

1-1-1991

James Kirke Paulding and the Picturesque Tour: "Banqueting on the Picturesque" in the 1820s and '30s

Beth L. Lueck

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/studies_eng_new



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lueck, Beth L. (1991) "James Kirke Paulding and the Picturesque Tour: "Banqueting on the Picturesque" in the 1820s and '30s," *Studies in English, New Series*: Vol. 9 , Article 16.

Available at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/studies_eng_new/vol9/iss1/16

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in English, New Series* by an authorized editor of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

**JAMES KIRKE PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE
TOUR: "BANQUETING ON THE PICTURESQUE" IN
THE 1820S AND '30S**

Beth L. Lueck

University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

At first glance the Paper War and the picturesque tour would seem to have little in common, but for James Kirke Paulding the war of words between American and British writers in the half-century after the Revolutionary War would prompt him to defend his country with his pen. What better way to demonstrate America's glory and to show its past greatness than through the medium of the picturesque tour? The focus on landscape beauty in this genre provided a conventional means of celebrating the landscapes of his native country, while at the same time the stops at historic points of interest during a tour enabled him to interpret America's heroic past as a token of its future greatness. In addition, the popularity of picturesque travel in the 1820s and '30s led Paulding to satirize some of the absurdities and excesses of fashionables who flocked to eastern watering places and, occasionally, to offer more positive models of probity and patriotism in fictional characters. Paulding contributed in an important way to the development of the picturesque tour in America by transforming it into a vehicle for nationalism.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, American writers and critics began increasingly to call for an American literature based on native materials and featuring national themes. As British critics responded to their efforts with increasingly disparaging reviews, the ensuing Paper War between American and British writers threatened to distract patriotic Americans from their stated purpose. But for Paulding and other nationalistic authors, the Paper War not only gave them an impetus to respond to British critics, but also provided an opportunity for them to demonstrate by their imaginative use of Old World literary conventions that the new nation's literary culture was alive and well. In defending American interests, such writers attacked European values and conventions as immoral or outmoded; more important, they reassured their American audiences that the patriotic values of the previous generation retained validity.

Since much of the criticism and misinformation propagated by British writers was found in travel books from American tours, the travel narrative—this time written by Americans—became a logical outlet for corrective views. Paulding, in particular, favored the travel

168 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

narrative as a loosely structured genre that enabled him to include whatever information he wished and to adopt the tone he needed in different books. In the first twenty years of his publishing career the Knickerbocker writer often turned to the travel narrative to respond to British critics and to present his own nationalistic view of the United States, contributing in this way to both the transatlantic debate about the New World's cultural vitality and to the internal debate concerning the identity of the new nation. Indeed, five of the seventeen major works published during this period take the form of travel narratives, including *The Backwoodsman*, a lengthy poem featuring, in part, the protagonist's travels from the Hudson River Valley through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and west to Ohio; *A Sketch of Old England, by a New-England Man* (1822), a satiric travelogue; and *John Bull in America, or, The New Munchausen* (1825), a burlesque on British travel writers.

Among Paulding's American travel narratives, two books and a tale present interesting studies in the use and modification of the picturesque tour, a specialized form of travel narrative. This kind of travel book was modeled on the published tours of William Gilpin (1724-1804), an English clergyman, traveler, and writer. The tour centered on the search for picturesque beauty, or that kind of landscape beauty which would be suitable in a picture. Travel books such as Gilpin's also included historical anecdotes, local legends, and accounts of colorful personalities encountered on the tour, which contributed to the associations necessary for true picturesque beauty in a landscape.¹ Beginning with *Letters from the South* (1817), the picturesque tour takes on added importance for Paulding as a means of presenting his increasingly critical view both of British travelers and of American tourists who aped Continental fashions and mores on the picturesque tour. Later works such as *The New Mirror for Travellers; and Guide to the Springs* (1828) and the tale "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage" (1832) also use the picturesque tour in these two ways. At the same time, Paulding's picturesque tours served to present the beauty of American landscapes to the world—a positive attribute of the United States about which even the most acerbic critics did not argue—and to offer more positive models of American integrity and values. In this respect both his fictional and nonfictional travel writings actively helped shape the national identity: America's greatness became further identified with its scenic marvels, and the American reader was advised to take his or her role models not from Continental fops but from patriotic natives, with Paulding offering fictional characters as examples and historical figures as role models.

Letters from the South offers an early example of Paulding's conventional use of the picturesque tour as a structural device in a travel narrative and as a means of celebrating American landscape. This early work shows the author already experimenting with the genre as a means of correcting distorted foreign views of the United States and of presenting his own ideas about the new nation. *The New Mirror for Travellers* (1828), however, written over a decade later, presents a more interesting study in his use of this British convention. By the time *The New Mirror* appeared, picturesque travel had become popular in the Northeast among the middle and upper classes, and guidebooks to favorite watering places and tourist attractions proliferated to such an extent that both tourists and guidebooks became ripe targets for satire. Some years later, when a collected edition of Paulding's works was brought out, he described the book as "a quiz on watering places and the Mania for Traveling."² Because many readers initially mistook the work for a guidebook, wags christened it *The New Pilgrim's Progress*,³ which suggested the possibility of reading the book not only as a light-hearted satire on contemporary fashionables but also as a more serious commentary on the superficial values of this group.⁴ The book evolves from a wickedly funny takeoff on the picturesque tour and tourists of the day to a satire on contemporary social trends.

The New Mirror opens with Paulding calling the reader's attention to new modes of transportation—steamboats, Liverpool packets, and railroads—that have speeded up travel.⁵ While decrying the "march of human improvement," he dedicates himself to providing the traveler with instructions on what to take, where to go, and how to behave. But most important of all, he offers "critical and minute instructions, concerning those exquisite delights of the palate, which constitute the principal objects of all travellers of taste" (p. 6). What initially appears to be a straightforward travel guide is revealed in the preface to be aimed, rather, at satirizing the tour guides and tourists themselves. The phrase "gentleman of taste" had become a cliché by this date, referring to a gentleman's exquisite taste in aesthetic matters—here, scenery. Paulding's work reveals his awareness of the spate of books in the last forty years that had considered the proper education of a man of taste, debated about the various levels of taste, and argued the fine points of defining terms such as "picturesque" and "sublime."⁶ But when he promises to instruct readers in "those exquisite delights of the palate," which "constitute the principle objects of all travellers of taste," the reader can expect hilarious results: not content with satirizing the picturesque tour in general terms, Paulding has set out to turn the

170 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

“gentleman of taste” into a literal gentleman of *taste*. Instead of a scenic tour, then, he produces a gastronomical tour whose noteworthy features will be the foods worth eating and the inns worth patronizing on the “Grand Northern Tour” (p. 8), not the expected scenes of picturesque and sublime scenery of the conventional picturesque tour.

But for what is ostensibly a satire and occasionally a burlesque, a surprising amount of the book involves conventional elements of the picturesque tour, including straightforward description. The contrasting scenes that follow, for example, could be part of any typical tour. Paulding’s tourists travel by steamboat up the Hudson River, and after a brief series of anecdotes from the voyages of Hendrick Hudson, ostensibly from the works of “Alderman Janson” (a fictional source much like Irving’s Diedrich Knickerbocker), they glimpse the following scenes. The narrator invites the traveler to contemplate “the beautiful world expanding every moment before him, appearing and vanishing in the rapidity of his motion, like the creations of the imagination. Every object is beautiful, and its beauties heightened by the eye having no time to be palled with contemplating them too long.” Looking back, the traveler sees the “waters gradually converging to a point at the Narrows,” while up ahead, he sees “on one side the picturesque shore of Jersey...[and] on the other, York Island with its thousand little palaces.” Although there is no evidence that Paulding read Gilpin’s works, passages such as this one suggest his familiarity with the English writer’s ideas about river travel, as expressed in the *Wye Tour*. Just as Gilpin extolled the “succession of...picturesque scenes” presented by the Wye, the traveler in *The New Mirror* admires the scenery along the Hudson River.⁷ The various views “by turns allure his attention, and make him wish either that the river had but one side, or that he had more eyes to admire its beauties” (p. 98). Some of this language is fairly hackneyed by the 1820s, but otherwise the writing is accurately descriptive. Certainly the author is attuned to the picturesque point of view that Gilpin had popularized decades earlier.

For example, in a passage following a description of the “sublime bluffs” bordering the Hudson River, Paulding’s traveler views the landscape with a well-trained picturesque eye, unconsciously echoing Gilpin’s description of the contrasting banks of the Wye⁸: “Contrasting beautifully with this long mural precipice on the west, the eastern bank exhibits a charming variety of waving outline.” He admires the “long graceful curving hills,” “wood crowned heights,” “mingled woods, and meadows, and fertile fields,” and “the living emblems of industry; cattle, sheep, waving fields of grain, and

whistling ploughmen” (pp. 99-100). In these two scenes the use of contrast, an essential element of the picturesque, and the inclusion of pastoral elements confirm the picturesque quality of Paulding’s description. The author notes the success of American farmers in taming the land and making it productive, while reassuring readers that it is still picturesque. Like other American writers of the time, Paulding finds nothing incongruous about the juxtaposition of farms and scenic beauty. American “industry” recalls the yeoman farmers of Crevecoeur’s and Jefferson’s agrarian ideal rather than factories belching smoke. The “march of improvement” Paulding fears and decries is scarcely evident here, except, ironically, in the steamboat on which his narrator travels. To complete the conventional nature of this section of *The New Mirror*, scenes are framed by anecdotes of Hudson’s life and comments on the region’s geology, history, and inhabitants, making this a good example of the kind of material included in a typical picturesque tour of the period.

Elsewhere in *The New Mirror* Paulding satirizes the elements of the picturesque tour that he seems to take seriously in other places, though he generally handles the transition from straightforward narrative to satire deftly enough for the reader to follow his lead comfortably. Skewering guidebooks whose excessive descriptions overwhelm the traveler, rendering actual viewing of the scenes almost unnecessary, he recommends that fashionable travelers dispense altogether with scenery and read the guidebook instead, the descriptions of which will be “infinitely superior” to nature’s “clumsy productions” (p. 90). Similarly, in “A Tale of Mystery; or The Youth that Died without a Disease,” published two years earlier, Paulding satirizes a young gentleman of fashion who consults a guidebook for advice on “reading” the landscape before him.⁹ Later in *The New Mirror*, following a lengthy—and generally straightforward—description of points of interest along the Hudson, Paulding reiterates his advice to the jaded picturesque tourist: “We now approach the Highlands, and advise the reader to shut himself up in the cabin and peruse the following pages attentively, as it is our intention to give a sketch of this fine scenery, that Nature will not be able to recognise herself in our picture” (pp. 114-115). Guidebooks and picturesque tours occasionally exaggerated or rearranged scenery whose composition did not perfectly fit the standards of picturesque beauty. True, William Gilpin had stated that the hand of art could often improve upon nature.¹⁰ But he had never advocated completely ignoring nature in favor of the imaginative verbal or pictorial sketch and would have resisted, as Paulding did, the notion

172 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

that the picturesque verbal sketch did not need to resemble its original model at all.

In some places Paulding's burlesque of picturesque tourbooks must have struck many a sophisticated traveler—and a few ordinary ones—as very funny, though modern readers may tire quickly of the mock-archaic diction he affects. In the scene that follows, he begins by invoking the inspiring spirit of the picturesque after the manner of eighteenth-century poets: "Genius of the picturesque sublime, or the sublime picturesque, inspire us! Thou that didst animate the soul of John Bull, insomuch that if report says true, he did once get up from dinner, before it was half discussed, to admire the sublime projection of Antony's Nose [a rock formation in the Hudson Highlands]. Thou that erewhile didst allure a first rate belle and beauty from adjusting her curls at the looking glass, to gaze for more than half a minute, at beauties almost equal to her own....Thou genius of travellers, and tutelary goddess of bookmaking, grant us a pen of fire, ink of lightning, and words of thunder, to do justice to the mighty theme" (p. 115)! By employing inflated language and choosing one of the more absurdly named objects of the traveler on the Northern Tour, Paulding satirizes the jaded picturesque tourist (here, an Englishman), whose appetite for food was stronger than his taste for landscape beauty, and he mocks society women, whose egotism leads them to think that their own beauty eclipses that of the passing scenery. He had made the same criticism earlier in "A Tale of Mystery," in which a group of "gay butterflies of fashion" traveling up the Hudson to the springs reveals the same sort of egotism.¹¹

Elsewhere Paulding satirizes conventions of the picturesque tour by pointing out that it is not always the scenery that draws tourists but the presence of the fashionables who frequent some of the popular stops on the Northern Tour. Of Ballston, a popular spa on the American tour, he writes: "It is very extraordinary, but the first impression derived from the opening scene...is that it is the ugliest, most uninviting spot in the universe" (p. 218). Arguing that it is really "beautiful damsels" that attract the eye, Paulding undercuts the reader's expectation of picturesque scenery with the following satirical comment on Ballston's less than scenic views: "If the marshes were only green meadows, dotted with stately elms; the sand hills richly cultivated with fields of golden wheat, and stately corn, waving its green ribbons to the breeze; the muddy brook a pastoral, purling river; the pine trees stately forests of oak and hickory, and their stumps were a little more picturesque, neither Ballston or Saratoga, need be ashamed to show themselves any

day in the week, not excepting Sunday" (p. 219). Since travelers are apparently not touring for the sake of the scenery, the author provides a ten-chapter "system of rules and regulations" (p. 220) on proper behavior for everyone from young ladies to aging bachelors at the popular watering places on the Northern Tour.

The most obvious and certainly the most humorous way in which Paulding satirizes the conventional picturesque tour is his insistence on picturing "gentlemen of taste" not as tourists whose knowledge of the picturesque is faultless, but as travelers whose pursuit of great culinary experiences is second to none. Opening the travel book, then, with a few comments on sights to see in New York City, the start of the Northern Tour, Paulding gets down to business and boasts of the city's "consummate institutions for cultivating the noble science of gastronomy." What follows is a mouth-watering catalog of American specialties that rivals some of Washington Irving's feasts: "There too will be found canvass backs from the Susquehanna; venison from Jersey, Long Island and Catskill; grouse from Hempstead Plains; snipe from the Newark meadows; and partridges from Bull Hill; which, if the gourmand hath never eaten, let him despair. Then as for fish! O for a mouth to eat, or to utter the names of the fish that flutter in the markets of New York, silently awaiting their customers like so many pupils of Pythagoras" (pp. 11-12). With rhetorical flourishes worthy of Geoffrey Crayon salivating over the joys of a bountiful banquet, Paulding catalogs the many delicious varieties of fish. As his muse inspires him to greater and greater poetic heights, he exclaims, "O most puissant and imperial oyster," concluding that the visitor who leaves New York without sampling these delights "has traveled in vain" (pp. 12-13). Later, playing on the accepted theory that one responded to beautiful scenery with pleasure, to the picturesque with delight or astonishment, and to the sublime with awe or terror, the author satirizes the picturesque tourist by describing the effect of a sublime prospect upon his appetite: "The stomach expands with the sublimity and expansion of the prospect, to a capacity equally sublime," he writes. As further evidence of this phenomenon, the narrator cites the case of a "sickly young lady" who learned to "discuss venison for breakfast like an alderman" (p. 145) on her travels. Lest readers take him too seriously, the writer introduces a traveler whose dyspepsia acquired on a recent Grand Tour (of the Continent) proves him worthy of emulation as the quintessential "gentleman of taste." The letter that follows, full of references to the most superficial European culture (opera dancers!) and, of course, digestive difficulties resulting from overindulgence,

174 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

reveals this gentleman traveler as one of the empty-headed, morally deficient sophisticates Paulding abhors (pp. 15-21). Even in the most apparently digressive sections of *The New Mirror*, such as this one, Paulding seldom fails to bring his narrative around to a pointed satire of the fashionables, whose aimless, vaguely immoral lives he deploras.

Paulding also satirizes the fashionables who took up picturesque touring in the 1820s and '30s by focusing on their tendency to praise Europe at America's expense. Just as Colonel Culpeper represents the voice of common sense and conservatism in *The New Mirror*, Stephen Griffen, another member of his traveling party, is the young man whose travels abroad have qualified him as a voice of pseudo-sophistication and modern manners. Called "Signior Maccaroni" by the Colonel (p. 59), Griffen brags that he "got rid of all my home bred prejudices" on the European tour (p. 20). "I brought home a great number of clever improvements," he writes, "to wit, a head enlightened with a hundred conflicting notions of religion, government, morals, music, painting, and what not; and a heart divested of all those vulgarisms concerning love of country, with which young Americans are apt to be impestered at home" (pp. 19-20). Lucia Culpeper, the Colonel's niece, criticizes Griffen for his imagined superiority: "He wont [sic] let me admire any thing in peace," she complains. "The moment I do so, he comes upon me with a comparison with something in Paris, Rome, or London, which goes near to accuse me of a total want of taste. If you believe him, there is nothing worth seeing here, but what comes from abroad" (p. 57).

Unwarranted criticism of America offends Paulding's pride in the young nation. In the numerous sections of *The New Mirror* in which the narrator's and the author's voices are essentially one, he encourages nationalism by highlighting the stops on the northern tour that would appeal to the patriotic tourist. Since the United States had fought and won two wars against Great Britain in the previous half-century, there were plenty of examples of its people's courage, daring, and fortitude available to the writer. Taking advantage of the tour's emphasis on the associations connected with picturesque beauty in a particular location, Paulding finds in the nexus of landscape and history the means to celebrate America's past military triumphs over a tyrannical foe and offers heroes of earlier wars as models for young Americans growing up in less heroic times. Stops at Tarrytown and Saratoga provide the author with precisely the right materials for achieving these goals. At Tarrytown, where Paulding grew up, "three honest lads of Westchester" (one of whom was Paulding's first cousin) captured the British spy

Major Andre, winning admiration for their courage during wartime. The narrator recounts the story of Andre's capture in detail, emphasizing the Americans' valiancy in withstanding the British spy's protestations of innocence and attempts at bribery until he was tried and hanged. In the introductory comments to the story the narrator emphasizes the "romantic interest" attached to the place where Major Andre was captured, recommending Tarrytown as a worthwhile stop on the tour. In spite of the complex nature of the case—and partly in defense of the integrity of his relative—Paulding recommends the subject for future poetic and dramatic treatment, lamenting that previous attempts at converting history into literature distorted the heroic nature of the three militiamen involved. With the author's patriotic convictions coloring his own presentation of the story, *The New Mirror* demonstrates how future writers might use the material for shaping the national consciousness by celebrating the heroes of recent conflicts. The length of the story of Major Andre's capture (about six pages) argues for its importance to the author. Moreover, given the superficial qualities of some of the main characters in *The New Mirror*, Paulding may have intended the "three young volunteers" to serve as role models for young Americans who were growing to maturity after similar opportunities for heroism were past (pp. 103-109).¹²

Paulding also emphasizes the patriotic value of Saratoga, a fashionable spa, suggesting numerous excursions in the area for the tourist, particularly "the famous field of Saratoga, on which the key stone of the arch of our independence was raised." Arguing for the historic value of the place, where a major battle with the "English invaders" was fought and won, he recommends that a monument "be erected to commemorate the triumph of free soldiers" (p. 289). Such a monument would attract even more tourists, further establishing Saratoga as a stop worth visiting on the tour of New York and New England described in *The New Mirror*. John Sears has shown that places like Niagara Falls came to represent shrines for travelers on a pilgrimage in search of picturesque beauty, with their aesthetic value transmuted into a quasi-religious experience.¹³ So too historical sites from previous wars—the French and Indian War, the Revolution, and the War of 1812—attracted travelers interested in more than just scenic beauty. Places such as Saratoga or, for example, Stony Point, where a British fort was captured by General "Mad Anthony" Wayne, became part of the American tour because of their historical and patriotic associations. Paulding makes this point clear in his comments on the second site. Since the ruins of the fort remain visible, the narrator

176 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

suggests that readers who wish to appreciate Wayne's feat must see the site for themselves. And though the historic field at Saratoga lacks a monument to past heroism, Stony Point has already acquired one: an "ornamental lighthouse" designed "to accommodate the lovers of the picturesque," as the narrator puts it. This "beautiful superfluity" is treated ironically by the narrator, who may consider, however, that half a monument is better than none (pp. 113-114).

The New Mirror's inclusion of numerous historic sites on the northern tour and the narrator's comments on their significance together argue that Paulding found the picturesque tour a genre well suited for the expression of implicitly political ideas. More important, he clearly considered the tour an appropriate, certainly useful vehicle for the propagation of his patriotic ideals. He could not have found more fertile soil for such seeds, for in spite of the satirical nature of the book, *The New Mirror* would likely encourage tourism, and enlightened travelers, guidebooks in hand, would see more than an empty field at Saratoga or a ruined fortress at Stony Point. Their imaginations fired by Paulding's patriotic prose, they would see thousands of British soldiers surrendering their flag or a heroic Revolutionary general capturing an enemy fort. Equally important, if these tales of past valor worked their magic, travelers young and old might be inspired to emulate the heroes of an earlier day and maintain the ideals of that first generation of American citizens.

Paulding demonstrated in *The New Mirror* that a travel narrative modeled on the picturesque tour could serve several purposes at once. In spite of the occasionally uneven tone of this multi-purpose genre, it successfully described and celebrated the native landscape, urging Americans to visit places important in the nation's history. At the same time, the picturesque tour and guidebook satirized tourists, fashions, and popular spas, and criticized citizens who traveled abroad and then returned to deride others for their outmoded ideas. Even more important to the nationalistic author, these themes were, implicitly or explicitly, patriotic. Tourists visiting places connected with important American victories felt a renewed sense of pride in America's past and faith in her future as a strong, independent nation. Even readers who never left their comfortable firesides could imagine the historic sites Paulding described, often in great detail, and could take pride in the heroic men and women whose stories he told in the book. Yet in spite of the modest popular success of *The New Mirror*, its odd mixture of fiction (the letters of the fictitious Colonel Culpeper and family) and nonfiction, and its references to long-forgotten figures and fashions

limit interest in it today. A tale published four years later, however, offers a more successful treatment of similar issues, retaining the modern reader's interest. Indeed, "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage" and *The New Mirror* share enough similar characters, scenery, and themes that the earlier work reads almost like a rough draft for the latter.

Written for *Tales of Glauber-Spa*, edited by William Cullen Bryant, the tale is much shorter and more focused than *The New Mirror*. As a result, it is more successful as a work of literature and better at satirizing its subjects. In "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage" Paulding grafted sentimental fiction onto the picturesque tour and produced an occasionally awkward but frequently humorous social satire that only loosely parodies Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage." The title character is Roeliff Orendorf, who is similar in temperament and conservatism to *The New Mirror's* Colonel Culpeper. Orendorf is a New Yorker who, "having got rich by a blunder," finds he doesn't know how to spend all his money.¹⁴ He tries spending it on literature, art, and music, but when his wife is seized with a "mania for travelling" the problem of how to spend their money is solved. Although his wife hints that she would really prefer a trip to Paris, she compromises on a tour to Canada after being assured that America's northern neighbor is really a foreign country (pp. 115-116). Childe Roeliff's "pilgrimage," then, is not a self-imposed exile from his native land, like the pilgrimage of Byron's poem, but a typical tourist's pilgrimage to the popular sites on the American Grand Tour. Accompanying the Orendorfs on their trip are Minerva, their spoiled, pretty daughter (a character like Lucia Culpeper), and their nephew, Julius Dibdill (like Stephen Griffen), a fop whom Roeliff considers a suitable beau for his daughter and heiress. The group leaves for Albany by steamboat in the early summer, in the course of their trip frequently encountering Reuben Rossmore, a worthy young man whom Minerva favors.

Traveling by carriage to Saratoga Springs, the family plans to admire picturesque beauty along the way, but as Paulding points out several times, the speed of modern travel prevents them from appreciating the scenery (p. 121). Most of the tale's satire, when not aimed at the foppish Dibdill, who has been corrupted by his European travels, is directed at a group of "picturesque hunters" who travel on board the steamboat with the Orendorfs. These fashionables complain constantly about the slow pace of the boat, wishing they could be at their next destination. In such haste to reach the next stop, they miss its beauties once they do arrive and begin complaining about reaching the next place. Paulding comments: "The day was of a charming

178 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

temperature; the sweet south wind gently curled the surface of the lake, which gradually expanded to a noble breadth, and all nature invited them to share in her banquet. But they turned from it with indifference, and were continually yawning and complaining of being 'tired to death'" (pp. 162-163).

As he implies by his criticism of "picturesque hunters," in "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage" Paulding uses the picturesque tour for a unique purpose, one not seen before in British or American fiction: The responses of his characters to picturesque scenery reveal character and, more important, serve as a measure of their integrity and patriotism. A classic example of this occurs on the way to Lake George, where the party encountered "a fine fruitful and picturesque country" along an untraveled route. The different responses of the main characters serve to characterize each of them: innocent, forthright Minerva and Reuben respond to the scenery "with sympathetic delight"; the pseudo-sophisticated Julius Dibdill "lug[s] in a comparison with some scenery on the Rhine" and pities "those unlucky wights who...could admire the homely charms of an American landscape"; the self-centered Mrs. Orendorf chats with other society women; and Childe Roeliff, tired and bored, falls asleep (p. 133). Later, confronted with the magnificent scenery of Lake Champlain, the author is moved to speak of God's hand in creating the world, an appropriate response to natural sublimity. Minerva and Reuben respond deeply to the view: They are "abstracted" from the present and "their spirits communed together in the luxury of silence" (p. 165). In contrast, the unimpressed "picturesque-hunters" are "tired to death" of the sublime and long for the next stop on their tour, revealing the shallowness of their character.

Sometimes a mutual response to picturesque beauty reveals an unspoken sympathy between two characters, developing, in this case, the love relationship between them. The author reveals Minerva and Reuben's growing love, for example, largely by showing their sympathetic response to the same scenery. On the way to Lake George one picturesque view elicits the following comment: "At sight of this charming scene Reuben and Minerva exchanged looks of mutual pleasure, indicating that sympathy of taste and feeling which forms one of those imperceptible ties which finally bind two hearts together, and constitute the basis of the purest species of youthful love" (p. 134). Few writers use responsiveness to picturesque scenery as a measure of character. In examples such as this, it becomes clear how far American writers have taken what began as a relatively simple love of landscape

in the picturesque tour and developed it into a complex vehicle for developing character and promoting nationalism.

In "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage" Paulding uses the format of the picturesque tour to reveal his pride in America and to argue that Americans ought to feel a similar patriotism, a theme he returns to throughout his career. In his own voice and through the characters Reuben Rossmere and Dibdill, Paulding makes a clear connection between the picturesque tour and nationalism in this tale in two important ways, by enabling him to celebrate the American landscape and to emphasize its historical associations. First, the tour offers an opportunity for the author to celebrate American scenery through patriotic characters such as Minerva and Reuben, who admire "the homely charms of an American landscape," while criticizing fops such as Dibdill, who disparage it in favor of European scenery (p. 133). During a stop for dinner while traveling in the Hudson River Valley, for example, Minerva suggests that the party walk to a nearby falls. Dibdill disdains viewing an American falls when he has already seen superior ones in Europe, preferring to check into the quality of the dinner fare instead. But Minerva and Reuben are rewarded for their hike with "one of the finest scenes to be found in a state abounding in the beautiful and sublime of nature" (p. 135). With a deft compliment to his native state, Paulding turns an ordinary trip to a local landmark, a conventional element of a picturesque tour, into praise for those who admire America's scenic beauty and criticism of those who disparage it. Later in "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage" the group steams across Lake George, one of the most picturesque lakes in the country as well as one of its most famous in history and legend. The steamboat's slow pace allows the travelers "an opportunity of almost studying the beautiful scenery of the lake," reinforcing their role as picturesque tourists and giving the author the chance to describe that scenery.

More important, though, is Paulding's interpretation of the scene: "It was a rare and beautiful scene, such as seldom presents itself to travellers in any region of the peopled earth, and such as always awakens in hearts disposed to love thoughts, feelings, and associations which cannot fail to attract and bind them to each other in the ties of mutual sympathy and admiration" (p. 159). Reiterating his notion that a sympathetic response to scenery brings people together, the author mentions the scene's unique beauty. As in a classic picturesque tour, he emphasizes not the scenery itself, but the observers' response to it. Among other things, Lake George's picturesqueness engenders "associations" in their hearts, though Paulding does not enumerate

180 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

those associations. The well-read or much traveled reader, however, would be expected to fill in the blank here, recalling various historic events associated with the lake. Travelers could turn to their guidebooks for help. When G. M. Davison's popular *Traveller's Guide* recommends an excursion to Lake George, for example, the author suggests that "the interest which is excited from an association of many important historic events" will add to the traveler's enjoyment of the lake's picturesqueness. The *Traveller's Guide* notes some of the events associated with the area. Tourists might visit nearby "Bloody Pond," the site of three different battles between French and British forces on one horrendous day in 1755, or the ruins of Fort William Henry near the lake's southern shore, the site of the Indian massacre of the British commemorated in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* a half-dozen years before Paulding's tale appeared. Other historic attractions recommended by Davison's guide include Ticonderoga, whose importance during the French and Indian War and Revolutionary War is underscored; Diamond Island, once the site of a "military fortification"; and the "mouldering ruins" of Fort George.¹⁵ Although Paulding himself does not detail the historic sites located on Lake George, he clearly expects his more sensible and patriotic tourists—Reuben and Minerva—to know them and appreciate their significance, just as he expects his readers to be responsive to the lake's historical associations. The importance of such sites in stimulating patriotism in the tourist is explored later in the tale when the travelers visit Lake Champlain.

In "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage" the picturesque tour also proves useful as a narrative vehicle for the author's nationalism through Paulding's criticism of Dibdill, who is a foil for the patriotic Reuben Rossmere. Because Dibdill arrogantly believes that his travels on the Continent have fitted him to comment on America's inferiority to all things European, he receives the brunt of the author's satire throughout the tale, just as Stephen Griffen in *The New Mirror* is satirized for similar reasons. In a letter to "Count Rumpel Stiltskin," an imaginary correspondent, Dibdill describes the unhappy results of travel abroad: "One of the great disadvantages of foreign travel is, that it unfits one for the enjoyment of any thing in one's own country, particularly when that country is so every way inferior to the old world." Dibdill disparages "this vulgar republic," which, he argues, "seems in a fair way of debauching the whole world with her pernicious example of liberty and equality" (p. 128). That Dibdill cannot be "bamboozled" into admiring anything American and, more important, that he disparages its ideals reveal not only his superficiality, but also the

dangers of his shallow-mindedness. Through the examples of Griffen and Dibdill Paulding warns readers that when America's native sons travel abroad their clear-eyed vision may become clouded in the shadowy world of European culture and morality, or they may become corrupted outright by Old World immorality. This notion anticipates the fascination of later writers such as Hawthorne and James with the moral struggles of young Americans abroad, though Paulding's characters lack the emotional intensity and intellectual complexity of a Miriam or an Isabel Archer.

Furthermore, during the critical decades after the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, an American's speaking out against liberty and equality, the keystones of New World freedom, is tantamount to siding with European restrictions on individual liberties and advocating monarchy over democracy. Thus even the most offhanded of Dibdill's snide remarks about his native land were meaningful for patriotic Americans of Paulding's day and require careful reading today to recognize their significance. In a fictional work such as "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage," however, the author maintains his light tone by never allowing Dibdill's remarks to be taken too seriously by the group. When the ladies of the group look forward to "banqueting on the picturesque" at Lake George, for example, Dibdill cries: "I who have seen the Lago Maggiore, and the Isola Bella—...and I who have luxuriated at the Cafe Hardy on *turbot a la creme et au gratin*—I to be bamboozled into admiration or ecstasy by Lake George and its black bass!...forbid it, heaven!" (p. 131). But no one except Reuben Rossmere, who is a bit of a prig, it must be admitted, takes offense at Dibdill's posturing.

In addition to using characters' love of national landmarks as a measure of patriotism, Paulding brings nationalism into the fictional picturesque tour in a second, more important way by showing that American scenery is full of associations with past moments of national glory, contrary to the laments of those writers who claimed that America lacked the "storied and poetical associations" necessary for literary endeavors.¹⁶ To highlight some of the nation's historic sites, he takes his tale to Lake George and Lake Champlain. Reuben, for example, finds the stagecoach ride between the lakes interesting because they provided an important supply route during the French and Indian War, in which his grandfather had fought. Later, at Lake Champlain, the ruins of Fort Ticonderoga enable the author to explore the connection between scenery and history, with important implications for the nation's future. "There are few more grand and interesting

182 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

scenes in the wide regions of the western world than old Ticonderoga," Paulding states. "Ennobled by nature, it receives new claims and a new interest from history and tradition; it is connected with the early events of the brief but glorious career of this new country..." This connection, as the author describes it, provides the associations that make a picturesque scene more than just a pretty picture for the tourist. Ticonderoga's "extensive, massy, picturesque ruins" remind the traveler of the nation's glorious past and suggest its equally glorious future (p. 161).

A stop at Ticonderoga offered Paulding the sort of iconography any well-read tourist of the early nineteenth century would recognize. As Dennis Berthold has demonstrated, Ticonderoga was "an icon of the American past unrivalled for historic significance and scenic beauty." Descriptions of well-known views of Ticonderoga, whether of Mount Independence or of the fort's ruins, would be familiar to readers from paintings and engravings by Henry Reinagle, William Guy Wall, and Thomas Cole, and in guidebooks such as Theodore Dwight's *The Northern Traveller* (1830). These works appeared before Paulding's tale, one in *The Analectic*, a popular journal for which the author himself had written.¹⁷ Paulding could rely upon his readers' familiarity with these pictorial images, which gave him a kind of shorthand with which to convey his nationalistic message to the reader. A brief sketch of Ticonderoga alone might have conveyed this meaning successfully, but the author's interpretation of the scene ensures that the reader will follow his reading of it completely.

Paulding makes the most important connection between history and scenery towards the end of the tale, when he takes his characters through Lake Champlain to the Bay of Saranac, just before the group enters Canadian waters. With a full moon in the early evening, the setting is romantic, though the author scarcely bothers to describe it in any detail. The Bay of Saranac, he states, is "scarcely less distinguished for its beauty, and far more renowned in history" than the city of Burlington, which they had visited earlier. Hence the author focuses on the bay's historical connections rather than its visual beauty, supporting Dennis Berthold's argument that visual interest is sometimes subordinated to historical associations in a picturesque scene, particularly in American writing.¹⁸ Since Paulding develops the Bay of Saranac's historical associations in some detail, it is worthwhile to look closely at what he hoped to accomplish in "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage" with what becomes, in the tale, a lengthy digression. At first the author simply states: "It was here that the gallant McDonough

[sic], now, with his famous contemporaries Decatur and Perry, gone to immortality, won laurels that will never fade while the grass is green on the bank that overlooks the bay, or the water runs in the Saranac River" (p. 172). In highly poetic language Paulding states MacDonough's connection to the scene on which his characters gaze. The reader is left to fill in the details that complete the allusion: In 1814, American naval forces under the command of Captain Thomas MacDonough, then a lieutenant, decisively defeated the British at the Bay of Saranac and seized control of Lake Champlain.¹⁹

What is the intended effect of this reference on Paulding's characters, Reuben and Minerva, and on the reader? Two additional comments in the tale clarify the author's intentions. First, he notes that "these distinguished men" (MacDonough, Stephen Decatur, and Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, victor at the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813) were known by both characters; Reuben, moreover, knew them "intimately." Second, Paulding develops the brief mention of Decatur, whose military exploits had virtually nothing to do with the Bay of Saranac, into a paragraph-long digression that includes a reference to yet another military hero, David Porter. In the first case, Reuben and Minerva's close acquaintance with these heroes is used to bring in comments on their physique and character, some of which might be known only to intimates of a great man in the days before photography and television. The romantic Minerva cries, "What a striking figure was McDonough!" To which Reuben replies, "And what a sweet, mild, yet manly expression was in the blue eye of Perry!" These two young men were "united in glory" and "united in death, in the flower of their age," according to the author (p. 172). What, then, does Paulding emphasize in his characters' description of MacDonough and Perry? They were known for the "simplicity" of their character and their mildness, yet both were "manly" too. These were heroes for a new age, for a new nation. Paulding makes this point clear in his biography of MacDonough in *The Analectic*. Speaking of many of the naval officers who distinguished themselves during the War of 1812, he writes: "They seem, like this country and every thing in it, bearing the stamp of vigorous youth, and promising yet more than they have ever yet performed."²⁰ Since many of the naval heroes of the War of 1812 were indeed young men, the author's hope of future greatness from MacDonough and others was not unfounded; he was not to know then, as his characters state in "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage," that MacDonough, Decatur, and Perry all died young, their future promise unfulfilled.

184 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

In short, these three naval heroes could provide excellent role models for a generation of men and women coming of age in the more peaceful 1830s. Paulding's relatively lengthy dissertation on the merits of Stephen Decatur, whose military exploits had little directly to do with the Bay of Saranac, underscores the importance of these naval men as heroes and role models for Reuben and Minerva and, more important, for readers of the tale. After the high praise accorded MacDonough and Perry, the reader is almost surprised to hear that "Both were of a high class of men, but they neither of them equalled Decatur." Reuben, who "knew him well," had found Decatur's character worthy of study; unspoken until the end is the assumption that the reader may benefit from the character analysis that follows. Decatur, Reuben declares, "was one of the few—the very, very few great men I ever met with," for "a truly great man is a rare production" (pp. 172-173).

The gist of Reuben's comments on Decatur appears in one long, perfectly balanced sentence that reflects the balance Paulding admired in the naval hero's life. He writes: "Such was Decatur: he was not merely a brave man—I might almost say the bravest of men—but he was a man of most extraordinary intellect, a statesman as well as a warrior; one who, like David Porter, could negotiate a treaty as well as gain a victory; one who could influence the most capacious minds by his eloquence and reasoning, as easily as he quelled the more weak and ignorant by his authority and example." Reuben notes that had Decatur lived longer he would have distinguished himself in a civil career, too (p. 173). The salient feats of Decatur's distinguished military career are all here, but concealed behind generalizations that to a modern audience are completely obscure. Contemporary articles such as Paulding's "Biography of Commodore Decatur," which appeared in *The Analectic Magazine* in 1813, highlighted the events of Decatur's career that had made him a hero: during the Barbary Wars he had burned the captured American ship *Philadelphia* as it lay in the harbor at Tripoli, an achievement described as "gallant and romantic"; during an attack on Tripoli he had avenged the death of his brother in single combat with a Turkish commander; he had successfully negotiated a treaty with Algiers; and he had captured a British ship during the War of 1812. Paulding's conclusion to the brief biography underscores the significance of Decatur's character and achievements for Americans in the formative early years of the nineteenth century. Describing his deportment as "manly and unassuming," Paulding praised Decatur's "spirit, enterprise and urbanity." In this one man, he said, "the polish

of the gentleman” was combined “with the frank simplicity of the sailor.”²¹

What is admired, then, is not just the courage of the hero in combat, but the modesty and courteous behavior of the true gentleman. As he states explicitly in “Childe Roeliffe’s Pilgrimage,” these are the qualities in Decatur that the author wants young Americans to emulate (p. 173). While the tale is less specific about the connection between hero and nation, Paulding’s biography of Decatur notes that “the gallant achievements” of the naval officers are “the universal topics of national pride and exultation.” He concludes the article with the following comment on the importance of these national heroes: “With the aspiring ardour of truly brave spirits, they pay but little regard to the past; their whole souls seem stretched towards the future. Into such hands we confide...our national interests and honour; to this handful of gallant worthies is allotted the proud destiny of founding the naval fame of the nation, and of thus having their names inseparably connected with the glory of their country.”²² Trusting in the honor and courage of these young men, Paulding sees hope for the nation’s future in them. America’s “Rising Glory” will continue.

How do these comments on the historical associations with the Bay of Saranac and on naval heroes of the War of 1812 connect with “Childe Roeliff’s Pilgrimage”? If Dibdill is a negative example of a young American aping the Old World dandies, foppish, imitative, and immoral, then Reuben is the moral exemplum whose character is admired. Even without a war in which to prove himself, Reuben Rossmere exhibits the integrity and honor that Paulding admires in Decatur and other naval heroes. Just before the digressive section on naval heroes, in fact, Dibdill has tried to convince Reuben to elope with Minerva. Reuben shows his integrity by his refusal to marry the young woman without her father’s permission, and just before the two-page commentary on the Bay of Saranac and American naval heroes he promises Dibdill (“upon my honour”) not to act further before they arrive at Montreal. The concept of honor is expanded and clarified through the author’s commentary on the integrity of the military men. Reuben lives up to these ideals later in the tale and becomes Roeliff’s favorite—and future son-in-law—by this display of integrity.

What Paulding achieves, then, in “Childe Roeliff’s Pilgrimage” is a tale that successfully integrates the literary form of the picturesque tour into fiction as a vehicle for the writer’s patriotic ideals. Certainly this work seems to support Dennis Berthold’s contention that “patriotism might have produced the picturesque tour, instead of the

186 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

other way around," here in a literary rather than literal sense.²³ For the tour offered exactly what Paulding needed in his patriotic campaign to show the world—England in particular—what America had to offer, and to remind Americans of their recent heroic past. The convention of tourists traveling from one scenic vista to another gave him the opportunity to present the usual picturesque and sublime landscapes. But Paulding took Gilpin's occasional references to English history a step further by emphasizing visits to sites where he could recall America's recent heroic past and suggest its future glory. In addition, with references to heroes associated with particular sites he could present positive role models of native courage and integrity to readers. Rather than indulge in "servile imitation" of English writers, a habit he deplored in his essay "National Literature,"²⁴ Paulding took an English form and used it to address contemporary American issues of pride and patriotism. In doing so he showed writers that followed him the potential uses of picturesque travel for both fiction and nonfiction, ranging from the humorous social satire of *The New Mirror for Travelers* to the successful tale "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage."

NOTES

¹William Gilpin, "On Picturesque Travel," *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape* (London, 1792), pp. 41-58.

²Letter to T. W. White, 7 December 1835 (?), in *The Letters of James Kirke Paulding*, ed. Ralph M. Aderman (Madison, 1962), p. 171.

³Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature* (New York, 1855), 2: 3.

⁴Since Paulding himself reports this nickname in an autobiographical essay for the Duyckincks' *Cyclopaedia of American Literature*, one may assume that he approved of or, at the least, felt flattered by the comparison. Paulding reports that he substantially rewrote the biographical entry on himself for the *Cyclopaedia* in a letter to Evert A. Duyckinck, one of its editors, dated 15 October 1854 (*Letters*, pp. 547-548).

⁵*The New Mirror for Travellers; and Guide to the Springs* (New York, 1828), [p. 3]. All subsequent references to this edition will be cited in the text.

⁶Paulding might have read or read about any or all of the following works: Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and*

Principles of Taste, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1811); Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 2nd Amer. ed., 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1793); William Gilpin, "On Picturesque Beauty," *Three Essays*; Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque* (London, 1794).

⁷Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye* (London, 1782), pp. 7-8.

⁸*Observations*, pp. 8-9.

⁹"A Tale of Mystery; or The Youth that Died without a Disease," *The Atlantic Souvenir* (1826), p. 79. (Subsequent references to this short story will appear in the text.) The guidebook referred to here is Horatio Gates Spafford's *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York...* (Albany, Troy, New York, 1824).

¹⁰"On the Art of Sketching Landscape," *Three Essays*, pp. 67-68.

¹¹"A Tale of Mystery; or, The Youth that Died without a Disease" (1826), in Melvin Rosser Mason, "The Uncollected Stories of James Kirke Paulding: An Annotated Edition," diss., University of Texas, 1958, pp. 75, 79, 81.

¹²See Reynolds, pp. 2-3, for a brief account of the capture of Major Andre and its influence on Paulding's writing.

¹³*Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1989), pp. 5-6; see also ch. 1 (pp. 12-30).

¹⁴"Childe Roeliffe's Pilgrimage," *Tales of Glauber-Spa*, ed. William Cullen Bryant (New York, 1832), 1: 111. All subsequent references to this edition appear in the text.

¹⁵*The Traveller's Guide: through the Middle and Northern States, and the Provinces of Canada*, 5th ed. (Saratoga Springs, New-York, 1833), pp. 183-192.

¹⁶Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*, ed. Haskell Springer, in *The Complete Works of Washington Irving*, ed. Richard Dilworth Rust (Boston, 1978), 8: 9.

¹⁷Dennis Berthold, "A Literary and Pictorial Iconography of Hawthorne's Tour," in *Hawthorne's American Travel Sketches*, Alfred Weber, Beth L. Lueck, and Dennis Berthold (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1989), pp. 124-125. See illustrations #23, #24, #25 (pp. 95-97).

188 PAULDING AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

¹⁸“History and Nationalism,” *Hawthorne’s American Travel Sketches*, p. 132.

¹⁹See Paulding’s comments on MacDonough and this famous naval battle in “Biographical Sketch of Captain Thomas Macdonough,” *Analectic Magazine, and Naval Chronicle* 7 (1816): 201-215.

²⁰“Biographical Sketch of Captain Thomas Macdonough,” p. 215.

²¹“Biography of Commodore Decatur,” *Analectic Magazine* 1 (1813): 503-510.

²²p. 510.

²³“History and Nationalism,” p. 134.

²⁴“National Literature,” *Salmagundi*, second series (New York, 1835), 2: 270.