Chapter One

AMERICAN LITERATURE?

In 1789 *The Power of Sympathy* was proudly announced as the first American novel. It was about that time that the fictitious Updike Underhill, the hero of Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive* (1797), left America. When he came back after seven years, he noticed at least one remarkable change:

When he left New England, books of Biography, Travels, Novels, and modern Romances, were confined to our sea ports; or, if known in the country, were read only in the families of Clergymen, Physicians, and Lawyers: while certain funeral discourses, the last words and dying speeches of Bryan Shaheen, and Levi Ames, and some dreary somebody's Day of Doom, formed the most diverting part of the farmer's library. On his return from captivity, he found a surprising alteration in the public taste. In our inland towns of consequence, social libraries had been instituted, composed of books, designed to amuse rather than to instruct; and country booksellers, fostering the new born taste of the people, had filled the whole land with modern Travels, and Novels almost as incredible. This development, Underhill said, was of course "pleasing to the man of letters" but not entirely satisfactory: the American authors did not profit from it. Underhill was right. Had *The Power of Sympathy*, for example, been the herald of a large crop of American novels? Apparently not. In fact, in 1820, more than twenty years after the publication of *The Algerine Captive*, a notorious verdict did not even acknowledge the existence of any American work of fiction. The judgment was that of a British commentator, Sydney Smith, writing in the *Edinburgh Review*. His sweeping attack on chauvinistic estimates by Americans of their literary achievements was adequately summed up in the famous words, "In the four quarters of the world, who reads an American book? or goes to an American
A slightly earlier list of deprecatory remarks about American literature concluded: "Prairies, steam-boats, grist-mills, are their natural objects for centuries to come. Then, when they have got to the Pacific Ocean—epic poems, plays, pleasures of memory, and all the elegant gratifications of an antient people who have tamed the wild earth, and set down to amuse themselves.—This is the natural march of human affairs." Far from being an ancient nation, the readers were given to understand, the Americans were still immature—only four decades old, as compared to the centuries of other peoples. Nor could they be expected to grow in literary stature, it was generally assumed, as long as practical concerns were predominant and urgent with them and their life remained "a round of practical duties." This phrase ends an enumeration of factors that were thought to slow down the development of American writing. There were many inquiries into the puzzling problem of the "literary delinquency" of America. The British-American observer John Bristed presented a comprehensive account of the question in 1818. Referring to the United States, he spoke of "the infancy of its national independence" and concurred with others in the opinion that the American was simply too busy to devote much time and application to literature. First, he had to find a way of earning a livelihood; and there obviously were easier ways than the pursuit of literature to keep body and soul together, especially in a land of opportunities where "the means of subsistence are so abundant and so easy of attainment, and the sources of personal revenue so numerous, that nearly all the active talent in the nation is employed in prosecuting some commercial, or agricultural, or professional pursuit, instead of being devoted to the quieter and less lucrative labours of literature." Second, for those who had any ambitions left after their struggle for existence, there were various possibilities more immediately rewarding than literature. Samuel Lorenzo Knapp named one of the callings that deprived the country of the poets it should have: "...The popular form of our government—by taking out of the market a large proportion of the best talents—has had its effect in prolonging our literary minority." The point had already been made by George Watterston, who spoke of "the general
The elder Dana said much the same thing when he emphasized how much Brockden Brown's decision to become a writer was at odds with the common active interest in the "hot and noisy contest of party politics."\textsuperscript{11}

Politics was, or could be, an honorable career; the "universal rage for riches"\textsuperscript{13} which passed for typically American seemed less commendable. If a man "scarcely hesitates, whether to prefer a habitation on the fertile banks of the Mississippi, to a more elevated seat on Parnassus,"\textsuperscript{14} this is sensible and appears harmless enough. But what is one to think of the "business-doing, money-making"\textsuperscript{15} American, absorbed by wage-earning, who lets his intellectual potential be "forced into some professional refrigeratory, where it undergoes the process of condensation, and is then turned out for ordinary use, as a common preparation of the shops?"\textsuperscript{16} It was argued that some of the best talents of America were wasted simply because the political and professional careers promised quick returns, whereas that of the writer definitely did not; therefore, America had no writers.

Evidently the situation was not quite so simple as that, and there were other elements to be considered. If there were to be writers and material rewards for them, there had to be a reading public as well: "Authors will, in fact, be always found, and books be written, where there is a pecuniary recompence for authors, and a ready sale for books. . . ." Engrossed with pursuing his career or amassing wealth, the American apparently not only left his literary gifts untended but also neglected the attempts of fellow countrymen braver than himself. This attitude in turn raised a further obstacle to the spread of American literature: it was a very difficult undertaking indeed for the writer to find a publisher willing to issue his books.

When the American student has completed a laborious work, he carries it to the bookseller, and offers it for sale.... But the offer is very properly and prudently rejected by the bookseller, for, says he, here have I a choice of books from England, the popularity and sale of which is fixed and certain, and which will cost me nothing but the mere expenses of the publication; whereas, from you I must purchase the privilege of printing
what I may, after all, be unable to dispose of, and which therefore may saddle me with the double loss of the original price and the subsequent expences.\textsuperscript{17}

The immaturity of the country and the interests of career and business that interfered with the literary development of America were held responsible, too, for the unformed taste and the lack of receptivity noticed by witnesses of the American literary scene, especially in the second decade of the nineteenth century. The hope for a spontaneous and rapid growth of an indigenous literature in the independent United States had by then yielded to anxiety about its retarded development. The blame could be laid on "what is termed a liberal education"\textsuperscript{18} and the failure to interest the students in "Classical Literature and Belles-Lettres."\textsuperscript{19} Only a small elite knew "the standard works in modern literature, the ancient classics."\textsuperscript{20} To James Kirke Paulding and William Tudor, who spoke in such terms, it seemed clear that the country did not lack, as Bristed thought, a social class of wealth and cultured leisure which could encourage literature and provide for competition among native writers;\textsuperscript{21} what the American writers and public badly needed was a vigorous sense of the artistic, and the conviction that the literature of a nation played an important part in its life. The more talented men followed a career in politics or business; meanwhile, Knapp complained, "the field of literature is abandoned to empiricks and pretenders whose jejune productions gain some notoriety because our national vanity has nothing better to feed upon."\textsuperscript{22} As for the readers, it could only be their crude taste that made them applaud worthless books, perhaps of the kind that George Tucker had in mind when he wrote: "Here you may see novels that had dropped dead-born from the press revived by the smiles of the ladies, and fairly besprinkled again with their tears."\textsuperscript{23} On the other hand, the public could also be carried away by a tendency to faultfinding. This seems to have led Paulding to assert in 1817: "... The want of a greater number of good models in our literature is not owing so much to a want of genius as to a taste radically bad. This taste is the product of criticism, which of late years has almost devoured and superceded every other species of literature."\textsuperscript{24}
Both Tucker and Paulding were professedly exposing southern foibles; but their statements, and Paulding's especially, were probably meant for the whole country. The overeagerness to criticize harshly, which is blamed by Paulding, may be attributed to a basic lack of assurance in the critics; if so, there is here a connection with a contemporary attempt at explaining such diffidence: "This continued dependence upon England has not only turned us away from the observation of what is well done here, but has begotten a distrust of our own judgment and taste. We hesitate at pronouncing an opinion on what has not received judgment there; and dare not confess where we have been offended or pleased, lest her tribunals of criticism should, by and by, come down upon us and tell us we were wrong."25

Dependence upon others was considered worse than merely to ignore or despise the native writers, an attitude common in the days "when to make literature one's main employment was held little better than being a drone."26 Walter Channing meant to make this clear when he wrote in 1815: "The truth is, we have wanted literary enterprise, and been sadly deficient in genuine intellectual courage.... The literary dependence to which we have been long reconciled, has become so much a part of our character, that the individual who ventures to talk about surmounting it, is thought the wildest of schemers."27 Yet there had been some who talked "about surmounting it." Mrs. Sarah Wood, for instance, had done so in 1801.28 In 1810 Watterston obliquely made the same point when he complained that in order to be successful in America, a novel had to use foreign scenes and characters.29 In 1818 Knapp blamed foreign models for the unsatisfactory development of native literature.30 In the same year Solyman Brown exhorted the American critics to patriotic courage and fairness, at least toward their fellow citizens; referring to the example of Addison and Dr. Johnson, he wrote:

Oh, that some other such may rise to save
A Payne, a Dwight, a Barlow, from the grave!
Let critics here, from foreign critics learn,
And proud contempt for proud contempt return;
Their chosen weapons to their rage oppose,
And make them love as friends, or fear as foes.
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A critic's fame should not from this arise,
To find where fault of foreign author lies;
But home-born Wit should share his honest praise,
And find, in him, the patron of her lays.
To wield the pen in modest Merit's cause,
And justly execute the critic's laws;
Disclose the Patriot in every line,—
Is great, is gen'rous, noble, and divine.
Be this the pride of those, whom Heav'n design'd
To form, instruct, and mould the public mind.51

All those champions of the American cause clearly felt that it was England, rather than Europe as a whole, upon which American literature had remained dependent for such a long time. This became increasingly galling to many Americans as the years went by. Whereas in 1797 it was chiefly the fanciful and possibly immoral character of British writings which worried Tyler, George Fowler, in 1810, was indignant about the respect accorded as a matter of course to all British books and its reflection on those written by American authors: "It is truly amusing to listen to the pompous boast of these people, respecting their 'superior illumination,' when, in the most slavish manner, they look up to England for every production, both of amusement and instruction, and seem to think it impossible that an American can write a book. They are freed from the political dominion of Britain, but in respect of literature they are still only her satellite and thence receive all their brightness."52 Walter Channing, too, pointed out in 1815 that to prolong the dependence on English literature was making things unnecessarily difficult for the native writer; it might even discredit the idea that America could have a literature of its own.53 As if to confirm his misgivings, the Edinburgh Review wrote three years later: "But why should the Americans write books, when a six weeks' passage brings them, in their own tongue, our sense, science, and genius, in bales and hogsheads?"54

The uneasy sense among Americans that they were tied to Great Britain by the links of a common language and literary tradition was the more irritating because the decades between 1780 and 1820 were a time of acute sensitivity to any form of
competition between the two countries. If some British judgments on the literary activity of the new nation sounded rather condescending, Americans were all too inclined to magnify such "slights." At the same time, they could not think of repudiating the heritage of English literature as a means to complete their independence. Nor, accepting the standards of that literature, could they deny that the British writers of those days were better than their own.

Furthermore, what the new country inherited or borrowed from the older one could make up for the lack in America of features considered essential to a national literature. The romantic movement then beginning was characterized in America by a reliance on old forms to express what was new. More specifically, it was held, for example, that the United States was sociologically so uniform as to lack that variety of materials which would make for fruitful contrasts and tensions in literary treatment. But this deficiency, which was thought to handicap chiefly the development of the novel, weighed less with the men concerned about the future of American writing than another consideration. The United States was a country with a history limited in time and scope, and what history it did have did not seem suitable literary material. Blackwood's stated the contemporary view on America's historical resources only a shade more discouragingly than others: "...It contains no objects that carry back the mind to the contemplation of early antiquity; no mouldering ruins to excite curiosity in the history of past ages; no memorials, commemorative of glorious deeds, to call forth patriotic enthusiasm and reverence; it has no traditions and legends and fables to afford materials for romance and poetry; no peasantry of original and various costume and character for the sketches of the pencil and the subjects of song; it has gone through no period of infancy...." With regard to the recent past and its figures, Sarah Wood wrote in defense of the French setting of her novel Julia: "It may perhaps be objected, that the annals of our own country display a vast field for the imagination. ...But an aversion to introduce living characters, or those recently dead, rendered Europe a safer, though not a more agreeable theatre."
It may be indicated to sum up, here, the failings and handicaps with which American literature was afflicted in the opinion of such judges as seriously thought about it at all. The country was too young to have a literature of its own. Its inhabitants were too much preoccupied with questions of survival or with ambitious political careers or with trying to get rich quickly to write themselves or to support the efforts of the few that wrote. They had no standards and no ability to recognize good writing, nor did they understand the value of a national literature. Therefore they accepted what the booksellers offered them; and that, whether good or bad, was mostly of foreign origin. The large majority of the imported and reprinted books, in fact, were by British authors. In spite of the calls for complete independence, America might well remain for some time to come provincially subordinate to Britain. It could no more renounce its literary heritage than it could give up its language, nor could it match the art of Britain's contemporary writers. Small wonder, then, that Dana, looking back in 1827, saw the turn of the century as a time "when a man might look over our wide and busy territory, and see only here and there some self-deluded creature seated, harping, on some weedy knoll, and fancying it the efflorescent mound of all the Muses."

The numerous statements on the poverty of the American literary achievement elicited voices of disagreement in various quarters. But even those very dissenting opinions tended rather to confirm the majority view than to constitute convincing counterarguments, for either they were not based on serious foundations or they represented views qualified in such a way as to prevent any generalized application. Take, for example, the one American writer who was unanimously respected on both sides of the Atlantic, Benjamin Franklin. It was Franklin to whom Noah Webster dedicated his *Dissertations on the English Language*; whom Mrs. Lydia Huntley Sigourney held in high esteem; and to whom the *Edinburgh Review*, after stating that American literature was "all imported," grudgingly allowed some claim to recognition. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly true that Franklin's fame as a patriot and scientist, and his eminence in "literature," not "belles lettres," qualified him as a great writer.
As for other instances of praise for American authors, we find Dana restricting his to political writers.\textsuperscript{46} In listing American models of good writing, Mrs. Sigourney betrayed a Federalist bias.\textsuperscript{47} In Benjamin Silliman's eulogy of President Dwight there is evidence of another partiality, not political or patriotic so much as personal and local; this led Silliman to speak very grandiloquently indeed of the reverence to be experienced by future visitors to Dwight's Greenfield Hill.\textsuperscript{48} Figures such as Dwight certainly deserved respect, to say the least; in their case admiration was better founded than where a "Philenia" or "Constantia"\textsuperscript{49} or the author of \textit{Laura}\textsuperscript{50} was made the object of exaggerated praise. The fact that Isaac Mitchell included Miss Warren, the author of \textit{The Gamesters}, among the noteworthy American novelists\textsuperscript{51} must be looked upon as just one more instance of respect accorded to undeserving subjects merely because there were no others.

The achievements of individual writers were evidently liable to overestimation. Perhaps less so was the rise of conditions generally favoring the creation and spread of literature. But while the observations made on that count were mildly encouraging, by their very nature they referred to the future rather than the present and to hopes perhaps to be fulfilled rather than to what was accomplished. They could not, therefore, be made into any clear case for actually improved standards in American literature. Significantly, Tyler sounded a note of irony when he wrote about the growing popularity of entertaining literature in 1797. For a number of years William Bentley's diary recorded indications of the spread of books, but nothing beyond that.\textsuperscript{52} Paulding's remarks on the stifling nature of criticism implied that there was some response to literature and to judgments passed on literature, but no more. From the East, William Tudor reported simply the general ability to read, describing the various reading matter consumed according to the kinds of readers.\textsuperscript{53}

In this climate of only moderate receptivity and promise it remained difficult to subsist as "a man of letters by profession"; and "perseverance in literary labour [was] very rarely witnessed."\textsuperscript{54} It was the novelist who stood the best chance of success, yet even the novelist felt that he had to offer certain extra induce-
ments if he wished to improve his prospects. It was clearly not enough to state that his novel provided a useful lesson in entertaining form for that was, in a way, a mere convention, accepted tongue in cheek by readers and writers. The author who appealed to the patriotic spirit of the public indulged in a necessary piece of sales promotion. Mrs. Wood, for one, did so repeatedly; John Neal dedicated his first novel to his countrywomen; and Samuel Woodworth declared that *The Champions of Freedom* was meant to become "a monument of American patriotism and bravery" that could not fail "being patronised by Americans." A friend of Neal's, reviewing *Keep Cool*, recommended the novel to the public on the ground that it painted native ways: "The most useful lessons of wisdom are those which are derived from the most natural and most common occurrences. The conversations at the family fire-side of an American farmer, may supply as many subjects to the moralist, as those in the drawing-room of a noble lord." The reviewer further stressed Neal's use of American scenery, a device which, according to many, in the future would contribute powerfully to the development of American writing. A brilliant future for American literature was, if not fervently believed in, at least unconsciously taken for granted. In fact, in some places so much was said about that future that it is difficult not to suspect a feeling of embarrassment disguised in the prolix expression of hopefulness.

The promise of American literature is obliquely implied, too, in the reasons advanced to account for the poverty of that writing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These explanations seem to say that an improvement must needs follow. Given time, American authors, who cannot help rising above the woeful level of their national literature, will soar to heights comparable to those reached by other writers. In 1804 William Austin introduced an analysis of the state of American writing with the following statement: "Literature cannot be expected, at present, to flourish in the United States, so luxuriantly, as it will in a few years." Hope was the keynote of many other passages on the subject. Bristed was, like Austin, implicitly looking forward to the days when practical concerns would
lose some of their urgency, and Americans would then turn their creative energies to fresh fields. No one could have been more thoroughly convinced than Paulding that the literary independence of America, once secured, would produce outstanding results: “The time will assuredly come,” he said, “when that same freedom of thought and action which has given such a spur to our genius in other respects, will achieve similar wonders in literature.” But not before 1829 did a writer state with any conviction that the necessary liberation of the country’s intellectual energies had at last been accomplished. No doubt America’s peculiar advantage of being “less liable to be interrupted by revolution and war” would soon make itself felt. At least the proof could be given that there was some truth in the Port-Folio’s assertion that there were “no physical causes to prevent the American genius from reaching the highest eminence in the arts and sciences.” It would no longer be necessary to add cautiously, “In proportion to its opportunities, it has already exhibited as much talent and intellectual energy, as the more highly cultivated genius of Europe.”

It is rather remarkable that American optimism managed to keep going in a climate of lamentations about its literature merely on the strength of such promises as were contained in the various passages quoted. To be sure, some more positive credos were also expressed. The most forceful was probably that of Noah Webster, who as early as 1789 praised the American variety of the English language. Judging in the main by his knowledge of conditions in New England, Webster asserted that American English, in practical use among a population that would number a hundred million “within a century and a half,” was “the most pure English now known in the world,” and could thus well dispense with the unreliable and incomplete dictionaries published in London. Voices as confident as Webster’s were heard only rarely, but promises of a more general kind could be liberally made. In 1820 the London New Monthly Magazine listed a number of elements which seemed to ensure a rewarding development of American literature:

The elements of noble material are certainly at hand. The
division of the country into separate states, and the consequent variety of individual character—the emigrations to the back-settlements—the rencontres with the savage tribes—the collisions between the habits and sentiments of the remoter and more central districts—the multiplicity of religious sects—the developments of the republican character in its progressive stages of refinement—all this, and much more, added to the magnificent aspect of the country, with its gigantic mountains and primeval forests, and wide savannas and majestic rivers, must furnish such stores for romantic, pathetic, comic, and descriptive representations, as it would be vain to look for in the now-exhausted resources of the parent country.  

If the reader disregarded the fact that several of the elements named had also, at various times, been thought a handicap rather than a potential advantage to American writing, a list of this kind seemed comprehensive enough to strengthen the American hopes. Moreover, it received support from the recollection of similar ideas expressed by Paulding, Watterston, and others.  

Still the glowing pictures of the future could not make the actual accomplishment any more impressive. There can hardly have been many Americans who responded to Paulding’s vision of a time when they would take pride in the humble and laborious start of American literature during the first years of the independence of the United States: “It is then that our early specimens will be sought after with avidity, and that those who led the way in the rugged discouraging path will be honoured, as we begin to honour the adventurous spirits who first sought, explored, and cleared this western wilderness.” In retrospect, George Tucker, who had witnessed the slow beginnings of some American writers, was inclined to see that period in a mellow light. He wrote about the American literature of the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century:

It assumed now a higher stand, and took a nobler aim. The more gifted of its votaries escaped from the smoky atmosphere of politics for the loftier regions and brighter skies of wit, humor, and fancy. They were no longer content to speak to the understandings of their countrymen, but they also addressed themselves to their imaginations, and to their tastes for the refined, the fanciful, the beautiful, and the ludicrous. The American
public, for the first time, was presented with original pictures of native manners and scenery, copied from the life, instead of being compelled to look for this species of literary gratification to what was imported from abroad, or what was yet worse, to feeble and servile copies of European productions. Then broke forth somewhat of the same spirit of independence in letters, which thirty years before had showed itself in government.  

In so writing, Tucker was obviously influenced by the general recognition of Irving and Cooper after 1820, in the wake of which Brockden Brown, too, enjoyed a renaissance. He was forgetting his earlier observations and projecting back across three decades the growing self-assurance of Americans with regard to their literature in the year of Emerson's *American Scholar*.


2. "Literature" was generally understood in the comprehensive sense of "learning" and "culture"; the modern editors of S. L. Knapp's *Lectures on American Literature* (1829), have appropriately changed the title of the book to *American Cultural History*. For the purposes of this chapter it is accurate enough to consider literature (in the sense of *belles lettres*) covered by the wider meaning then current.


4. This passage and some others to which reference is made in the present chapter are included in the excellent collection edited by Robert E. Spiller, *The American Literary Revolution, 1783-1837* (1967) (hereafter cited as Spiller, *Literary Revolution*). For the first part of the Tyler quotation, see the corroboration in Samuel Woodworth, "The Influence of Juvenile Reading," which refers to the early 1790s, in Kendall B. Taft, ed., *Minor Knickerbockers* (1947), p. 61. New England was better equipped than other parts
of the country to diffuse reading matter equally; see the figures for the editions of Charlotte Temple between 1794 and 1840, in William Charvat, Literary Publishing in America, 1790-1850 (1959), p. 32.


12. Richard Henry Dana, Poems and Prose Writings (1851), 2:327 (hereafter cited as Dana, Writings). Dana's remark was written on the occasion of the reissue of Brown's novels (1827).


15. Sarah Hall, Selections from the Writings of Mrs. Sarah Hall (1833), p. xxix. The phrase is used in a letter written in 1821, which also states, "literature has no career in America."


22. Travels, p. 101. Knapp praised Dennie and his influence through the Port-Folio because Dennie set up a firm standard of taste; see Cultural History, P. 137.


usurpation of hypercriticism is subsisting on the excoriation of literature” (Inchiquin, the Jesuit’s Letters [1810], p. 97). The preface of Eliza Pope’s Henry and Julietta (1818), protests against “the severe criticism that frequently flows from the press of our native country, and which falls most heavily upon the productions of American writers” (p. iv).


26. Dana, Writings, 2:327.

27. NAR 2(1815):37. A reviewer grumbled that poets like Joseph Brown Ladd, “Croaker,” and Ray were neglected while British writers sold well; see William Ray, Poems (1821), p. 35. Quantitatively speaking, at least, things were soon to improve; compare the twenty-eight titles written by Americans, out of a total of 1200 titles in Caritat’s circulating library in 1804 (see George R. Raddin, An Early New York Library of Fiction [1940] [hereafter cited as Raddin, Library]), with Goodrich’s figures for 1820, 1830, and 1840 (see Taft, Minor Knickerbockers, p. xxxvi). On American literary nationalism see Benjamin T. Spencer’s informative The Quest for Nationality (1957).


29. Glencarn, p. 207. Cf. Tucker, Letters from Virginia, p. 147. In the novel Rosa (1810), there is an American writer who achieves success by publishing his novels under the guise of translations from wellknown English and French authors (chap. 5).

30. Travels, p. 100.


32. The Wandering Philanthropist, p. 116. See also James E. Cronin, “Elihu Hubbard Smith and the New York Friendly Club, 1795-1798,” PMLA 64(1949):471-79; there was a gap between Smith’s postulates in his diary and the disappointing reality of the club meetings, at which the American writers were tacitly ignored (p. 478). Smith contributed articles on American poets to an English magazine as early as 1798; see Marcia Edgerton Baily, A Lesser Hartford Wit, Dr. Elihu Hubbard Smith, 1771-1798 (1928), p. 129.

33. NAR 2(November, 1815):35-36. Cooper’s account of his literary beginnings, as given in Letter to His Countrymen (1834), may be recollected in this context.

34. Edinburgh Review 31(1818):144. The items of this list remind us that influence and imitation were not restricted to works of poetry or fiction. Such a treatise as Blair’s Lectures on Rhetoric, for example, was reprinted in America; see the references to Blair in William Hill Brown, Ira and Isabella (1807), title-page, and George Watterston, Glencarn, Preface.


40. *Julia* (1800), p. v. See also *NAR* 2(July, 1815):39-40. Echoes of this attitude led, for example, to statements on historical subject matter in John Pendleton Kennedy's preface to his *Horse-Shoe Robinson* (1835), and Simms's "History for the Purposes of Art" (1842-45), an article included in *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction* (1845) (edited by C. Hugh Holman [1962]); this collection also contains the illuminating review article "Americanism in Literature." Kennedy's nationalism was more militant in the 1810s; see William S. Osborne, "The 'Swiss Traveller' Essays: Earliest Literary Writings of John Pendleton Kennedy," *AL* 30(1958):228-33.

41. Neal, introducing the "American Writers" papers which he wrote for *Blackwood's* (Sept., 1824), warned against any overpraising of American writing; according to him no national American literature, distinct from English literature, had yet appeared. See *American Writers*, ed. F. L. Pattee (1937), pp. 29-30.


43. Boston, 1789, pp. iv-v.


48. *A Sketch of the Life and Character of President Dwight* (1817), p. 13. Silliman has this compliment to make: "Never, probably, did a single individual, and especially, one, in an inconsiderable village, both concentrate and diffuse a greater flood of light." The remarks suggest a (relevant) comparison which Silliman and Dwight would have been horrified to hear: with Voltaire at Ferney, spreading his own brand of enlightenment.

49. "Philenia" (Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Morton) was praised in Mrs. Wood's *Julia*, p. 81, and, together with Tyler, in the *Farmer's Museum*; see *The Spirit of the Farmer's Museum*, p. 76. Mrs. Wood expressed even more unqualified praise of "Constantia" (Mrs. Judith Sargent Murray); see *Julia*, pp. 81-82, and *Dorval*, p. 78. A panegyric of "Constantia" forms part of the first chapter of Henry Sherburne's *The Oriental Philanthropist* (1800).


51. *The Asylum* (1811), p. xix. See also this early piece of general praise
for American literature: "...I view the surprising advancement that has been made in literature and politeness, and see the justness of sentiment, the elegance of style, and force of expression, which adorn the manly productions of some American geniuses..." (The American Bee [1797], pp. 99-100).

52. The Diary of William Bentley (1905), 1:415 (December 7 and 11, 1792); 3:73 and 77 (January 7 and March 2, 1804); 3:166 (June 16, 1805).

53. Tudor, Letters, p. 121. Halleck's Fanny "Had skimmed the latest novels, good and bad,/And read the Croakers when they were in fashion;/And Dr. Chalmers' sermons of a Sunday;/And Woodworth's Cabinet, and the new Salmagundi" (Fanny [New York, 1819], stanza cxviii).


55. See, e.g., Glencarn, p. 3, and Samuel Relf, Infidelity (1797), p. 11.

56. Mrs. Wood, Julia, pp. iii, v: Dorval, pp. iii, v, 78; Ferdinand and Elmira (1804), Publisher's Advertisement; Neal, Keep Cool (1817); The Champions of Freedom, 2 vols. (New York, 1816), iv, iii.

57. The Portico 4(1817):162.


60. Knapp, Lectures on American Literature. In 1829, too, Samuel Kettell's Specimens of American Poetry were published. A year earlier George B. Cheever had written in the preface to The American Common Place Book of Prose (Boston, 1818): "It is hoped that it may not be found inferior in excellence or interest to any of those compilations which have hitherto embraced only the 'morceaux delicieux' [sic] of English genius."

61. Samuel Austin, An Inaugural Address (Burlington, Vt., 1815), p. 10.

62. Port-Folio 1, no. 48(1801):378. Two years before, Dennie, who was to be the first editor of the Port-Folio, had rather forcibly expressed different views. See Harold Milton Ellis, Joseph Dennie and his Circle (1915), pp. 100-101. "Robert Slender" thought in 1788 that the literary independence of the United States was not likely to be accomplished within 700 years; see The Prose of Freneau, p. 95. Cf. Félix de Beaujour's pessimistic prophecy concerning the development of a national literature in America (1814), quoted in Durand Echeverria, Mirage in the West (Princeton UP, 1957), p. 251.


64. The New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register 14(1820):617.

65 Paulding, Salmagundi, 2d Ser., in Spiller, Literary Revolution, pp. 384 ff.; Watterston, Glencarn, pp. 207-8, and Letters from Washington (1818): "The eye of an American is perpetually presented with an outline of wonderful magnificence and grandeur; every thing of nature is here on a vast and expansive scale, the mountains and lakes and rivers and forests appear in all the wild sublimity of nature, and render the mountains, lakes and rivers of Europe, mere pigmies in comparison. While the political and religious freedom they experience, removes all shackles and gives an elasticity, a loftness and
impetus to the mind that cannot but propel it to greatness. Thus operated upon by moral and physical causes, what must be the ultimate destiny of the people of this country and the range and expansion of intellect they will possess?” (pp. 133-34).