

American Writers and the Picturesque Tour

The Search for National Identity,
1790–1860

Beth L. Lueck



Routledge Studies in Nineteenth-Century American Literature

AMERICAN WRITERS AND THE PICTURESQUE TOUR

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE
VOLUME 7
ROUTLEDGE REFERENCE LIBRARY OF THE HUMANITIES
VOLUME 1967

GARLAND STUDIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

BENJAMIN F. FISHER, *Series Editor*

MELVILLE'S SCIENCE
*"Devilish Tantalization
of the Gods!"*

by Richard Dean Smith

THE LANGUAGE OF STEPHEN
CRANE'S *BOWERY TALES*
*Developing Mastery
of Character Diction*

by Alan Robert Slotkin

THE POETICS OF THE ANTARCTIC
*A Study in Nineteenth-Century
American Cultural Perceptions*

by William E. Lenz

AMERICAN SUPERNATURAL FICTION
*From Edith Wharton to
the Weird Tales Writers*

edited by Douglas Robillard

AMERICAN WRITERS AND
THE PICTURESQUE TOUR
*The Search for National
Identity, 1790-1860*

by Beth L. Lueck

AMERICAN WRITERS AND
THE PICTURESQUE TOUR
THE SEARCH FOR NATIONAL
IDENTITY, 1790-1860

BETH L. LUECK

First published by Garland Publishing, Inc

This edition published 2011 by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Copyright © 1997 by Beth L. Lueck
All rights reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lueck, Beth Lynne.

American writers and the picturesque tour : the search for national identity, 1790–1860 / by Beth L. Lueck.

p. cm. — (Garland studies in nineteenth-century American literature ; vol. 7) (Garland reference library of the humanities ; vol. 1967)

Includes index.

ISBN 0-8153-2285-2 (alk. paper)

1. Travelers' writings, American—History and criticism. 2. American prose literature—19th century—History and criticism. 3. Americans—Travel—United States—History—19th century. 4. National characteristics, American, in literature. 5. Picturesque, The, in literature. 6. Group identity in literature. 7. Landscape in literature. 8. Travelers in literature. 9. Travel in literature. I. Series. II. Series: Garland reference library of the humanities ; vol. 1967.

PS366.T73L84 1997

810.9'355—dc21

97-19947

CIP

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent.

For my parents

Contents

Series Editor's Preface	ix
Acknowledgments	xiii
1. Introduction	3
2. Charles Brockden Brown's <i>Edgar Huntly</i> : The Picturesque Traveler as Sleepwalker	31
3. "Banqueting on the Picturesque": James Kirke Paulding in the 1820s and '30s	53
4. The Search for Manliness: Irving and Parkman in the West	91
5. Hawthorne's Ironic Traveler	119
6. Poe's "Picturesque-Hunters"	151
7. Excursions in New England: Thoreau as Picturesque Tourist	169
8. Conclusion	189
Index	197

Series Editor's Preface

Specialists in nineteenth-century American literature will find much to digest in this book, a critical survey of the picturesque tour in our national literature from Charles Brockden Brown to writers of the American Renaissance. American literary nationalism is no new concern in cultural issues, but Beth Lueck's approach to it is. Customarily critiques of the picturesque have dwelt upon what I'd call the more grave aspects that, for many, were thought to be inherent in the subject matter. Accounts of the picturesque and the picturesque tour, particularly those established by William Gilpin and others in Great Britain, could be calculated to elicit awe and its ramifications among most readers. Lueck details how American writers' attitudes toward this European aesthetic and its discourse occasioned interesting strategies in adaptations. These alterations were aimed at promoting interests of American literary nationalism. As was typical of his outlook toward European literary traditions in other respects, Charles Brockden Brown, her first exemplar of an American who ventured to handle picturesqueness, cast a wary eye upon the picturesque. He discerned the pitfalls awaiting Americans who too unheedingly tried to view their own landscapes through Old World lenses, so to speak. With the faddishness that rapidly came to be associated with American travelers in search of such stimuli, however, and because of the frequent dependence of such travelers upon a small number of quickly emerging "standard" guidebooks to spots of the picturesque to be encountered in American travel, satiric-parodic reactions sprang up from those who detected an increasing ridiculousness in the overarching American yen to take a picturesque tour, but without sufficient spontaneity within the tourist(s) to engage landscape with any really original intuitive impulses. To an eye taking a long view, large numbers of travelers who quested after the picturesque depended too emphatically and facilely on what amounted to how-to-do-it manuals of limited, and limiting scope; therefore they might as well not have taken efforts to undertake such travel in the first place.

Beth Lueck is no stranger to American authorship and the picturesque tour, having contributed to a significant study of Hawthorne's ventures into that kind of travel writing, and her survey provides insights into the aims and methods of several American authors whose art involves in some one way or another an engagement with the picturesque. The names of Irving, Parkman, and Thoreau, along with those of Hawthorne and Melville, are certainly no surprise in such contexts. The inclusion of Brown, Paulding, and Poe may, however, not initially seem to fit into the same mosaic as these others. Lueck's chapters nonetheless suffer no annoying wrenchings in theme or placements as she leads us from one to another of these writers. From Brown's questioning the value of European conceptions of picturesqueness and the picturesque tour for American culture, on to Melville's far more grim handling of the picturesque, we learn in these pages, is no obstructed pathway. In terms of political ideals and the practicalities of coping with the American frontier, Brown's *Edgar Huntly* stands as a warning signal against too easily yielding to artificialities potentially in picturesqueness.

Moving outside of the sobriety that characterized *Edgar Huntly* (and Brown's other novels), writers like Paulding, Poe, and Melville exercised their propensities for parody and satire on what they envisioned as the extravagances and lopsided thinking to which writings about the picturesque were prone. Lueck's chapter on Paulding alone should be required reading for Americanists, among whom his stock has remained undervalued for many years. This section of Lueck's book makes an excellent compliment for Leland S. Person's critique of Paulding in *Western American Literature* (1981), and it also supplements Larry J. Reynolds's Twayne series book on Paulding. As with his handling of literary Gothicism, Paulding's treatments of the picturesque are varied, fairly straightforward in *Letters from the South*, comic in a story like "Childe Roeliff's Pilgrimage" or *The New Mirror for Travellers; and Guide to the Springs*. Lueck's chapter also amplifies much that has already been published on the intertwinings of the Hudson River school of painters with American literature and nationalistic impulses in the arts during the era.

Likewise, the name of Edgar Allan Poe does not spring immediately to mind in discussions of the picturesque, but Lueck's placement of him as one whose talents encompassed the western tour and other aspects of picturesqueness, and who should thus not be ignored in such contexts, illuminates several of his fictions that have

not been done to death by Poe specialists, e.g., *The Journal of Julius Rodman*, "Morning on the Wissahiccon," "Landor's Cottage," and "The Domain of Arnheim." Poe, too, could not seem to resist comic presentations of materials of picturesqueness, as is evident in these pieces, and Lueck's work enriches our perceptions of Poe's successes as a humorist. Thus her Poe chapter makes good companion reading for that excellent book on Poe's landscape aesthetics, Kent Ljungquist's *The Grand and the Fair*. A near kinsman in terms of registering possible flaws in unheeding acceptance of the picturesque, Hawthorne also hit at travellers who depended too unthinkingly upon guidebooks' canned picturesqueness. Lueck's critiques of Hawthorne's landscape techniques remind us that he wrote much else, and that of high artistic worth, in addition to *The Scarlet Letter* or "Young Goodman Brown." The achievements of Poe and Hawthorne in the art of the short story were in part enhanced by their adapting elements of the picturesque tour to bolster such successes.

Dovetailing neatly with Lueck's assessments of these authors' achievements in characterization by means of the picturesque tour are those concerning Irving and Parkman on the western tour as a barometer to issues of American manhood, and that on Thoreau's works, in which the picturesque tour (in northeastern environs) symbolizes moral and spiritual growing. Parkman in particular transforms the conventional picturesque tour by his implications about its outcome not in consequence of the individual only, but in the greater context of the nation overall. Reading these chapters may prompt us to see some origins for heroes in twentieth-century western fiction and films. Lueck's presentation of manliness in *The Oregon Trail* could plausibly figure into discussions of the Lone Ranger character (although film fans may recall that the actor who, for many, was "The" Lone Ranger, Clayton Moore, also appeared as a bad guy in films from time to time) or that of a host of other cowboy stars. Knowing that Parkman in his book did not dwell upon his own extended illness during his western travel, we might think of his being a relative to Poe's Julius Rodman, who was not really what he seemed to be (and, of course, both works in their method of omitting important information pave the way for a similar lacuna in *The Education of Henry Adams*). And these ambiguities bring us full circle. By the mid-nineteenth century, fashionable picturesque touring had run its course, and Melville could fashion dark parody of it in *The Piazza Tales*.

In sum, Lueck's book extends the work of such scholars as Benjamin T. Spencer, Blake Nevius, Kent Ljungquist, Dennis Berthold, and others, who have mapped courses in landscape aesthetics as American literature emerged during its formative years. Lueck's assessments of individual primary texts remind us that considerations of so-called "major" texts may not always give us all we might profitably learn or know about any given author or cultural movement. Not only do Lueck's readings of individual texts themselves reveal a keen ability in literary analysis, but they offer all sorts of implicit outreaches to other texts by their own creators and to other writers and the other arts as well. For one example, the comments by the narrator in "The Fall of the House of Usher," concerning how rearrangement of landscape-pictorial details could change emotional responses, offers perspectives for approaching the Poe texts included in this book, and for many others in his canon. For another example, many features of the picturesque in William Cullen Bryant's poems also may stand out in more sharply etched detail and with more sophisticated suggestions, once one reads Lueck's pages. *American Writers and the Picturesque Tour* ought to enjoy a long shelf life for what it establishes and for what it implies in regard to additional prospects into territories of the American literary picturesque.

Benjamin F. Fisher

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my colleagues in the Department of Languages and Literatures at the University of Wisconsin--Whitewater for their support and encouragement, especially Mary Pinkerton, Larry Schuetz, DeWitt Clinton, Mary Emery, John Fallon, Rebecca Hogue, and Geneva Cobb Moore. I also would like to thank Howard L. Ross, Dean of the College of Letters and Sciences, for his financial support for the index.

I wish to thank the University of Wisconsin--Whitewater for a Summer Faculty Enhancement Grant, 1995.

I also want to thank the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee for its Graduate School Research Fellowship, 1986-87, and for the Committee on Institutional Cooperation's Summer Research Opportunity Grant for the summer of 1987. The late Howard Deller provided expert assistance with the travel guides and maps in the American Geographical Society Collection in the Golda Meir Library at the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee. Donna Schenstrom, of the university's Cartographic Services Laboratory, also deserves recognition for the three maps she created for this book.

This book started as a dissertation at the University of North Carolina more than a decade ago. For their advice and encouragement, I want to acknowledge the late Robert Bain, the late C. Hugh Holman, Joy S. Kasson, Richard D. Rust, and John Seelye, who pointed me towards Gilpin in America.

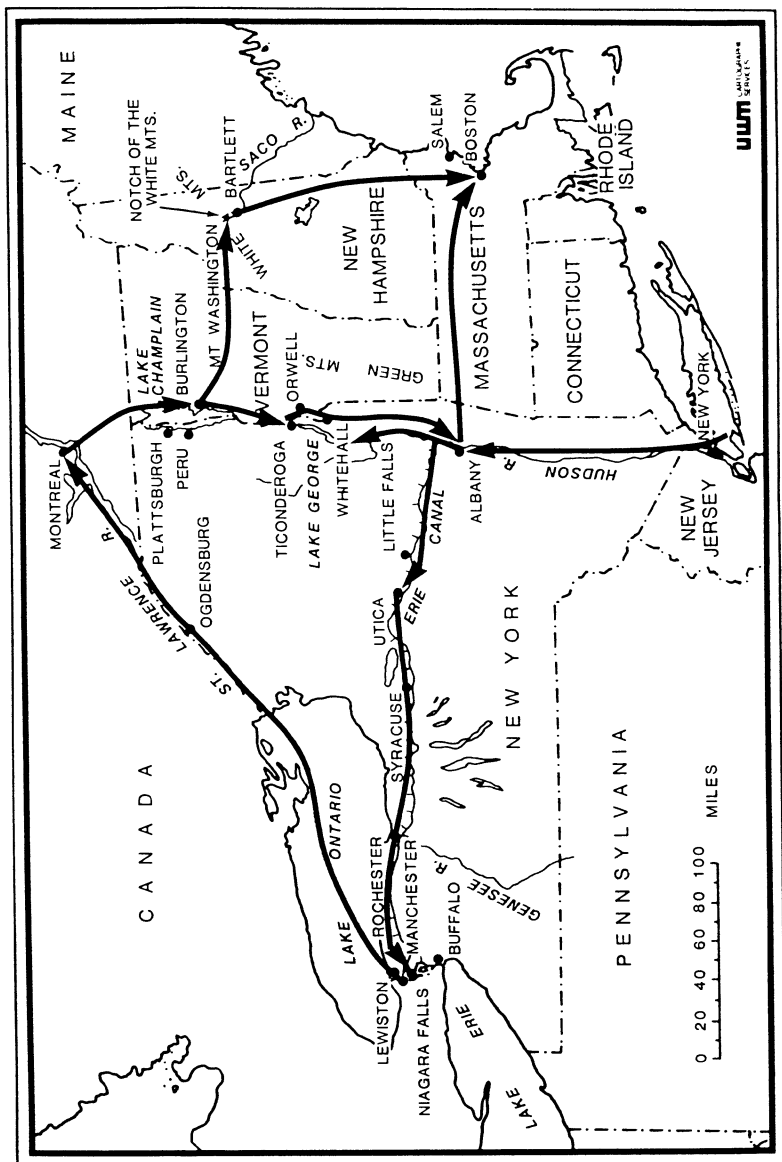
I also wish to thank my former colleague Ralph M. Aderman for his generous help and encouragement, particularly for the Paulding and Irving chapters. In addition, my conversations with Dennis Berthold on American travel writing in general and on Hawthorne in particular helped clarify my thinking. Both colleagues exemplify humane scholarship.

Finally, I want to thank my children, Benjamin and Daniel, for being so patient and keeping a sense of humor throughout the long history of this book.

Earlier versions of the chapters on Brown and Paulding appeared in *Studies in American Fiction* (1987) and *University of Mississippi Studies in English* (1991). I am grateful to the editors for permission to reprint here.

I wish to thank University Press of New England for permission to reprint "Hawthorne's Ironic Traveler" from *Hawthorne's American Travel Sketches* (1989).

AMERICAN WRITERS AND
THE PICTURESQUE TOUR



Map 1. The Fashionable Tour in 1825.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In 1855, writing about travelers of various nations, a critic for *Putnam's Monthly* compared British, French, and American travelers and made the following observations about his fellow countrymen: "The American," he wrote, "has a pleasure in foreign travel, which the man of no other nation enjoys. With a nature not less romantic than others; with desires and aspirations for the reverend and historically beautiful, forever unsatisfied at home, fed for years upon the splendid literature of all time, and the pompous history of the nations that have occupied and moulded the earth, and yet separated from those nations and that history, not only by space and the total want of visible monuments, but by the essential spirit of society around him; born with poetic perception amid the stateliest natural forms--forests, mountains, rivers, and plains--that seem to foreshow a more imperial race, and results more majestic than are yet historical, but with none of that human association in the landscape, which gives it its subtlest beauty and profoundest influence, the American mind is solicited by Europe with unimagined fascination." The American traveler, he concludes, "goes out [to Europe] to take possession of his dreams, and hopes, and boundless aspirations."¹

He was wrong. For at least a half-century before this essay appeared Americans had been traveling in their native land, their routes expanding ever westward. During this same period dozens of travel books had appeared by recognized writers, by minor writers, and by people without the least pretense to this title. Contrary to this critic's observation, the great majority of these travelers found plenty to satisfy them on the American continent, both landscapes and history. Even though Washington Irving complained early in the century about the

dearth of historical associations in the American landscape, he was finding and exploiting dozens of historical and geographic sites in early sketches such as "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and, later on, in tales such as "The Devil and Tom Walker" and "Kidd the Pirate."² Americans, including Irving and most other major writers, did travel to Europe in great numbers, often paying lip service to the complaint that the American landscape lacked the associations and history necessary for a vital, indigenous literature. Nevertheless, many of these same writers found enough to write about and produced hundreds upon hundreds of travel books, sketches, tales, and novels.

These works of travel literature constitute the material of this study. Although critical interest has been stirred in recent years by the extraordinary volume of travel literature written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and an occasional work has appeared that links the interest in particular landscapes with people traveling to view such scenery, no one has examined the broader issues that arose when Americans in increasing numbers traveled in pursuit of scenic beauty in the first half of the nineteenth century.³

American travelers' passion for picturesque beauty was fostered by various accounts of landscapes worth viewing, by artists' renderings of scenery that appeared in periodicals in the form of woodcuts and engravings, as well as in paintings, and by the nationalistic fervor following the War of 1812. With peace newly returned to the country, with prosperity, and with leisure time at hand, people increasingly sought out well known landscapes and traveled in search of landscape beauty. Picturesque travel led to the development of the American picturesque tour, a written version of the popular British tour. But what was most significant about this phenomenon, in which almost every major author of the first half of the nineteenth century participated, was the role it played in shaping the literature of the new nation. Critics have assumed that, by and large, American writers borrowed British literary conventions and used them relatively uncritically to present native materials to their American and European audiences. In sharp contrast to this view, it is clear that American authors did not feel at all confined by some literary forms. Instead, they adapted these conventions for a national literature, keeping elements that seemed essential and abandoning those that appeared irrelevant. In the case of the picturesque tour, American writers seized

upon an essentially British form that originated in the late eighteenth century and modified it for their own use.

Right from the beginning, with Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* (1799), the American tour took off in a direction scarcely suggested by the British original. From Brown's picturesque tourist, asleep and stumbling through a dark landscape, to James Kirke Paulding's later satires on tourism, to Poe's parodies of the genre, American writers transformed the picturesque tour, recognizing its extraordinary adaptability in tone and its particular usefulness as a means of expressing their nationalistic sentiments. In addition, picturesque discourse offered a flexible series of conventions that enabled American writers to celebrate verbally the unique landscapes and associated legends and peoples that set their nation apart from the rest of the world. Its many variations in tone, from straightforward description to irony and satire, also allowed writers to adapt the picturesque for various kinds of writing, including nonfictional forms such as tours and essays and fictional forms such as sketches, tales, and novels. How these writers took the conventions of the picturesque tour and adapted them to help shape the nation's identity through literature is the focus of this book.

Most of the leading writers of the period between 1790 and 1860 showed familiarity with picturesque travel and used at least some of its conventions in their writing. Some writers borrowed the picturesque tour and its literary conventions wholesale from English models and adapted them to the realities of the American landscape. Brown's picturesque tourist in *Edgar Huntly*, for example, explored the wilderness landscapes of Norwalk, and Paulding's tourists traveled throughout the South and New York. Later Washington Irving and Francis Parkman adapted the modes of picturesque discourse to the prairies and mountains of western America. Other writers dealt with the divergences between English conventions and American realities by introducing new tonal qualities into the picturesque tour. Thus Hawthorne created an ironic tourist who satirized the pretensions of other travelers, while Poe employed comic and parodic strategies in his travel writings. Thoreau also responded creatively to the problem of adapting the British model to American landscapes, employing picturesque discourse in a wide range of tones and forms, ranging from irony to awe, and from description to meditation.

In this study I propose to define the picturesque tour both as a form of travel and literature, and to examine the national and cultural

background that led to the popularity of picturesque travel. Then I will explore the ways the major writers between 1790 and 1860 adapted the existing conventions of picturesque travel to American locales and shaped the tour for their own needs in both fictional and nonfictional narratives. Focusing on the writings of seven major authors whose work reflects a knowledge of and interest in picturesque travel--Brown, Irving, Paulding, Hawthorne, Parkman, Poe, and Thoreau--I will examine the varying modes of picturesque discourse that resulted in their work.

The conventions of the picturesque tour date back to the 1780s and '90s in England, or even earlier, if one considers the continental grand tour a forerunner of picturesque travel. During this period William Gilpin, an English clergyman, traveler, and writer, emerged as the chief advocate and practitioner of the picturesque tour. His published tours of Great Britain introduced the upper ranks of British society to the pleasures of touring. These tours also established the format for the picturesque tour for the next half-century, both in England and America, and set the standard for travel books that featured the picturesque tour.

Gilpin's influential essay "On Picturesque Travel" (1792) defined the conventions of this form of travel, even as his essay "On Picturesque Beauty" (1792) initiated a prolonged debate about this form of landscape beauty. According to Gilpin, the picturesque tour was a tour in search of picturesque beauty, which he defined as the kind of landscape beauty that would be suitable in a picture. Travelers searched for landscapes featuring contrasts in light and shadow; rough textures, or "ruggedness" (as opposed to smoothness, which was associated with the beautiful); compositional unity within the varied elements of a scene, sometimes achieved through the unifying light of the sun or moon on a landscape; and historical, legendary, literary, or other associations.⁴ Contemporary critics such as Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight debated Gilpin's definition of picturesque beauty. More recently, modern critics such as Martin Price argue for both a more complex and less stable definition of this aesthetic category. But because the term "picturesque beauty" was most widely understood in America as embracing the qualities listed here, and because Gilpin's works were most frequently cited and read by American writers, I will use the term in this sense throughout this study.⁵ Several examples will illustrate the first three elements in picturesque description as American

writers used them in the art of the verbal sketch; the issue of associations and landscape will be taken up later.

Washington Irving, one of the most enthusiastic picturesque travelers in America and abroad, offers an excellent example of the verbal sketch in a scene from *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), as he and his fellow tourists pause to view a river valley in what is now Oklahoma. Irving's highly trained picturesque eye appreciates the scene before him, and he creates the following sketch of the view:

A beautiful meadow about half a mile wide, enameled with yellow autumnal flowers, stretched for two or three miles along the foot of the hills, bordered on the opposite side by the river, whose banks were fringed with cotton wood trees, the bright foliage of which refreshed and delighted the eye, after being wearied by the contemplation of monotonous wastes of brown forest.

The meadow was finely diversified by groves and clumps of trees, so happily disposed that they seemed as if set out by the hand of art. As we cast our eyes over this fresh and delightful valley we beheld a troop of wild horses quietly grazing on a green lawn about a mile distant to our right, while to our left at nearly the same distance, were several buffaloes . . . The whole had the appearance of a broad beautiful tract of pasture land, on the highly ornamented estate of some gentleman farmer, with his cattle grazing about the lawns and meadows.⁶

The entire scene provides a refreshing contrast to the "monotonous wastes" of forest through which the company has just ridden. Within this scene the smooth meadowland contrasts effectively with the rougher textures of the trees, just as the meadow is "diversified" by "clumps" of cottonwoods. (These terms originate with Gilpin, who had defined the usage of such terms for picturesque discourse in *Remarks on Forest Scenery* [1791].⁷)

Irving provides the requisite variety for a picturesque composition with the river, meadow, trees, flowers, and animals, and although the unifying touch of the sun is absent here, his focus on the valley, with its surrounding hills, helps to frame the scene for the

reader. Directional references also help the reader picture the scene. Water, whose changeable quality Gilpin admired in the picturesque landscape, is present in the river.⁸ The grazing buffalo and wild horses give rough texture to the composition, an element Gilpin often included by means of sheep or other rough-coated animals, and add a pastoral element that softens the wildness of the western landscape.⁹ At the end of the verbal sketch Irving's comparison of the river valley to a gentleman farmer's estate domesticates the landscape even further and suggests its future potential as farmland for the pioneers who would one day settle here. This reference also introduces the element of class to the sketch, an element that plays an indirect role in landscape appreciation for many picturesque tourists. For the upper-middle class or upper-class traveler in America or abroad, the act of categorizing landscapes as picturesque often involved class distinctions since farmers--real ones, not "gentleman farmers"--who actually tilled the soil, shepherds, and similar figures often appeared in picturesque sketches, verbal or otherwise. Such figures were often sentimentalized by the very nature of the tourist's viewing them as "picturesque"; indeed, a later American traveler, Francis Parkman, distinguished between such persons (Indians, for example) seen at close range and at a distance. In the foreground, they and their dwellings are merely ugly or dirty, but with the softening effect of distance they become picturesque. Prosperous figures, whether businessmen or middle-class tourists, lack the roughness and quaintness of humbler persons and rarely appear in the picturesque sketch until the late 1820s, when they enter the scene as objects of the author's irony or satire. Paulding frequently satirizes the tourists at popular Virginia and New York watering places, and Hawthorne occasionally features such characters in his American travel sketches.

While Irving celebrated western scenery in the example from *A Tour on the Prairies*, Hawthorne's travel sketches from the 1830s illustrate the usefulness of picturesque discourse for depicting the scenery of eastern America and reflect, like Irving's description, Gilpin's compositional principles at work in the verbal sketch. "A Night Scene" provides an excellent example of how contrast and unity can function in picturesque composition. Although most picturesque scenery is viewed in the daytime or during the early morning or evening hours, in this sketch Hawthorne finds visual excitement in the strong contrasts created by a bonfire on a riverbank, which he views from a steamboat at night:

As the evening was warm, though cloudy and very dark, I stood on deck, watching a scene that would not have attracted a second glance in the day-time, but became picturesque by the magic of strong light and deep shade. Some wild Irishmen were replenishing our stock of wood, and had kindled a great fire on the bank, to illuminate their labors. It was . . . blazing fiercely, spouting showers of sparks into the darkness, and gleaming wide over lake Erie--a beacon for perplexed voyagers, leagues from land. All around and above the furnace, there was total obscurity. No trees, or other objects, caught and reflected any portion of the brightness, which thus wasted itself in the immense void of night, as if it quivered from the expiring embers of the world, after the final conflagration. But the Irishmen were continually emerging from the dense gloom, passing through the lurid glow, and vanishing into the gloom on the other side. Sometimes a whole figure would be made visible . . . ; others were but half seen, like imperfect creatures; many flitted, shadow-like, along the skirts of darkness, tempting fancy to a vain pursuit; and often, a face alone was reddened by the fire.¹⁰

In a twist on the typical picturesque scene, darkness and not light provides the unifying element in the composition, and the sharp contrast between the gloomy night and the glare of the bonfire attracts the observer's eye. Hawthorne's interpretation of the scene, and perhaps even his attraction to it, owes more than a little to the popularity of Salvator Rosa's paintings in nineteenth-century America. The seventeenth-century Italian artist's work had become synonymous with the savage aspect of picturesque beauty since before Gilpin's time,¹¹ and in this verbal sketch the writer's depiction of "wild Irish" provides the visual equivalent of Rosa's banditti in the Italian countryside for the relatively tame American landscape. Unlike Irving's work, however, in which picturesque description orders and civilizes the western landscape and the author's tone remains the smoothly admiring voice of a gentleman-tourist, Hawthorne's sketch suggests some of the diverse tonal qualities possible in picturesque discourse. "A Night

Scene" glows in an apocalyptic light that distorts rather than illuminates the scene, and the narrator's tone is one of awe or even horror at the supernatural, almost magical quality of the picture created by the bonfire's lurid blaze.

The picturesque principle of unity in variety can be illustrated by Edgar Allan Poe's description of a prospect near the Missouri River in *The Journal of Julius Rodman* (1840). From high grounds Rodman and his fellow explorers viewed the "extensive prospect" that follows:

We saw here an immense and magnificent country spreading out on every side into a vast plain, waving with glorious verdure, and alive with countless herds of buffaloes and wolves, intermingled with occasional elk and antelope. To the south the prospect was interrupted by a range of high, snow-capped mountains . . . Behind these again was a higher range, extending to the very horizon in the north west. The two rivers presented the most enchanting appearance as they wound away their long snake-like lengths in the distance.

The composition centers on the "vast plain," within which various elements such as the prairie verdure and wild animals provide interest for the observer. The scene is framed by mountains, and the rivers, which "vanished in the shadowy mists of the sky,"¹² add depth to the landscape, beckoning the observer into the distance like the golden light in the background of a painting by Claude. The meandering rivers also add the curved lines that are a common feature of picturesque beauty in the verbal sketch.

One question that arises in reading picturesque discourse concerns the combination of aesthetic categories in natural landscapes. Nature, of course, seldom provided pure examples of each aesthetic for the picturesque tourist, and travelers took it upon themselves to try to describe, and sometimes to label, the various landscapes they observed. Gilpin himself acknowledged that the traveler rarely found "perfectly pure" examples of the grand (a synonym for sublimity¹³) or the beautiful, and in practice he often mixed the various modes of landscape beauty, particularly the picturesque and the sublime.¹⁴ An example from *Remarks on Forest Scenery* illustrates these mixed modes. Gilpin describes "a very grand, and picturesque forest view"