turn up in the world we live in."[3]

American Facsimiles

Gardiner begins his review of The Wilderness by reiterating his argument for the application of Associational Psychology to the American experience.[4] The materials for a new kind of fiction are present in the history of the United States, but not for the purpose for which they have been abused by James McHenry. The novelist's imaginative powers have distorted historical elements which Gardiner believes should be accurately presented. From the reviewer's standpoint, McHenry's novels effect nothing truthful about America. For the first time Gardiner introduces a term to describe what he has been demanding from prospective American novelists: the modern American historical romance should offer fac similes, but the critic prefers to frame his demand for them in a satirical context:

> There are those among us, perhaps, who may be curious to know what constitutes the Americanism of an American novel. Many persons have doubtless been so far deluded as to imagine, that the peculiarities of such a work are mere fac similes of the peculiarities of the country and consist in strong graphic delineations of its bold and beautiful scenery, and of its men and manners, as they really exist or have at some time existed. They might look to see perhaps, from

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[3] Charvat, ACT, p. 158.

[4] William Howard Gardiner, "Book Review, The Wilderness, or Braddock's Times. A Tale of the West and The Spectre of the Forest, or Annals of the Housatonic. A New England Romance," by James McHenry. Unless otherwise noted in the text or textual notes all page references in this chapter refer to NAR, 19 (July 1824), 209-23. Herschel M. Sikes, "William Howard Gardiner and the American Historical Novel," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 46 (1962), 295. Sikes notes, in regard to this review of McHenry's novels that, "This satiric criticism has been almost completely ignored; yet it is one of the most delightful and interesting articles to appear in the NAR."

> the hand of a master, something of our lakes, rivers and cataracts, something out of autumn woods and skies, so beautiful and peculiar, something of our own rich and rapid summer vegetation, outstripping the tardy growth of more equal climes; or the sudden desolation of our winter tempests. And in regard to the human beings who animate the soil, they would expect to find the familiar manners, habits and dialects of those immediately around them (p. 207).

Gardiner's romantic theory appears to have demanded as truthful a picture of nature as of human nature. The delusions he alludes to are really those Americanisms which should form the structure of historical romance. American fiction, written to the reviewer's taste would reflect the natural environment, the diversity of the individual American character, and an accurate representation of the "language" peculiar to the "class" of American being dramatized at any particular point in fiction.

Sarcastically, Gardiner continues his discussion of James McHenry promising to "corrêct . . . erroneous impressions" about "the elements of the American novel." "By casting an eye over these pages it will be seen at a glance," he charges, "that the art of writing an American novel, is neither more nor less, than the art of describing under American names such scenes as are in no way American, peopling them with adventurers from all corners of the globe, except America, with a native or two here or there, acting as no American ever acts, and talking a language which, on the other side of the water, may pass for American, simply because it is not English" (p. 210). Almost jestfully he notes: "The chief dramatis personae of the Wilderness are a Scotch Irishman, (by which we mean an Irishman who talks Scotch,) and his wife, with their sons and daughters; an American Irishman, (by which we mean Paddy himself,) for his servant; a sort of mad Indian, who turns out

to be a Frenchified Scotchman; together with General Washington, and a few other mere nondescripts" (p. 210).[5]

The Wilderness

Deep in the Ohio country McHenry discovers the family of immigrant Gilbert Frazier not long departed from Inishowen. A woman servant to the Fraziers dies in childbirth introducing her offspring Maria as the heroine of The Wilderness. Distraught, the father of this unfortunate baby, described by Gardiner as a "Frenchified-Scotchman," disappears into the forest. He then becomes Tonnaleuka, a remarkable Indian who assists McHenry as a deus ex machina much in the fashion John Paul Jones served Cooper in The Pilot.

Charles Adderly, the American-Irish hero, arrives commanding an expedition of the Ohio Company. During an encounter with the Indians he kills one of their leaders before he is captured and condemned to death. Tonnaleuka rescues Adderly and delivers him to the Frazier household where he quickly falls in love with Maria. The romance is complicated by the introduction of George Washington who is also smitten by the orphan, now a beautiful forest maiden. It is to the author's embarrassing depiction of this major historical figure that Gardiner relegates his attention and the majority of the review's extracts. McHenry's Washington is brave and dashing, but grossly sentimental. He steps dramatically from the depths of the wilderness into a tranquil scene. Maria and her foster sister, Nancy Frazier, are

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[5] Hinton, DAB, 12, p. 64, writes: "For all his [McHenry's] many talents, his sole contribution to American letters was his portraiture of the Ulster Irishman who in conduct, beliefs, and religious tenets resembles the lowland Scot." Herschel M. Sikes, p. 295, reminds that novels like McHenry's were often accepted as "good" American literature.

sitting under a tree reading. Gardiner quotes the encounter:

> Maria had just pronounced the following exquisite lines;
> "He saw her charming, but he saw not half
> The charms her downcast modesty concealed."
> When Nancy, happening to direct her attention a little to one side, perceived a white man (the reader should bear it in mind that Washington was a white man) leaning against a tree, scarce two yards distant. She immediately started to her feet in surprise, crying out--
> "Oh, Maria, here is a white stranger."
> Maria arose, considerably startled, and the stranger approached, with mildness, benevolence, and admiration strongly expressed in his countenance.
> "Ladies!" said he, "I must ask pardon for my delay in addressing you. But how could I interrupt the noble exercise, the refined enjoyment in which I found you engaged! And in such a place too--so unexpectedly! I have traversed the wilderness nearly two hundred miles without seeing a white woman; and here to discover such as you, and so splendidly employed! Ladies--forgive me, if I say my delight is equal to my astonishment!" (pp. 212-13).[6]

The infatuation Washington subsequently developed for Maria was to go unrequited. Charles Adderly had won her heart as he was soon to win her hand. The critic apologizes for not presenting the scene in which Maria administers the coup de grace to Washington, but he promises to atone with an even more interesting event which follows Braddock's disastrous defeat. McHenry stages the legendary battle within sight of Gilbert Frazier's cottage, and Gardiner describes the chaos: "Never did knight of romance, under the influence of peerless dame," he romantically exaggerates, "perform more unheard of prodigies of valor against Saracen or Turk, than did Washington this day, under the eye of 'the beloved of his soul,' among the red warriors

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[6] James McHenry, The Wilderness or Braddock's Times. A Tale of the West, 2 vols. (New York: 1823), I, p. 217. Efforts to secure a copy of this work disclosed that it is in the rare book collection at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville. It is not available on microfilm. For the purpose of including future page references in the text the title has been abbreviated to TW and includes volume number and page references.

of the west. His men, however, were cut to pieces, his general killed, and Adderly a third time captured" (p. 217).

The French commander, having carried the day, carries Maria away to confinement in his personal quarters. Determined to rescue his sweetheart, Washington dons the costume of a savage chieftain and proceeds to the French fort. This spectacle of George Washington in disguise and on a daring rescue mission is Gardiner's promised scene of deeper interest: "It is much to be regretted," he comments, "that Chantry and Canova, who have taken so much pains in devising attitude and costume for the immortal Washington, never happened to imagine him with porcupine's quills, leggins, and moccasins in the character of a Piantia chief" (p. 219). Meanwhile, the impounded heroine is astonished at the appearance of "this chief, so majestic in person and splendid in his apparel," who also speaks English:

> '"How sorry I am, Miss Frazier," said he, "to find you a captive in such a place, and in the hands of such a man!--But I forget--you do not know me in this disguise. Alas! has the form of him who loves you with an ardor beyond whatever man has felt for woman, made so slight an impression upon your mind, that the mere changing of the hue of his countenance can conceal him from your recollection? Must I name to you the man who loves you with a tenderness and devotedness, which none but himself can ever feel?--alas, must I name to you--George Washington" (TW, II, p. 229).

Maria subsequently disguises herself as an Indian squaw in order to escape with Washington. The ploy is discovered by a sentinel who shouts an alarm as Maria's noble rescuer stabs him to death. Following this bloody encounter their flight proceeds without further incident. The heroic rescue however, does not alter Maria's affection toward the unfortunate Adderly who once again awaits execution. With a great magnanimity of spirit Washington leads a dashing cavalry troop into the Indian village retrieving Adderly from the stake practically at the moment his pyre was being lighted.

Restored to each other, Maria and Charles marry, while the novelist attempts to show how Washington relieved his despair by entering again into the hero's intelligence:

> His heart having suffered much, he became serious, and contemplative even in the days of his youth; but he had done his duty, and hence he was blest with the consciousness of self approbation, and with the possession of a magnanimous firmness and independence, and a fearlessness in all his actions and intercourse with the world. Having parted with the only object that could engross his whole affections, and being naturally free from every close and selfish feeling, his heart regarded all men as his brothers, it cherished his country as its only mistress, and hearkened to his duty as his only master. In short, from the day on which it was forced to abandon the tender hopes of a youthful and enthusiastic ove, it would be impossible to find an example of human nature having produced a heart more purely and entirely devoted to all the calls of a philanthropy, patriotism and duty, and productive of actions more conducive to the benefit of the world than the heart of Washington (TW, II, pp. 291-92).

Recalling Gardiner's reaction to Cooper's presentation of Washington in The Spy, the severity of his attack on McHenry is hardly surprising:

> It cannot be reckoned among the least of the benefits, which Washington has thus conferred upon the world, that he has been the occasion of so remarkable a work as that we have above noticed. For ingenuity and originality we are sure the author of The Wilderness must stand unparalleled among American novelists. We have indeed, before this, seen Washington placed in extraordinary situations; but who besides our author ever imagined him,
>
> 'Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
> Made to his mistress' eyebrow?'
>
> Who ever before thought of General Washington thridding the mazes of a cotillon upon 'light fantastic toe,' or marching with the true aboriginal parrot toed gait in an elegant costume of party colored feathers, and porcupine's quills! We have had no room to notice the minor characters in the book; but we can assure our readers that they are all as well sustained, and have as much verisimilitude as that of Washington himself (pp. 222-23).[7]

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[7] Edmund Lindop, "A National Need," American History Illustrated, 10 (Dec. 1975), p. 4. Mr. Lindop provides an interesting narrative report on the part music played in the life of George Washington. Of particular interest is a visit that Washington made to General Nathanael Greene's headquarters in the winter of 1779. An entertainment was staged during the evening for the visiting guest, Greene was ailing, but Washington reportedly was in a fine mood and danced every dance with the attractive Mrs. Greene.

The Spectre

Gardiner's preoccupation with The Wilderness forced him to capsule his comments on The Spectre of the Forest, which he discovered to be, in some ways, even more inventive than the Ohio romance:

> There is nothing in it quite equal to Washington; but still upon the whole, it is rather a bolder attempt than The Wilderness. The scene is laid chiefly in Connecticut and the manners of our Puritan ancestors are intended to be described. The machinery of horror is far more various and complicated than the Wilderness. We have wars, Indians, wild beasts, witches, trials, hangings, mobs, pirates, regicides, all conspiring against the reader's peace in every page. But on the other hand, we have the solace of society such as Prior, Dryden, Addison, besides the king and queen, judges, bishops, dukes, lords and gentlemen, which to be sure we are obliged to go to England to enjoy, but with which we are amply repaid for all our trouble, seeing so many and so great personages as familiarly as Scott himself could have shown them. The Spectre, who appears and disappears in a most astonishing manner on all great occasions, and constantly stands ready to help the author through every difficulty, turns out to be no other than Goffe, one of those who subscribed to Charles's execution, and who is said to have secreted himself for several years in this country (p. 223).[8]

Conclusion

This review suggests that, while in 1824 authors were producing more and more novels, there was little if any improvement in the quality. McHenry is representative of those novelists who were the antithesis of Cooper. The Spy was introduced as a practical, successful model of the modern American historical romance, but apparently few were perceptive enough to understand the value of its Americanisms. McHenry selected Gardinerarian epochs for his novels, but in what he created the Boston reviewer only found unreal people inhabiting an unreal world. Gardiner's demand for facsimiles of American scenes and classes is the most important clue to his critical acumen

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[8] James McHenry, The Spectre of the Forest, or Annals of the Housatonic. A New England Romance, 2 vols. (New York: 1823). Also a rare book, The Spectre is available on microfilm.

expressed in this article, and when he turns again in 1826 to the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, he will criticize America's first novelist for many of the faults that led him to condemn James McHenry.

Gardiner's reviews evidently had little effect on James McHenry's career. He continued to write fiction, even a drama. In the 1830's he produced two historical romances, The Betrothed of Wyoming and Meredith, or the Mystery of Meschianza. After twenty-six years in America McHenry returned to Ireland and a position in the United States Consulate's office at Londonderry. In 1843 he died in Larne.[9]

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[9] Two James McHenrys can confuse the issue. The novelist, poet, critic and publisher discussed in this essay is not the James McHenry (1753-1816) who wrote poetry in addition to serving as Secretary of War in George Washington's cabinet. Additional information and a collection of McHenry's poetry can be found in Oral Sumner Coad, "James McHenry: A Minor American Poet," Rutgers University Library Journal, 8, no. 2 (June 1945), 33-37.

CHAPTER V

"COOPER'S NOVELS" (1826)

Publication of The Last of the Mohicans (1826) heightened the excitement of a year in which James Fenimore Cooper and his family sailed for a grand tour of Europe. The novelist's financial condition had improved significantly since 1823 when he had been forced to sell some of his property to avoid bankruptcy. Four years had elapsed since William Howard Gardiner, writing in the North American Review, had recognized native fiction and acclaimed Cooper the first "distinguished American novel writer." In his 1826 critique of The Last of the Mohicans and The Pioneers, Gardiner evaluated Cooper's literary achievements and the status of the American novel:

> The experiment of adapting American scenes, events and characters to historical romance, was suggested but a few years ago. It has been since abundantly tried, and is still going on to such an extent, that we should have ample cause to regret the little countenance we may have given it, did we feel ourselves called upon to review, or even to read, half the trash which appears daily under this disguise. Mr. Cooper, however, has the most singular merit of writing American novels which everybody reads, and which we are of course bound to review every now and then. For these last five or six years he has supplied the reading public annually with a repast of five or six hundred pages of such matter; so that we have a right to consider him as publically professing this department of elegant literature. It is too late to say, that he does not excel in it; or at least, that he has not some considerable merit; for however far he may fall short of our standards, or wherever we may rank him among living writers, the public voice has long since confirmed to him the appellation of the American novelist, a title which was but sparingly and timidly suggested for the author of the Spy. No one has yet appeared

> among us who has been wholly able to cope with him in his proper walk; and we see no good reason why he should not be allowed, for the present at least, to maintain the distinction (pp. 150-51).[1]

This forty-seven page article is devoted almost entirely to a discussion of The Last of the Mohicans. The Pioneers (1823) is the subject of the final four and a half pages. Gardiner included the earlier work in this review in order to compare Cooper's development of Natty Bumppo. Calling the Leatherstocking "the most striking original" of Cooper's "naturals," he surmised that Bumppo in The Pioneers is superior to the scout of the French and Indian war: "The latter is a mere copy by the same hand," he writes, "or rather a new draught of the same personage at a different period of life and under other circumstances; and we cannot but think that it has something less of the spirit and raciness of originality" (p. 193).

While the general public had accepted James Fenimore Cooper's novels, Gardiner was aware that some intellectuals did not appreciate American fiction. In a major defense of the novelist, he issues a stern lecture on how to read and enjoy the modern American historical romance:

> We have met persons, indeed, deficient neither in sound judgment, nor refined taste, nor yet with minds wholly destitute of fanciful association, who are bold enough to say, that they cannot work their way through one of Cooper's novels. Such readers we are strongly inclined to suspect of unfair dealing. They take up Cooper and are exceedingly disappointed, that he does not turn out to be Scott. In the first place, it is ten to one that they cannot abide an American novel from any quarter; or that they have become entirely satisfied, that the author of the Spy is a very vulgar writer; or, without wholly prejudging the matter, they suffer their sensibilities to be so utterly shocked at some little indelicacy, or awkwardness or inelegance, which is likely to occur

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[1] William Howard Gardiner, "Cooper's Novels," North American Review, 23 (July 1826), 150-97. All page references in this chapter refer to this article.

> in the first ten pages, that they throw down the book in disgust, long before the author has arranged those preliminaries, which he esteems necessary by way of groundwork, and which are apt to be somewhat dull with the most vigorous and imaginative writers. But let him take up one of these tales, not as a subject of perpetual comparison with the Great Unknown, but for the bona fide purpose of suffering his imagination to be amused with scenes of fictitious life; let him read, as a child would read, for the sake of the action, rather than the argument or the style, and busy himself about disentangling the thread of the narrative, and watching the fortunes of the actors, instead of philosophizing on their characters or criticizing their conversation (all of which we take to be a clear usurpation of our province), and we will venture to say, that no such unsophisticated novel reader ever called for his nightcap, until he had arrived at some of those natural resting places, which, every judicious author, consulting equally with his reader's health and his own reputation, will take care to intersperse at proper intervals, and which, by the way, it is sometimes a fault with our author, that he neglects to provide (pp. 151-52).

Gardiner's argument that Cooper should be read for entertainment again indicates a change in attitude toward the novel. When reviewing The Spy he suggested the modern American historical romance as a way of "developing the political history of the time." The selection of three historical epochs centralized events which tended to provide the proper material for romantic fiction, an expression of "native character and manners," to answer those who objected to novels. As Carl Van Doren noted: "The dullest critics contended that novels were lies; the pious that they served no virtuous purpose; the strenuous, that they softened sturdy minds; the utilitarian, that they crowded out more useful books; the realistic, that they painted adventure too romantic and love too vehement; the patriotic, that dealing with European manners, they tended to confuse and dissatisfy Republican youth."[2]

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[2] G. H. Orians, "Censure of Fiction in American Romances and Magazines, 1789-1810," PMLA, 52 (1937), 195-214, quotes Carl Van Diren, The American Novel (New York: Macmillan, 1921), p. 3.

A comparison of Scott and Cooper is central to understanding what Gardiner desired in the modern American historical romance. The word "romance" as it was used by Walter Scott reportedly indicated the difference between his historical novels, and the "day to day realism of a Robinson Crusoe," or Jane Austen's social novels.[3] Cooper borrowed Scott's conventions and attempted to weave mystery, melodrama, picturesque settings, pageantry, rustic quaintness and high sensibility into American scenes and experiences. Gardiner's defense of Cooper suggests that this mixture offended as many of Gardiner's associates as did Cooper's inelegance in style and diction.

The Last of the Mohicans

The extent of Gardiner's influence upon Cooper will lie perhaps for all times in the realm of conjecture, but The Last of the Mohicans answered the reviewer's call for a historical romance about the era of the Indian wars. Most of the complaints Gardiner had raised in the preceding reviews appear again in "Cooper's Novels." Improbabilities of plot and failures in characterization combined with Cooper's extravagant descriptions of the landscape offer the reviewer a rich variety of techniques to dispute with his favorite novelist, but Gardiner is still willing to acknowledge Cooper's power over reader and critic alike:

> Indeed, if we are called upon to state what, in our judgment, constitutes the characteristic excellence of this writer, we should say . . . that it is exhibited in the rapidity of his incidents, the vividness of his action, and the invention of the machinery of the piece, by which we mean all that answers in the modern novel as a substitute for the

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[3] Warren S. Walker, James Fenimore Cooper (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1962), p. 22.

> mythological divinities of the ancient epopeia, or the giants and enchanters, faries and wierd sisters of Runic poetry and the elder romance . . . It is the creation and adaptation of a kind of machinery, which may be adequate to its objects, original in its character, and yet within the narrowed limits of modern probability, that stretch to the utmost the inventive faculties of the novelist; and our author has uniformly succeeded in producing something far enough from faultless, but sufficient to answer this great end (pp. 152-53).

Cooper's narratives stir the imagination. Vivid scenes and rapid changes hold the reader's attention, but the reviewer complains about matters of the heart; "we never fall in love with the heroine ourselves," he writes, "and we cannot bring ourselves to sympathize in her sweet sorrows, unless we perceive that she is about to be scalped, or is menaced with some other bodily harm" (pp. 153-54). The mechanical mistresses Cooper created for his race of squires forms a society that Gardiner is determined to avoid; "the moment we set foot in a fashionable drawing room," he charges, "we find the gentry there so abominably stiff in their manners, and with so much vulgar good breeding, and so dull or flippant, or affected in their discourse, that we are heartily glad to escape from elegant society, and take a walk with our author in the woods, or step over to the neighboring inn, where we are likely to meet with somebody who can talk to the purpose in his own way" (p. 154).

Once again Gardiner must judge Cooper's control of historic figures when they are introduced in romance: "His great attempt," he remembers, "that of George Washington in the Spy, was a miserable failure. Paul Jones in the Pilot can scarcely be called a portrait; and the slight sketches in Lionel Lincoln are by no means touched with the master's hand, and give . . . but faint representations of their originals" (p. 155). There is a more controlled distancing between fact and fiction in the Mohicans. Cooper

borrows from history the name of Lt. Colonel Monroe, commander of the ill-fated Fort William Henry, but there is nothing historically embarrassing in this "slight sketch."[4] The colonel's daughters, Alice and Cora, and the novel's plot bear the brunt of the critic's dismay; "we cannot forbear to express our astonishment," Gardiner exclaims, "that our author, who has exhibited so much ingenuity and invention in the interior conduct of this piece, should have suffered its claim to regard as a 'narrative' to rest on such a wretchedly improbable foundation" (p. 158).

He disputes the very presence of the heroines in the novel; "it is much easier to account for the fact, that either of them should have come into the world, than that they should have come into the American wilderness at such a time, without some more particular provocation than a mere girlish desire to visit their father in the midst of his duties and dangers" (p. 162). If Gardiner ever considered that Cooper inserted heroines and aristocrats into his fiction to attract reader interest he never mentions it, but he does extract a heavy price in criticism for their appearance and particularly for the indiscreet mixing of Cora's blood:[5]

> There is no task of the novel writer more difficult, we suppose than that of delineating a good female character; at least the frequency of the failure seems to justify this presumption. Whether it be,

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[4] In 1757 Monroe's two-thousand-man garrison was attacked by Montcalm's ten thousand militia and Indians. After Monroe surrendered, Indians allied with the French, slaughtered several hundred Royal-American troops and dependents.

[5] William Charvat, Introduction, James Fenimore Cooper, The Last of the Mohicans (Boston: Riverside, 1958), p. viii, suggests that the love affair between Alice Munroe and Duncan Heyward "was for Cooper mere pandering to public appetite." Charvat reminds that "sentimentally educated women were the chief consumers of fiction" during Cooper's time, "a fact," he suggests, "which created a real problem for a writer whose characteristic material was physical action in a male world."

> that the softer sex is less marked by striking and individual character, or because we are less accustomed to see them in scenes which call it forth, or because their genuine peculiarities are of too ethereal a cast for the rude nature of man to imitate successfully, or because our tastes are somewhat capricious upon this interesting topic, are questions which we shall leave to the philosophers. Certain it is that the heroine is commonly the least agreeable article in a good novel, and quite intolerable in a bad one. Scott himself has but seldom succeeded; our author, we think, never. In the present case, we are free to confess, that so far as Cora is concerned, our judgements, like Major Heyward's, may be somewhat biased. We mean no offence whatever to the colored population of the United States; on the contrary, we have a great deal of esteem for them in certain situations; and we acknowledge it to be a vile and abominable prejudice; but still we have (and we cannot help it) a particular dislike to the richness of negro blood in a heroine (p. 163).

This distaste for Cora blinds Gardiner to the associations later critics delighted in detecting in her relationship with Magua. The reviewer describes her negro blood as an "extraordinary and superfluous blemish." This element, like gothic caverns, cataracts, and the overhanging forest, does not appeal to Gardiner. His great concern is a feeling of coldness for Alice and Cora. There is nothing in their character to arouse his passion; therefore, he judges that the sisters do not contribute "to the interest of the piece:"

> We are deeply interested in certain scenes of peril, which they encounter; but we are so simply because of the character of the perils themselves. We are moved at the sight of a young female bound to a tree by a troop of fierce and inexorable savages; we shudder at the stroke of the tomahawk which severs her tresses, without much considering whether they be raven or sandy; nor, under the feverish excitement of the scene, do we stop to ask ourselves if this helpless victim be a lady of high degree, or a simple washerwoman. It is certain, that the emotion of the scene would be immeasurably heightened if the fair being, who seems doomed to a lingering death, were one who had already wound her way into our affections, and created a peculiar interest for herself by some touching and attractive traits of female loveliness. But the spectacle has a horrid interest of its own, apart from all considerations of the sufferer; and this species of interest it is, an interest derived from the novelty, the rapidity, the horror of the incidents, and this only, we think, which carries us through the book (pp. 163-64).

Perhaps Alice and Cora were not as well fitted by the novelist for a wilderness adventure as the heroines of The Deerslayer were to be.[6] With time Cooper would do better, but Gardiner had reached the limit of his endurance with Cooper's "social vulgarity:"

> Does the author ask, why we are neither satisfied with the feminine timidity of Alice, nor with the proud bearing of the ardent and noble minded Cora? We answer, chiefly for the same reason, that we were dissatisfied equally with Isabella Singleton and Frances Wharton, or with Katherine Plowden and Cecelia Howard; for the same reason, that we are now dissatisfied with all the heroines of The Pioneers and of Lionel Lincoln; it is that they are all miserably deficient in the grace and ease, gentility of deportment, true delicacy, and unaffected refinement which properly belong to the sphere of life in which they are designed to move; or in other words, because no one of them exhibits, according to our conceptions, what we suppose each of them is designed to exhibit, the true notion of a well bred lady. Nor ought we to confine our remarks now, more than formerly to the female characters, in regard to this sort of defect. It belongs rather to the high life of either sex; and, as it would in the course of real life, appears most conspicuous in their mutual conversation. We have heretofore, perhaps, said enough upon this head; but we really esteem it a great drawback from the pleasure of reading this writer's compositions. It is hardly worthwhile to attempt to point our examples of a fault, which runs through a whole series of works, and cannot fail to strike every educated reader. Besides, we might not make ourselves very intelligible, after all, to the writer, without consuming more time than we have to spare (p. 164).

The humorous figure David Gamut does not escape Gardiner's wrath. He describes the New England singing master who accompanies the Munro sisters on their journey as "a very delicate monster," and locates the inspiration for Gamut in the works of Walter Scott (p. 160).[7] Gardiner's complaint against what he terms the "Queen's dwarf and the King's jester," is an attack on the presence of the folk-hero in the modern American

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[6] Warren S. Walker, p. 36. The reference is to Judith Hutter in The Deerslayer. She is characterized as "Cooper's most charming hussy."

[7] William Charvat, Introduction, The Last of the Mohicans, pp. viii-ix, discusses David Gamut and Cooper's presentation of New Englanders; also see Warren S. Walker, pp. 102-105.

historical romance. But even Gardiner realized that David Gamut, the constantly endangered heroines and the starchy officers, were background decorations for the true heroes of The Last of the Mohicans:

> The main design of this work is manifestly to exhibit the characteristics of savage rather than civilized life, as they exist or once existed in the wilds of North America. The aborigines of our soil constitute the great machinery of the piece and the few civilized whites, who appear to take an active part in the plot, are in fact introduced merely as objects on whom the Indians may operate to advantage. We have long since looked upon the character of the North American Savage as one admirably calculated to form an engine of great power in the hands of some ingenious master of romance, who had a true notion of this part of his subject; and the success with which it has been managed by Mr. Cooper in his present work, is a striking example of its effect. Beings that went by this name and were in fact meant to represent North American Indians, have acted their parts, more or less important in the world of fiction almost ever since the discovery that such creatures existed. But the representation has commonly borne no greater simultude to the red warrior of the woods, than it has to a chieftain of Timbuctoo, or the solitary hero of the moon. They have not been copies from nature; but mere creations of the poet's brain, the half formed dreams of a disturbed imagination. Mr. Cooper's Indians are somewhat of the visionary order too; but then he has dreamed a more consistent dream upon the subject than most of his predecessors, and he has interwoven with his vision more of what really belongs to the aboriginal character than any other writer of poetry or romance. The great difficulty is that which we suggested by the way, in a late article on this interesting subject; namely that he has relied exclusively upon the judgements of the enthusiastic and visionary Heckewelder, whose work is a mere eulogium upon the virtues of his favorite tribe, and contains, mixed with many interesting facts, a world of pure imagination (p. 166).[8]

While Cooper may be guilty of misrepresenting the Indians because of his dependence on an unreliable source, Gardiner recognizes his intent to

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8 W. H. Gardiner's opinion of Heckewelder changed from 1822 to 1826. In reviewing The Spy, NAR, 15 (July 1822), p. 258, he referred to Heckewelder as the Indian's "best historian." According to John T. Frederick, "Cooper's Eloquent Indians," PMLA, 81 (1956), 1004-17, the Rev. John Heckewelder's History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations appeared as part of the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia: 1819). Cooper's sources for Indian lore are discussed in Warren S. Walker, pp. 48-49, and by G. L. Paine, "Cooper and the North American Review," Studies in Philology, 28 (1931), 799-809.

authenticate their physical and tribal characteristics. He suggests that the Indians should have been made to appear more like primitive hunters than "modern carpet knights." Chingachgook is determined to be the more truthful reproduction, while Uncas and Magua represent "licensed instruments of romance." The reviewer's personal opinions surface in this review; invariably the Indians are savages, and having observed them in society, Gardiner objects to the civilized traits they effect, including, "sagacity, skill, politeness, and delicate and refined attentions" (pp. 167-68).[9]

Here again, Gardiner's preoccupation with historical accuracy probably prevented him from recognizing that Cooper was applying to Indians the only character traits he was familiar with, the virtues and vices which were commonly distributed among all the white men he had ever known.[10] The reviewer consistently fails to notice the more delicate images and illusions

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[9] W. H. Gardiner, "Cooper's Novel's," NAR, 23 (July 1826), p. 167, describes an encounter with a group of Indians indicating that he had first hand knowledge of their behavior in society as it involved rum, jewelry, ladies and language. Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought: The Romantic Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927), II, 227, notes that while Cooper's "prejudices certainly got the better of him in dealing with New England . . . his romance certainly got the better of him in describing the Mohicans. John T. Frederick, p. 1005, believes it "unlikely that general agreement can ever be obtained as to the broad question of whether Cooper's Indians are portrayed realistically or are idealized," but as far as the "figurative expressions employed by Cooper in the speeches of his Indian characters," are concerned, Frederick finds that the author "neither invented imaginatively nor imitated European writers, but followed his sources with extraordinary fidelity."

[10] Stanley T. Williams, "James Fenimore Cooper," Literary History of the United States: History, ed. Robert E. Spiller, et al., 3rd. ed., rev. (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 263, suggests that Uncas and Magua epitomize "the virtues and vices which Cooper thought worthy of portrayal. in human nature."

because of a predilection for factual exactness, and a suspicion of all romantic nuances hardened by a single-minded desire for fiction authenticated by a historical background.

If Gardiner was disappointed by Cooper's Indians his concern for realism was answered by a natural-like Nathaniel Bumppo. He constructs a historical background for the "bold and original conception," reminiscent of the authentication he provided for Harvey Birch. Gardiner shows how a similar individual might have functioned during the Indian wars and how it might have been possible for a white man to become acclimated to Indian customs and manners and subsequently separate himself from civilization. Praise upon praise accompanies the reviewer's pen as he compliments "the best piece of invention our author has ever produced; one we may say," he continues, "which deserves to be ranked in the first class of the creations of genius;" then he evaluates Bumppo:

> The scout, though averse to the modes of life 'down in the settlements,' is neither a savage nor a misanthrope; on the contrary, he has a vast deal of the milk of human kindness in his composition, with an excellent moral code of his own manufacture, and religious notions which certainly do great honor to the wilderness. He adopts many of the prejudices, but few of the superstitions and none of the barbarous practices of the people with whom he lives; and notwithstanding his attachment to savage life, he yet piques himself upon being 'genuine white,' or as he more often expresses it, 'a man without a cross' (p. 172).

Conclusion

Gardiner concludes by cataloging the indiscretions and absurdities a later critic suggested resulted from "an astonishing lack of coordination between the classical ingredients of narrative: plot and character,

thought and diction:"[11] Gardiner believed Cooper's mistakes derived from "an aboriginal taste, which delights in finery and glitter, and provided there be a dazzling effect, cares little whether it be produced by tinsel or gold." Cooper's imagination was discovered to be the writer's undoing; "the greatest fault of this work upon the whole," Gardiner writes, "is a little overdoing of the very thing that constitutes its chief excellence. The incidents are too crowded, there are too many imminent dangers and hair breadth escapes . . . too many startling sights, and unearthly sounds, and amazing incidents" (pp. 191-93). Almost plaintively Gardiner begs Cooper to recognize and correct his errors:

> The truth is, we have concerned ourselves chiefly to notice our author's faults, because Mr. Cooper is already too far advanced to stand in need of our praise; and we desire, not only that the public taste should be correct on the subject of our native literature, but also, if it be possible, and any suggestion of ours can effect it, to see something from this pen free from the numerous defects which deform its present productions, and every way worthy of the great powers and far spread fame of the American novelist (p. 197).

In the same year (1826) that Gardiner's review of The Pioneers and The Last of the Mohicans appeared, the United States Literary Gazette offered these conclusions about Cooper's novels and their acceptance: "So far, Mr. Cooper certainly has no just cause of complaint, either against the critics or against the public. The public have read him, have applauded him, and above all, have been proud of him. The critics

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[11] R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 101. William Charvat, Introduction, The Last of the Mohicans, pp. viii-ix, suggests that J. F. Cooper borrowed many of his "action devices" from Shakespeare; also see W. B. Gates, "Cooper's Indebtedness to Shakespeare," PMLA, 67 (1952), 716-31.

have not been sparing of praise where it was deserved, whilst censure has been administered with a gentle and unwilling hand."[12]

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[12] George Dekker and John P. McWilliams, Fenimore Cooper: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 14.

CHAPTER VI

WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT

Ferdinand and Isabella

"This book has got summer puffs in plenty and a gale to the tune of ninety pages from the 'old North American.'"[1]

The esteem in which his friends held William Hickling Prescott can best be indicated by their support of The History of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic. Friendly Bostonians purchased the entire first printing when it was offered on Christmas Day in 1837. At the same time at least four sympathetic reviewers were preparing to introduce the work nationally in the era's most respected periodicals. The most significant discussion was written by William Howard Gardiner for the North American Review (January 1838), and prompted Jared Sparks to suggest that it could serve as the fourth volume of the history.[2]

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[1] This quotation is from a letter written by W. H. Prescott to George Ticknor, William Hickling Prescott (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864), p. 115. The letter is dated January 6, 1838.

[2] William Howard Gardiner, "Book Review, History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic," North American Review, 46 (January 1838), 203-91. Unless otherwise indicated all page references in this chapter refer to this article. Jared Sparks is quoted in Ticknor, William Hickling Prescott, p. 115. Ticknor, pp. 110-11, provides a discussion of contemporary reviews by Francis W. P. Greenwood, Christian Examiner (March 1838); John Pickering, New York Review (April 1838); and George Bancroft, The United States Literary Magazine (May 1838). For additional discussions of these reviews see C. H. Gardiner, William Hickling Prescott: A Biography (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), pp. 137-39; and C. H. Gardiner, ed., The Papers of W. H. Prescott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), p. 114, p. 122; and William Hickling Prescott, The Literary Memoranda, C. H. Gardiner, ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 222.

That the writing of this review was an emotional as well as a literary experience can be determined, in addition to its extravagant length, by its vast catalog of compliments and the casual manner Gardiner affects in criticising his friend. Inevitably, the review honors a courageous aristocrat who overcame enormous physical disabilities to research and write a remarkable narrative history. The highly informed nature of the review attests to Gardiner's determination to properly represent his friend as a major historian. Acclaiming Prescott as the developer of a "true philosophical theory of General History" (p. 277), the reviewer overstates himself repeatedly, self-consciously acknowledging "an exhibition of copious merit on the one side, and petty faults on the other" (p. 291). It is obvious that the warmth of a close relationship tends the pen of the magisterial reviewer as he considers minutely the attractions of _Ferdinand and Isabella_.

Spanning fifty years, the friendship between Gardiner and Prescott ended only with the historian's death. The first Prescott son was named for Gardiner who later named his son for Prescott. Gardiner was also appointed as administrator of Prescott's estate. Ironically, while this champion of American authors composed his massive critique of _Ferdinand and Isabella_ for the still prestigious _North American Review_, Prescott, Federalist and pro-British, sought recognition from England which he considered "the most truly civilized place on earth." Rushed to completion, Gardiner's article was threatened by a shortage of printer's paper stock and by the editor of the _North American Review_, J. G. Palfrey:

> The longest paper I ever inserted in the _Review_ was the learned and able one (in the number for January, 1838) on Prescott's _Ferdinand and Isabella_, then just issued. The preparation of the article had

> been delayed until the number was almost due, and as I had perfect confidence in the writer, I began to print soon after he began to to write, and he kept on just before me, sending installments of his manuscript day by day. What with the fertility of his mind, the extent and interest of the subject, and his ardor for his friend, his work grew to unexpected proportions as he proceeded; Alps on Alps arose; I had made no sufficient provisions of paper for such an affluence of discussion, and the printer reported that his stock was out, while the manuscript continued to flow in. I sent him to buy paper wherever it could be found; and, luckily for the credit of my punctuality and for the gratification of the public, who would not have been willing to lose a line of such a composition, the market proved to be sufficiently supplied.[3]

Palfrey may have been coerced into publishing more of Gardiner's review than he deemed reasonable, regardless of how "learned and able" it was. A concerned Prescott begged Harvard printer Charles Folsom to intercede with Palfrey who had evidently threatened to edit the extracts from the review:

> He [Palfrey] may as well cut my head off. Who will believe half the fine things said of the book without a voucher. The article is somewhat lengthy to be sure, but it is a learned and elaborate one, I am sure, and the extracts will be as new to the reader as the review. People will certainly think they were afraid to quote me. It is so very unusual an occurrence . . . in this sort of article.[4]

A Lawyer's Brief

Gardiner develops this review in the form of a lawyer's brief pointing out new material and comparing the author's "novelty, originality, and authenticity" with preceding histories (p. 275). Legalistically, he constructs the case for Prescott as a philosophical historian by disparaging France's Vincent Mignot and Germany's Von Rupert Becker (pp. 203-206), and then a group of English and European historians headed by William Robertson (pp. 206-209). The importance of Spain during the reign of Ferdinand and

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[3] James Russell Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton, eds., "The Semi-Centenary of the North American Review," North American Review, 100 (January 1865), p. 325.

[4] C. H. Gardiner, ed., The Papers of W. H. Prescott, pp. 121-22. While there is no evidence of editing, the article includes only twelve pages of extracts.

Isabella and the condition of the country during this era must be concretely established in order to suggest that Prescott has written the definitive history of a major epoch:

> The age of Ferdinand and Isabella, like that of Washington and Louis the Sixteenth, was the beginning of a great end; or at least contained, in the general upturning of the old elements of society, the first marked development of that new political state which had long been imperceptibly accruing, and of that which was to follow. It was one of those epochs, when the world is perceptibly undergoing a great change; when the universe of nations seems to be in a state of excited action, and the human mind moves forward, not merely with accelerated steps, but by great and visible leaps (p. 209).

The Spanish Connection

The nineteenth-century American preoccupation with Spain is exemplified by Gardiner's acclamation of Isabella as "the mother of America" (p. 214). Additionally, he notes that the book contains for politicians and statesmen, "food for reflection on the nature of governments," for scholars there is material about the political and literary history of the emerging nation, while "striking incidents and blood-stirring adventures" await the general reader. For the first time in any of his reviews Gardiner notices women and suggests what the "gentler sex" will learn from the relationship between Ferdinand and Isabella:

> They will be particularly struck with that particular action by which the royal couple accomplished their united purposes; that happy mingling of interest, affection and authority, which cherished mutual respect, and claimed mutual support, without compromising the dignity of either; and that graceful division of the cares of sovereignty which assigned the foreign relations and military movements to Ferdinand, while his queen regulated the internal affairs of the great national household, not neglecting, meanwhile, the humbler domestic duties which fall within the ordinary sphere of a wife and mother (p. 215).[5]

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[5] Donald G. Darnell, William Hickling Prescott (Boston: Twayne publishers, 1975), pp. 27-29, discusses the American preoccupation with Spain during the 1830's indicating an interest in conquest themes, the theme of the noble savage, Columbus, and the Spanish wars and legends.

The British Connection

Referring to a British edition of Ferdinand and Isabella Gardiner does not indicate an awareness of Prescott's intense desire to have the history published in England. His name is not mentioned among those advisors who counseled the historian prior to the publication of the book. Actually, Prescott was more interested in publishing in England than in America and had in 1836 employed Colonel Thomas Aspinwall as his British literary agent. Later that same year the author wrote Aspinwall that he had "taken no steps for the publication of Ferdinand and Isabella here [in America], and shall take none till I have heard from you, since I would do nothing which can interfere with securing a copyright in England." Gardiner was apparently not sure that the history would be enthusiastically received in England: "Although we cannot anticipate for a large historical work by an unknown American," he writes, "that kind of rapid and ephemeral popularity which greets the newest novel from a familiar hand, we shall be disappointed if the literary portion of the British public do not give the stranger a fair welcome, and admit him gradually to the place he is entitled to hold among the historians of our common language" (p. 214).[6]

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[6] C. H. Gardiner, William Hickling Prescott: A Biography, p. 133. This biographer provides a discussion of events surrounding the publication of Ferdinand and Isabella, pp. 130-34. Prescott had three early copies of the history privately printed in 1836 to "enhance prospects of publication in England by facilitating publisher evaluation." C. H. Gardiner lists several other reasons for the "Dickinson" copies but publication in England was apparently the major motivation. It should be noted that Prescott had reservations about the success of his work and it remained for his father and his friends to encourage him to publish it in America. William Charvat and Michael Kraus, eds. William Hickling Prescott: Representative Selections, with Introduction, Bibliography and Notes (New York: American Book Company, 1943), pp. lxxxv-lxxxvii,

Gardiner's familiarity with the injury and disease that left Prescott almost sightless influences him to suggest that the historian's "fidelity of performance in putting the book together regardless of an often painful disability elevates him above Milton who left at his death an unprintable manuscript history of England. Milton, Gardiner points out, had the advantage of study in his sighted youth toward the English chronicle, while Prescott literally "groped from book to book and through almost indecipherable manuscripts in order to write Ferdinand and Isabella (pp. 215-17).[7]

Prescott and Irving

A portion of Gardiner's review concerns a comparative estimate of Irving and Prescott. In 1822 Gardiner noted that Washington Irving had not yet written a romance, but as he reviewed Ferdinand and Isabella during the latter part of 1837 he probably had before him Irving's histories, Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus (1828), The Conquest of Granada (1829), and The Alhambra (1832). Irving is treated more kindly by Gardiner than the Europeans who had written about Spain, but he still comes off second best to Prescott in style and material. Compared with the "philosophical historian" Irving is a fanciful romantic: "The object of Irving is rather to amuse," Gardiner suggests, while "Prescott's is rather to instruct." The first comparison

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suggest "there is little in the diction of his [Prescott's] histories to indicate that he was an American writer."

[7] Biographical information regarding the relationship between William Howard Gardiner and William Hickling Prescott was provided for George Ticknor by Mr. Gardiner. Consult George Ticknor, pp. 11, 12, 13, 18, n. p. 23. Donald G. Darnell, pp. 36-38, provides an interesting description of Prescott's disability and his method of composing with the noctograph.

of the authors concerns the wars of Granada (pp. 235-41), the second deals with their treatments of Columbus (pp. 241-45).

Gardiner determines that Irving and Prescott are occupied with different voyages: "Irving's admirable work," is determined to be "a history of the life and personal adventures of his hero," while Prescott develops "a history of higher character, not of Columbus, but of Spain" (p. 241). For Prescott the discovery and colonization of America is one part of the larger story of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. With minor exceptions the reviewer finds Irving historically accurate, but he cannot refrain from pointing out that Irving does not precisely determine where Columbus is buried (p. 245).

Tedious Topicality

Topic by topic Gardiner leads his readers through the details of Ferdinand and Isabella. A discussion of the constitution of Castile and Aragon occupying ten pages (pp. 246-56), is succeeded by comments on Isabella's youth, her union with Ferdinand, and the Inquisition, which Gardiner suggests is the only blemish on the queen's career (pp. 258-66). The extirpation of the Jews introduces a section on the culture of the Spanish Arabs defeated during the wars of Granada (pp. 266-70), while the "Death of Isabella" (pp. 270-72), and the "Regency of Ximenes" (pp. 272-75), initiate another comparison with earlier historians which allows Gardiner to suggest Prescott's superiority as researcher and philosopher. Inevitably, for this reviewer, if Prescott is to be accepted as a major historian it is against Robertson that the most dramatic comparisons must be made.[8]

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[8] Donald G. Darnell, p. 29, writes that "until Prescott's entry into the field, the best known historian of Spain was the Scottish historian

Conclusion

Focusing on "The Comprehensive Plan of the Work" (pp. 275-78), Gardiner notes the "singular boldness and originality" which provides a combination of civil and political history, literature, biography, and anecdote in a unique presentation (p. 275). With one exception Prescott refrains from doctoring his history with "fictitious harangues and imaginary arguments" (p. 276). The reviewer concludes that Prescott is a philosophical historian because he has taken a "wider and juster view of his duties from a distant central elevation:"

> He collects into one grand <u>coup d'oeil</u> all those characteristic qualities, moral, intellectual, and physical, which constitute the national being; he traces then the increase of this political creature from year to year in territory, strength, internal resources, intellectual capacity, and moral development; he unfolds the causes of a gigantic growth in every department unparalleled for rapidity; he displays the whole political machinery which gives life and activity to its large bulk; he bares to the eye the secret springs of all its actions; and he lays his finger at last on that diseased spot, which, in the midst of all this wonderful vigor, indicates mortality and decay. It is a history of the whole glorious soul of Spain, while it yet animates a living mass. It exhibits this at the heighth of her national renown and then prepares us for the final dissolution (p. 277).

The "Just Arrangement of the Work" (pp. 278-80), and the "Execution of the Work" (pp. 280-82), convey comments on Prescott's order, proportion, knowledge, and aesthetic success. The historian's manner of developing universality is attributed to an arrangement of "centres of attraction," around which the lesser personages and particulars revolve like satellites. This is Gardiner's defense of Prescott's topicality of arrangement which supposedly offers a more "intrinsic connexion [sic]" than chronological

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William Robertson (1721-93)." Robertson failed to trace in <u>The History of the Reign of Charles the Fifth</u> (1769), Spain's rise to power and the associated events upon which Prescott concentrated.

order. Finally, the reviewer finds that "a marked unity of action and design," results in "a sort of epic or dramatic interest" (p. 280).

In "Reflections of the Spanish Character" (pp. 281-84), Gardiner reveals a greater pleasure with Prescott's method of developing character than he ever expressed in reviewing James Fenimore Cooper: "Character drawing, a commonly-admitted grace of the historic page, is not easy. It is well done in the work before us, with great fidelity, nice discrimination, and much also of that epigrammatic point, faulty in other composition, but here allowable; and, indeed, a necessary grace; the only means of giving life to a species of composition highly artificial, and wanting narrative animation" (p. 282).

Turning to Prescott's "Style of Composition" (pp. 284-85), Gardiner suggests that "the mere literary style, so far as it depends on choice and collocation of language, . . . is both perspicuous and attractive; the particular narrative fluent and spirited; the argument consecutive and forcible; and the generalizing portions adequately adjusted to the elevation of the subject, often rising with it to a high degree of grace and elegance" (p. 284). Prescott's style preserves "the just historic medium" tending neither to excessive ornateness or to dryness. Prescott lacks the accuracy and beauty of Robertson but is as stately as Gibbon:

> The precise degree of elevation proper for the historian, in his mere narrative, is difficult to hit; and it is a subject upon which tastes would very widely differ. For ourselves, we pitch at the first degree above the conversational and epistolary styles, too low for the dignity of history, and, among our old standard historians, adhere to the graceful negligence of Hume. And although we see some trifling inaccuracies in our author to correct . . . our fastidiousness may upon the whole be well enough content with a writer who makes himself both intelligible and agreeable, with language copious and expressive, arrangement generally correct and grammatical, while the march of his sentence is neither buskined

nor slipshod. And the rather may we be content, since we have chosen to try him by the highest standards, both in matter and manner (p. 285).

Following these accolades Gardiner discusses Prescott's faults beginning with the history's title which he suggests is not "accurately diescriptive" of a book which encompasses additional important regimes (p. 285). After briefly debating the problem and deciding that he is unable to render a more inclusive title the reviewer challenges the accuracy of quotations attributed to Horace and Milton (pp. 285-87), objects to the arrangement of several chapters and the lack of proper introductory material at other points (pp. 287-89), before lodging his major complaint against the Spanish words Prescott uses to "flavor" his history. Aware that the author might be offended by the hypocrisy of this criticism, Gardiner, admitting to a similar weakness, suggests that the use of foreign words is not the problem with critics that it is with writers (pp. 289-90). He finds Prescott guilty of "historical impropriety" for occasionally introducing himself into the text through the personal pronoun "I." These slight indiscretions are determined to be the "weightiest" of the "trifling peccadilloes" in Ferdinand and Isabella. Gardiner concludes the review by saluting Harvard printer Charles Folsom for his typographical execution (p. 291).

It would be unjust to dismiss this review as "a gale of puffery," when the most prominent faults of the reviewer appear to be the emotions of friendship and patriotism. Most damaging to Gardiner's critical acumen is the patronizing tone he effects while chastising Prescott. While Gardiner's later correspondence indicates he was serious about this trivia, it is difficult to be objective about the value of a review

alleging to proclaim "the most brilliant page of modern European history," when the article degenerates into casual banter between the reviewer and his friend. While Gardiner may have overestimated Prescott's powers of philosophical analysis, his recognition of the historian's arrangement, accuracy and impartiality is reinforced by contemporary and modern commentators.[9] Therefore, the reviewer's personal enthusiasm does not completely stain the most significant review of Ferdinand and Isabella.

Furthermore, the epic and dramatic interest of this bold and successful concept of a topical literary history has been awarded tangible evidence of appreciation by the public. Figures compiled in 1975 indicate that Ferdinand and Isabella has enjoyed 147 editions and printings and six translations. In his critical study of the most frequently published and widely sold historian in America, Donald G. Darnell finds that: "Prescott's reputation as a competent historian was established with his first work, a reputation he embellished with the succession of histories that followed."[10]

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[9] Ibid., pp. 117-18. This critical study (1975) provides the latest evaluation of Prescott's work. That William Howard Gardiner was sincere in his criticism of Ferdinand and Isabella can best be determined from a letter to Prescott, C. H. Gardiner, Prescott's Papers, p. 112. After reading The Conquest of Mexico (1843), Gardiner wrote the author: "The Ferdinand and Isabella embraced matter which must make it intrinsically a more valuable contribution to literature--but in the point of literary execution I consider the Conquest to be a decided improvement. I am particularly pleased to see that you have left out those I's--and diminished the sprinkling of those Anglicized foreigners. In short, if I held the spiteful pen of a reviewer, even I do not see how I could quarrel with it much." C. H. Gardiner, William Hickling Prescott: A Biography, p. 139, notes that Gardiner's review was the "most significant appraisal" of Ferdinand and Isabella.

[10] Donald G. Darnell, pp. 25, 113, 120.

A quarter of a century after Ferdinand and Isabella was published William Gardiner reminisced about the occasion:

> The day of its appearance was looked forward to and talked of. It came, and there was a perfect rush to get copies. A convivial friend, for instance, who was far from being a man of letters,--indeed, a person who rarely read a book,--got up early in the morning, and went to wait for the opening of the publisher's shop, so as to secure the first copy. It came out at Christmas and was at once adopted as the fashionable Christmas and New Year's present of the season. Those who knew the author read it from interest in him. Mr. Daniel Webster, the statesman, who knew Prescott well in society, was as much surprised as the rest, and spoke of him as a comet which had suddenly blazed out upon the world in full splendor. Such is the history of this remarkable sale at its outbreak. Love of the author gave the first impetus. That given, the extraordinary merits of the work did all the rest.[11]

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[11] George Ticknor, p. 107.

CHAPTER VII

ACHIEVEMENT

This examination of William Howard Gardiner casts him in a role greater than book reviewer. His recognition of the power and art of James Fenimore Cooper establishes him as a national spokesman in the North American Review, at that time (1822), the most prestigious arbiter of literary taste in America. His review of The Spy, a seminal article on American literature, anticipated with its suggestions of themes and characters a great succeeding wealth of national literature. His demand for facsimiles in American literature isolates the first exponent of realism in native fiction, while his review of Ferdinand and Isabella is a learned and informed cornerstone of Prescott criticism.

In the development of literary criticism it may be possible to locate Gardiner somewhere between the dusk of Neo-classicism and the dawn of Romanticism. His predilection for form and facsimile aligns him with Neo-classicist doctrine, while his taste for narrative interest points up his romantic inclinations. During an era when America and Americans were struggling for recognition from abroad and constructing the traditions of an emerging political Republic, Gardiner visualized the complimentary value of a co-existent Republic of Letters. He accepted responsibility for promoting this cultural trust in the North American Review and suggested in his reviews of Cooper and McHenry its early direction.

Gardiner's awareness of the sectional differences which provided the nation with a unique national personality did not blind him to the

inherent danger of these differences as a divisive element in the land. Returning to Harvard to deliver the annual Phi Beta Kappa Address (1834), he reminded his audience of their responsibility: "care ye for the republic of letters, it is your special trust;--nor doubt that the republic of letters shall hereafter save the Commonwealth."

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