St George Tucker's Essay "For the Old Batchellor" in Praise of Virginia Women: A Critical Edition

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ST. GEORGE TUCKER'S ESSAY "FOR THE OLD BACHELOR"

IN PRAISE OF VIRGINIA WOMEN:

A CRITICAL EDITION

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
John L. Hare
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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

St. George Tucker's essay "For the Old Batchellor" in praise of Virginian women is a work of little literary merit, but it illustrates some of the conflicts in Virginia at the time it was composed. Its view of women is different from that taken by novelists of the period, and, indeed, from Tucker's own poems about women. Nevertheless, Tucker writes the essay from the same position evident in some contemporaneous works in that he fails to acknowledge sexual equality, and places the women who receive his praise in the home. Although presumably belleuristic in intent, the essay's portrayal of women is clearly didactic, and the work also promotes the patriotic spirit that would lead to the War of 1812. The political sentiments intrude to diminish the quality of the essay.

This study includes an introduction providing information on Tucker's life and times, an annotated text of the essay transcribed from Tucker's unpublished holograph, and a critique examining the essay in detail.
ST. GEORGE TUCKER'S ESSAY "FOR THE OLD BACHELOR"

IN PRAISE OF VIRGINIA WOMEN:

A CRITICAL EDITION
INTRODUCTION

St. George Tucker left his mark upon his age as a jurist and political writer. His limited renown derives chiefly from his edition of Blackstone's Commentaries and his formal essays on trade and the abolition of slavery. His belletristic works, including The Probationary Odes of Jonathan Pindar, are virtually unknown beyond a small circle of scholars, but Tucker's poems and informal essays probably deserve more attention because they represent an important phase in American literary development. Recording his observations of Virginian life in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Tucker left a record of an era between Augustan elegance and reason and Romantic rusticity and emotionalism, of a nation between British monarchy and American democracy, and of an impressive mind attempting to solve the problems of the changes taking place around it. The conflicts show clearly in his hitherto unpublished essays "For the Old Batchelor," written about 1811, and the essay in praise of Virginian women from the collection is a case in point.

When he wrote the "Old Batchelor" essays, Tucker was not a young man. At the age of 59, he had already lived a varied life as a student, soldier, professor of law, and jurist and had retired as Judge of the Virginia Court of Appeals. A brief review of his life may shed some light on his character.

Tucker was born in Bermuda, 29 June 1752 (o.s.), the youngest son of a prominent mercantile family. Like many other sons of prominent
families, he began his education at home, but from 1768 - 1770, he attended a school operated by the Reverend Alexander Richardson. By 1770, he had settled on a career in law, and hoped to obtain his legal education at the Inns of Court in London; however, his father's finances made study in London impossible. After leaving Richardson's school, Tucker read law under the supervision of his uncle, John Slater, then the Attorney General of Bermuda, but by the summer of 1771, it had become apparent to Tucker and his father that this arrangement was unsatisfactory. Since legal study in London was still out of the question, it was decided that he should continue his liberal education at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. After a voyage from Bermuda to New York and a leisurely trip southward, Tucker arrived in Williamsburg in January, 1772.1

With his student days at the College, Tucker began a lifelong affection for Williamsburg, but more important to the present study, his character began to emerge. Some writers have observed correctly that Tucker came to Williamsburg with letters of introduction and a paternal injunction to cultivate influential friends, and that he capitalized on both.2 The relationships that he began entirely on his own initiative are more revealing, though, and deserve more consideration than they usually get.

Tucker conducted his studies under the supervision of the Reverend Alexander Gwatkin, professor of mathematics and natural philosophy, who impressed upon him the importance of a broad, liberal education. In the face of his father's objections he pursued a course of study including "Natural Philosophy, Logick, Rhetoric, and Mathematics." This program clearly reflects Gwatkin's own broad interests. After returning to Britain in 1775, the former professor of science distinguished himself as a scholar of ancient and modern languages.3
Gwatkin was closely associated with a student organization called the F. H. C., or, perhaps derisively, the Flat Hat Club. The club records, which seem to have been in Tucker's keeping for a time, have been lost, so it is difficult to determine its purpose with any certainty. From the extant accounts of the members' activities, it is clear that the promotion of scholarship was one of their important concerns. With Gwatkin's assistance, they attempted to set up their own library to augment that of the college, but by no means was the club composed of bookworms. Whether officially or unofficially, they seem to have drunk well, if not wisely, on several occasions. The brothers of the club, including James Innes, Beverley Randolph, Thomas Davis, and Walker Maury, among others, remained close friends most of their lives, banding together to help Maury out of some financial straits at one point. Tucker often assisted them in various legal matters. Perhaps it is most important to point out that all of the members named served in the Continental Line or the Virginia Militia during the Revolution. Maury became a schoolmaster, and Davis an Episcopal priest, but Innes, Randolph, and Tucker practiced law and held important positions in the state government. In his own choice of friends, then, Tucker seems to have been drawn to men who could share the enjoyment of carousing or serious discussion of many subjects. 4

Tucker found himself unable to earn a living after war broke out in 1775, so in June of that year, he returned to Bermuda. Until late 1776, he carried on trade on behalf of the American colonies from there, and perhaps engaged in some covert activities. In the summer of 1776, ships' crews from South Carolina and Virginia seized a supply of gunpowder from a British magazine at St. George's, Bermuda, and Tucker was suspected of
assisting them. He returned to Virginia on a ship laden with West Indian salt in January, 1777, and for the next two years he continued his trading ventures from there. When British forces raided Hampton, Suffolk, and Portsmouth in 1779, he left his wife of less than a year, Frances Bland Randolph Tucker, and marched with the militia to contain them. Mustered out when the British left, he was called up again in 1781 and fought at Guilford Court House, North Carolina. He was wounded there and discharged with the rest of his unit to return to Mrs. Tucker's Matoax plantation in April, but by June he had been called into service for the campaign that finally trapped Cornwallis and his army at Yorktown.

While serving as French interpreter for General Thomas Nelson at Yorktown, Tucker was struck by the momentous events he saw taking place. His assignment to Nelson's staff offered him a vantage point from which he could see the tightening siege more clearly than could a line officer in the trenches, and he began to keep a journal. In it, his legal training and interest in objective observation are evident, for he draws clear and careful distinctions between his own information and that which he obtained from others, and he carefully avoids inferences and emotionalism to record facts with objectivity. The Journal of the Siege of Yorktown was never published during Tucker's life, but it has become an important source for modern historians studying the Yorktown campaign. Its precise and objective views stand in striking contrast to the personal elation obvious in Tucker's letters of the same period. That contrast suggests that Tucker possessed a strong sense of purpose in his writings. In some of his later didactic essays, the sense of purpose becomes almost overpowering and flaws the work. In the Yorktown journal, it is a source of strength.
St. George Tucker spent the rest of his life in positions of increasing importance. In the early days of his private practice after the Revolution, he was appointed Commonwealth’s Attorney for Chesterfield County (1783). In 1788, he accepted election and was sworn to the bench of the District Court, a post that he held until he was appointed Judge of the Court of Appeals in 1804. In addition to his professional duties, he served an unexpired term as a member of the Council of State in 1782, and, with Edmund Randolph and James Madison, represented Virginia at the Annapolis Convention in 1786. Successive appointments as a member of the Board of Visitors, Rector, and second Professor of Law and Police at the College of William and Mary allowed him to act upon his concern for education.

This list of Tucker’s professional and civic accomplishments is not in itself relevant to his writings, but it provides a basis for some observations concerning his character. While his career was eminently successful and his contemporaries showed their respect for him by honoring him with appointments to positions of increasing importance, he only held two positions in which he was directly involved with the Federal government. Even those positions, as a member of the Annapolis Convention, and as Judge of the Federal District Court, were concerned with representation of Virginia interests and adjudication of cases originating within Virginia. Nonetheless, Tucker was deeply and passionately interested in national affairs. His formal essays on commerce, slavery, and the Louisiana Purchase deal with issues of national importance, and his edition of Blackstone’s Commentaries, one of the most important legal textbooks of the period, was a highly successful attempt to outline an American jurisprudence on the basis of British
common law. These formal writings suggest the depth of his concern for the nation he had fought to establish just as many of his poems written over roughly the same period reveal the passion of his patriotism. From the victory at Yorktown until almost the end of his life, he commemorated events of national significance with new poems. The titles of two of his plays, "The Patriot Rous'd," and "The Patriot Cool'd," suggest their orientation as forcibly as can any critical examination of their contents.

Although Tucker's political writings show him to be a dedicated Jeffersonian Republican, the most important of them, his essays and edition of Blackstone, are works of theoretical jurisprudence, and have prompted Richard Beale Davis to observe that Tucker was not a politician. During the bitter partisan controversies between the Hamiltonian Federalists and the Jeffersonian Republicans, such a theoretical orientation could prove a serious handicap, for courts sometimes took advantage of the absence of American judicial precedent to return decisions favorable to their political friends. Tucker, a deeply committed Jeffersonian, attempted with great success to base his legal judgment upon law, even when doing so violated his personal or political beliefs. This may explain, in part, why Tucker never rose to national prominence. Although liberal in theory, his practice was basically conservative.

Discussion of the reasons why Tucker performed his public service at the state level must be speculative, of course, but his success in Virginia allowed him to enjoy some time at his home in Williamsburg. His life there must have attracted him strongly, for he composed at least one poem lamenting his solitary life at the Swan Tavern in Richmond during the long court sessions. It appears that his retirement in 1811 may have been precipitated in part by an extension of his duties that would have required still more time in Richmond.
In 1811, when he returned to Williamsburg, his old friend, Bishop James Madison, was President of the College, and there is no doubt that he and Tucker were often in each other's company. Madison shared Tucker's interest in the sciences, and worked with him on at least one experiment. Another old friend would have been James Innes of the old Flat Hat Club. Needless to say there were far more than these, and Tucker surely found many opportunities to see them and discuss the interests they shared, from gardening to literature to current events and political theory. They talked, they read, often borrowing books from each other (and forgetting to return them); they wrote letters when they travelled; they flourished in the quiet that had come over Williamsburg after the last soldiers left the hospitals in town at the end of the Revolution.10

If Tucker's attachments to Virginia and to Williamsburg appear somewhat provincial and complacent, it is necessary to examine briefly the objects of those attachments as he may have seen them. Virginia, after all, had given the nation three of its first four Presidents by 1811, when Tucker wrote his essays "For the Old Batchellor." Before his death in 1826, yet another Virginian would be elected and serve two terms. An exhaustive list of Tucker's contemporaries who had achieved national prominence might easily fill a small volume, but it could begin with George Washington, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Mason. By 1811, Mason Locke Weems had written a biography of Washington, giving his subject a mythic aura. When William Wirt put aside the Old Bachelor series, he wrote a similar biography of Patrick Henry. Of course, Virginians had not conceived, promoted, and won independence without the assistance of the other colonies, but somehow the leaders of the other colonies (Francis Marion of South Carolina perhaps
excepted because of Weems' biography of him) never quite captured the imagination as the Virginians had done. Virginia was the oldest colony, the colony that had moved for independence in the Continental Congress of 1776, the home of George Washington, and the Mother of Presidents. If civilization had travelled westward from Greece to Rome, and then to France and Britain and at last to America, then it was obvious to Tucker's contemporary Virginians that it was centered in Virginia, just as it had been centered in Athens when Greece had been the most civilized nation in the world. When the Richmond Enquirer called the state "the Athens of America," the assessment was considered apt, perhaps a slight overstatement, and immodest, but not entirely baseless.¹¹

To the Virginian of the early nineteenth century, praise of this kind was of the highest order, for no civilization had ever achieved the splendor of ancient Greece and Rome. Educated Virginians studied Greek and Latin authors, and their writings included frequent quotations from the classics. In setting up their government, they sought to establish by law the principle of equality that had been central to Greek democracy, and they settled on a republican form of government somewhat similar to that of Rome. In their capital city of Richmond -- a city, like Rome, built on hills -- they built a capitol following Jefferson's adaptation of a Roman temple in France, and, in the Federal City across the Potomac from Virginia, they used marble and granite to build government buildings that conjured up Greece and Rome. Their heroes they immortalized in marble statues and busts, often crowning them with Greek laurel or portraying them in the poses of Roman emperors.¹²

A similar veneration of classical antiquity had taken place in England during the first half of the eighteenth century, but British
neoclassicism was less imitative than its American descendent. It manifested itself in a host of translations, imitations of classical forms in literature, and a confrontation between Aristotelian empiricism and Baconian rationalism. The Aristotelian system, which rests upon objective observation of phenomena and logical analysis of concrete data, won out in the American colonies, but the controversy was never quite resolved in Britain.

An empirical system required the accumulation and analysis of vast bodies of information and acquisition of broad general knowledge. To this end, many Virginians of the upper class assembled huge libraries. The libraries assembled by Thomas Jefferson were considerably larger than most, for they included thousands of volumes and important Virginian manuscripts; however, in the range of subjects they included, they were not unusual. Richard Beale Davis has found that the fifteen libraries of this period extant in records include volumes covering a similar range of subjects: Fine Arts, Criticism on the Fine Arts, Politics and Trade, Religion, Law, Ancient and Modern History, and Natural Philosophy and History. Tucker’s estate list catalogs five hundred volumes, and many of these still survive in the Coleman-Tucker Collection of Swem Library at the College of William and Mary. The greatest number of Tucker’s books were legal treatises, followed fairly closely by histories covering a period from classical antiquity through the American Revolution. His collection of scientific books is comparatively small, but heavy marginal annotations, similar to those in the histories, suggest that both subjects were of great interest to Tucker, and that his knowledge in both fields was considerable. He also collected the classics in translations and the original languages, and a few volumes of modern
literature and criticism, politics and trade, and religion. The comparatively small numbers of volumes on these subjects do not indicate any lack of interest on Tucker's part. The College library during his life contained about three thousand volumes, and it is likely that he read there on occasion. Then, too, the custom of book borrowing was popular in Virginia. Bookplates in some of the Tucker volumes indicate that he borrowed them, although in 1817, he complained of his own losses to borrowers. His reading and knowledge must have been wide indeed.  

Such breadth of knowledge and Tucker's achievements have led Richard Beale Davis to compare him to Jefferson. While such a comparison is not inappropriate, it is important to recognize that it might be made of many Virginians of the period. Together, they formed an aristocracy based upon achievement as measured by wealth, and by accomplishments in such varied fields as agriculture, literary criticism, and government administration. Social stratification and slavery may seem antithetical to the democratic principles that Tucker and his contemporaries espoused, but to them hierarchical social structures were naturally present in every civilization. They would have hastened to add that their society with its insistence upon property and ability reflected Greek and Roman civilization, even to the presence of slaves, and that it was infinitely more desirable than the British hereditary system.

The members of Tucker's class and generation kept in contact by letters when they were apart, but they also met fairly frequently as they travelled to conduct the public business. Born British subjects, they had fought together and created an independent nation. The assembly of information about their country was a matter of importance to them, and
they prized works like Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* and Wirt's *Letters of the British Spy*. Both Jefferson and the Spy were familiar with William Byrd's *History of the Dividing Line*, and Jefferson praised the old manuscript for its observations of nature. If Jefferson's interest was primarily scientific, Wirt's was historical, and like many of his fellow Virginians, he saw a decline from the glorious days of Jamestown and the heroic adventures of the Revolution. "Where is Smith?" his Spy asked wistfully. The answer was obvious: "That pink of gallantry, that flower of chivalry" was gone, and the society he represented was as ruined as the old church at Jamestown. The Spy sketched the characters of prominent contemporaries with sympathetic objectivity, but nowhere could he find the chivalry and gallantry of Smith. The dead Revolutionaries, especially Washington, had left a sizeable void in Virginia and the other states, and the rising generations could only fill it if they knew its dimensions and received adequate instruction and exhortation. Provision of patriotic and moral inspiration through writing became a work of public spirit, a quality the Spy found conspicuously absent as he journeyed through the state.

Virginian histories, as discussed above treated the present as inferior to the past, and frequently romanticized the past. This tendency to gild a subject to better inspire and instruct led Weems to mythologize Washington and Wirt to create some fine speeches for Patrick Henry. Later, Wirt's own biographer, John Pendleton Kennedy, would even destroy some of Wirt's letters to protect the myth he sought to create. The essay below shows one of Tucker's attempts to write in this strain, but the Romantic view of history is not consonant with Tucker's notion of history. He may ask faintly where the heroes of old have gone, and he
may long for the youth of the present to prove themselves as their forbears did in battle, but he never quite gives up on the present. In his anxiety to inspire, he mars the piece. On the other hand, the essay demonstrates Tucker's understanding that impending war with Britain would require sacrifice on the part of every American.

The pessimism that lamentation for the past evoked clashed with optimism born of the belief that a benevolent deity revealed itself in the orderly structure of the universe, and in observable phenomena. Acts of kindness and charity provided Tucker and many of his contemporaries with evidence that proved to them that God did exist. Not only were charitable acts of divine origin; they brought to those who performed them rewards of health, happiness, and national prosperity. When virtue was rewarded immediately, the existence of an afterlife became immaterial, and religion became little more than a sanction for morality. These beliefs are Deistic, of course, and they are reflected throughout Tucker's writings. They were held by many important Americans in the years after the Revolution, but they ran counter to the teachings of orthodox Christianity. In a state in which acts of hospitality and charity seem to have been common, they permitted an optimistic view of the world, and made it difficult to accept wholeheartedly the idea of a civilization in decline.21

Deism grew in part from the empiricism of the Augustan period, but by the end of the eighteenth century in America as in England Romanticism was becoming increasingly evident in literature. Perhaps the strongest bond between the two periods, and the one most clearly evident in Virginian writings, was the belief that literature existed to serve as a vehicle of moral instruction. Consequently, literary critics like the
popular British Lord Kames emphasized matter over form. Optimistic works by authors observing the world from the mainstream of society and recording those things that gave them renewed faith and hope were supposed to have absolute and intrinsic beauty. Obviously works condemning society, religion, or morality were to be avoided since they promoted nothing positive. The portrayal of immorality and impropriety could be countenanced, provided that wrongdoing led to punishment.  

Virginians read Kames's *Elements of Criticism* and accepted his moral and utilitarian view of literature, but they studied with equal care Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric*, a book that may be seen as a predecessor of Strunk's *Elements of Style* in its attention to the craft of writing. Blair's insistence upon scientific precision and impersonality and his preference for Latinate diction as a means of achieving these ends were congenial to the Augustan mind, and the view of oratory and literary eloquence as products of the same techniques permitted the use of a fervent hortatory tone that pleased Romantics. On the other hand, a book concerned with literary or rhetorical technique generally carries with it the assumption that aesthetic values in literature supersede moral values. This idea obviously opposes Kames's belief in the priority of moral values.  

The Virginian writers were caught in the conflict between moralism and aestheticism. Earnestly wishing to show their intellectual accomplishment and public spirit by writing, they still could not be sure that writing was more than a frivolous and somewhat narcissistic waste of time. Writing was virtually unknown as a profession, but was considered acceptable as a gentlemanly diversion. Because the gentlemen who wrote in Jeffersonian Virginia did not wish to be thought idle or
immoral, their rare publications are almost always anonymous or pseudonymous. This custom has given rise to the belief that before the time of Poe, Southerners wrote little literature of significant quality. Darrel Abel believes that the plantation economy produced a literate leisured class too small to support the development of literature, but this admits too much a stereotypic view of the South of the plantation myth. In Jeffersonian Virginia, most writers lived in the cities, although some planters wrote frequently and well. Both city and country gentlemen, as suggested above, read copiously, and might have supported professional writing if there had been copyright protection adequate to assure an author of an income. In the absence of such protection, printers of newspapers and other periodicals filled their pages as much by the liberal use of scissors as by the solicitation of manuscripts, and published volumes of poetry and prose.

Most Virginian authors published the bulk of their works in the periodicals to which they subscribed. Matthew Carey's American Museum, published in Philadelphia between 1787 and 1792, was a particular favorite, and attracted contributions and subscriptions from many of the most important men in the states. Politically, the Republican Museum differed from its later counterpart, the staunchly Federalist Port-Folio which was published in Philadelphia between 1801 and 1827. Like the American Gleaner and Virginia Magazine (Richmond, 1807), both included scientific, political, and literary material. So useful were many of the articles that subscribers collected the periodicals, had them bound and preserved them for future reference with the Spectator.

Although the magazines occasionally printed criticism of fictional works, they seldom published fiction until after the end of the
Jeffersonian period. Of course, short stories were seldom written before Poe, and novels were too long for anything but serial publication. Serialization never seems to have achieved in America the popularity it enjoyed in England, although the episodic structure and epistolary form of many early American novels would have lent itself to the practice. The point might be raised that some of the series of informal essays were based on fictional premises; however, the series submerge plot and characterization beneath the revelation and explication of factual material.27

The novels written after the Revolution follow closely the early British models in episodic structure, didactic intent and claims of realism. Authors like Susanna Rowson, of course, make this claim to realism explicitly, and it is implicit in Charles Brockden Brown's epistolary novels. Had they not established the "factual" nature of their works, the novels would have been considered lies unworthy of attention by the strong Puritan element in American society. Of course, virtue ultimately receives its rewards, and immorality invariably leads to horrible punishment. The absence of picaresques and satires like those of Fielding and Sterne suggests that readers sought heavy-handed didacticism, but this is not the case. Educated Virginians, probably with Deistic leanings, read and enjoyed Tom Jones and Tristram Shandy. Early American novelists set their works in America and treated their nation and its people without the sentimentality of later American and English books. Like their English predecessors, the most notable of them were set in cities and towns. Only later would the countryside become an important setting.28

When novels and poems about the country did appear, they were not set in the wild natural country of the English Romantic and New England
Transcendentalist, but in the orderly world of the plantation. Plot and character became mythic and sentimental. In their exaltation of the American ancestral past, these plantation novels are as sentimentally patriotic as the writings of Scott and Byron. Jay B. Hubbell identifies this strain in the novels of the Thirties and Forties, but it is present in works published as early as 1804.29 The durable popularity of Gone With the Wind suggests that the plantation myth that began in Virginia novels retains much of its attractiveness to the present day.

Poetry and essays were the usual literary forms that gentlemen/writers of the early national period chose. Poetry seems to have been particularly popular, and numerous lyrics, satires, vers de société and nationalistic narrative and descriptive poems still survive. Virginian poets employed a variety of eighteenth century models in their writings, and their works are often clearly Augustan in diction and stanzaic form. The verses of Pope were particularly admired, probably for their technical virtuosity as much as for their substance. Still, there is no reason to believe that Pope's substance was not well received, although it may have appeared at times undemocratic. In England, the Romantic movement was taking place, and it began to manifest itself in America in the sentimental treatment of patriotic themes, in new freedom in rhythm and increased variety of stanzaic form.30 This movement away from Augustan formality offered the opportunity for poetic expression along a wide front, and would have supported one of St. George Tucker's poetic projects: a collection of poems similar to the Canterbury Tales. Indeed, five prologues were written for the twelve tales he planned, a general prologue assembled the company in a tavern, and "A Monitory Tale" disclaimed responsibility for any immorality in the tales. These works
cover a period, from 1786 to 1820, during which Tucker's increasing responsibilities probably did not allow sufficient time for composition on this scale, but the conception itself indicates Tucker's enthusiasm. He might have completed all twelve tales of "The Country Wedding," and the finished work might have made for entertaining reading. His finished poems show a command of many different strains. He wrote some bawdry, none of it as riotous as Chaucer's, but some of it better than the doggerel that Tucker admitted he wrote. By the same token, he wrote poems as poignant as anything in Chaucer. It is unfair to compare the two poets too closely, for Tucker never wrote a narrative poem of significant length. A better comparison is with Swift, for Tucker's best poems are satiric in a vein similar to Swift's. His Probationary Odes of Jonathan Pindar, one of two published volumes of poetry, is as fierce in its attack on the Federalists as any of Swift's poems, and like Swift's poems, the Odes are broadly humorous. Tucker's wit is never the subtle wit of Pope or of Swift at his best, but it is, perhaps, an American wit that finds knee-slapping humor in the image of a judge plagued by a massive boil.

Of course, not all of Tucker's poetry is bawdry and satire. He wrote some pleasant social verses, many patriotic poems, and some good lyrics. The lyrics and patriotic poems were not sufficient to convince him that his poetry was serious, but they may have allowed him to rationalize his other works. In the lyrics, he shows himself to be in the mainstream of Jeffersonian thought, for his poems are philosophically optimistic and secure in the belief that man was self-perfectable. They are Augustan in their treatment of the individual as a member of society, their concern with universal (as opposed to individual) experience, and their concern with morality. The social verses, for the most part, are
occasional, and provide glimpses of Williamsburg life and people, perhaps suggesting something of their author's gregarious and gentle nature. The patriotic verses, like their political counterparts, are militant. For Tucker, America was to be a military power capable of protecting herself by brute force. He was not entirely jingoistic, however. Although devotedly partisan, Tucker recalled the Revolution as a holy war in which the American people had been united, and, by the assistance of God, had cast off the British oppressors. Believing such unity to be vital to national survival and finding none of it in peacetime, Tucker was willing to beat the drum and rattle the sword in the martial lines of his patriotic poems.34

In his own day, he was considered quite a fine poet. He carried on long correspondences with Governor and Mrs. John Page, and they esteemed his poetry. George Wythe enjoyed "A Monitory Tale" so much that he sent it to a London friend. In an ironic incident, John Adams, who was among the political adversaries singled out for scathing attack in the Probationary Odes, liked Tucker's lyric "Resignation" so much that he compared it favorably with Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope. (The Odes had been published pseudonymously. Adams probably never knew that he had given such a bitter opponent such extravagant praise.35)

Unfortunately, little of the poetry from Jeffersonian Virginia has been studied in detail. A great deal of it, pseudonymously or anonymously published in periodicals, has not been identified with an author or with the commonwealth. Similar statements may be made about the informal Virginian essays of this period. The essay was a popular genre, probably because it offered a medium in which the author could offer useful information about economics, agriculture, or politics, or could write
in elegant terms about literature, morality, and manners. The criteria of eloquence and utility could be met. Nonetheless, belletristic essays were typically signed with pseudonyms. Only more formal works like Tucker's essays on slavery, trade, and the Louisiana Purchase were signed. Even among formal essays there exist a large number of pseudonymous works, including Madison's Federalist contributions.  

In Virginia at the beginning of the nineteenth century familiar essays were written by a great many men, but perhaps the best essayist was a Richmond attorney named William Wirt. Born in Maryland in 1772, he brought with him a love of writing and an ability to be sentimental without becoming bathetic. His canonization of Patrick Henry has already been noted. In his essays, he seems more objective, although his prejudices emerge from time to time. The Letters of the British Spy, published first in the Virginia Argus, in 1803, were his first major essays, and perhaps his best. The Spy sees Virginia's weaknesses in transportation, schools, and public spirit, but he is still enthusiastic about Jefferson's character and the oratory of a blind preacher. Letters of the British Spy became Wirt's most popular work, and it was still in print as late as 1860. Modern critics feel that Wirt's later series, The Old Bachelor, published in the Richmond Enquirer from 22 December 1810 to 24 December 1811, is a better work, and they are probably correct in a sense. The Old Bachelor series is far more restrained and probing than the earlier work. Between the two series, Wirt and a group of his friends published The Rainbow, a series much more restrained and rational than the Spy, but for some reason, only the first ten of these essays were collected. The series does not appear to have been popular.
The Old Bachelor, Wirt posing as Dr. Robert Cecil, made his first appearance in the Richmond Enquirer of 22 December 1810. He was a man of wealth and education, a failure at law and medicine, and an enthusiast. In his erudition and his interest in the world around him, Dr. Cecil is similar to Addison's Sir Roger DeCoverly. A correspondence with the Spectator character is not surprising, because Wirt's Spy thought a complete edition of that periodical ought to be in every house, but the sentimentality and emotionalism of the Old Bachelor separate him from his British counterpart. \(^41\) Wirt/Cecil contributed most of the essays that appeared sporadically in 1811, but received correspondence from a number of friends, not all of whom have been identified. Frank and Dabney Carr, Richard Parker, George Tucker, Dr. Louis Girardin, Major David Watson, and perhaps St. George Tucker contributed to the series. \(^42\)

St. George Tucker's role in the Old Bachelor series is unclear. At one point, Wirt asked for his comments on essays already published, but Tucker demurred, apparently feeling that Wirt was better able to judge. \(^43\) It is possible that the twenty-seventh number in the newspaper series was Tucker's work, but the evidence for his authorship is circumstantial. \(^44\) Correspondence between Wirt and Tucker during the summer of 1811 suggests that Tucker submitted a number of contributions, and that Wirt may have meant to give them a place in the series. \(^45\) In 1813, Tucker wrote to Wirt proposing to publish these and other essays in a new series, "Nuga: The Hermit of the Mountain." Although Tucker set to work on this series before receiving any response from Wirt, he completed only two introductory essays and a fragment of a third. \(^46\)

One thing is certain: Tucker's apparent failure to gain entry to the Old Bachelor series was not due to any lack of effort. A notebook
in the Coleman-Tucker Collection of Swem Library of the College of William and Mary contains twenty essays, two of them in two versions. The themes and concerns of these essays indicate that they could not have been intended initially for the "Hermit of the Mountain" collection, for some deal with issues disposed of by 1813. Letters between Tucker and Wirt indicate that even this collection is incomplete, and that there were other essays and drafts that have been lost. Why, then, were more of them never published? The answer can only be speculative, but several possibilities present themselves. Generally, Tucker's essays are not as good as those in the published series. He wrote many allegories, although none of this type by any author were published in the Old Bachelor, and they are too often more instructive than entertaining. Wirt might have polished many of Tucker's works, as he seems to have done with the contributions of Frank and Dabney Carr. Probably the worst flaws in Tucker's essays were their subjects and points of view, for they are often more theoretical than the published series, and are decidedly the works of a neoclassicist struggling to keep up with the times by treating his subject with sentimental effusiveness.

Perhaps because they come to the modern reader in holograph and represent their author's unedited impression, Tucker's essays "For the Old Batchellor" are valuable. After all, they reveal a period of political turmoil and literary change. Their documentary value probably exceeds their literary value. To see this, it is necessary to examine one of them in detail. I have selected the essay bearing the arabic number fourteen in its upper left hand corner. It is not allegorical, but typological. In other respects this essay in praise of Virginian women is typical of the group.
NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1 Charles Cullen, "St. George Tucker and Law in Virginia," Diss. University of Virginia, 1971. Unless otherwise noted, all biographical material in this thesis is drawn from Cullen. Mary Haldane Coleman, St. George Tucker: Citizen of No Mean City, (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1936) is the only full length published biography of Tucker, but it lacks adequate documentation. Several other biographical sketches exist, all of which draw heavily on a letter from St. George Tucker to Richard Rush, 27 October 1813, Coleman-Tucker Collection, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.


4 Material on the F. H. C. and its members is from Carson, James Innes.

5 Coleman, pp. 72-78, reprints part of the journal. Sections of Tucker's letters from the period are in Coleman, pp. 68-69.


11 Richmond Enquirer, 31 January 1807.

12 Davis, pp. 209, 229.

13 Davis, pp. 89-118.


15 Davis, p. 94.


18 Wirt, pp. 190, 223.
19 Parrington, p. 32. Davis, pp. 375-76.

20 Davis, pp. 293, 383.

21 For discussions of Tucker’s Deism, see Davis, pp. 124-25, 329, and Coghlan, p. 54.


23 Davis, pp. 257, 260, 261.


25 Davis, p. 262-63.

26 Davis, pp. 89-118, 262-64.

27 Davis, p. 262.

28 Davis, p. 260.


30 Davis, p. 319.

31 Prince, p. 279-80.

32 Prince, pp. 273, 274-75.
33 Davis, pp. 328-31. See also: Prince, pp. 277, 278, 281.

34 Prince, p. 278.

35 Prince, p. 276.

36 Davis, p. 279.

37 Davis, p. 280. See also: Parrington, pp. 30-31.

38 Davis, p. 280. See also: Parrington, p. 30.

39 Davis, p. 280.

40 Davis, p. 282.

41 Davis, pp. 283-85.

42 Davis, p. 283.


45 Wirt to Tucker, 7 August 1811, Coleman-Tucker Collection.
46 Tucker to Wirt, 12 September 1813, Wirt Papers.

47 Dolmetsch, p. 6.

48 Dolmetsch, p. 20.
The source of this text is a holograph manuscript in St. George Tucker's notebook marked "For the Old Batchellor" in the Coleman-Tucker Collection of Swem Library at the College of William and Mary. The notebook contains twenty essays, two of them extant in more than one version. Six of these essays are merely folded in the notebook, but the rest are loosely sewn into a blue paper cover. Generally, the compositions cover two folio sheets, recto and verso. Only in recent years have any of the manuscripts in the Tucker-Coleman Collection had professional care, and some of them have required restoration, but the notebook "For the Old Batchellor" remains in fair condition. The handwriting is clear and easy to read when compared to the script in some of the letters in the collection. Consequently, a literal transcription of the sort offered below poses no significant problems.

All of the essays bear arabic numerals in the upper left hand corner, and some carry single letter subscripts: "E," "L," "P," and "N." Presumably, the numbers indicate an order of composition or a proposed order of publication. The letters remain unexplained, but seem to be part of some private system that Tucker used. Most of the essays are in the form of letters and carry the heading "For the Old Batchellor."

In the transcription below, I retain Tucker's arachaic spelling because it seems typical of the orthography of the period. Some words, however, do not conform to any conventional orthography, and are marked with [sic]. Tucker used the long form of "s" and substituted "i" for "j." I have modernized these conventions.
The notes that follow the text locate Tucker's cancellations and provide readings of cancelled passages whenever possible. These are the only variant readings in the essay. Beyond this, the notes explain major allusions and provide background information. Extensive commentary is left to the critique which follows the text.
Sir,

It was not without the highest gratification that I perused that extract from the Letters of a Scottish Lady, containing a Sketch of the very exalted character of that excellent Lady, Madam Schuyler, of Albany, in the State of New York, with which you favoured your readers in a former number; more especially, as I flattered myself, that it would have been followed with some further notice of the character of our fair Countrywomen, in Virginia, than is contained in that number. --The retired situation, and recluse mode of life, of many of those who have exhibited in their conduct through Life, the most excellent patterns of domestic, and social, virtues, may well account for the silence of travellers, who ride through a Country, by a map, and see, & converse with, none, but ordinary-keepers, and their disorderly customers; but they furnish no apology for the silence of Doctor Cecil, who from his birth must have seen and felt the general superiority of the female Character, in Virginia. Many of my fair Countrywomen to whom this tribute is most justly due, will blush, I am sure, to find themselves discovered, not less than the chaste Goddess of the woods, when she found Actaeon peeping through the thick umbrage, which, as she supposed, conceal'd her even from the penetrating Rays of fraternal light. Be not alarm'd, ye loveliest, and best of the Daughters of her, who once, like you, was all Innocence, and purity: I mean not to
profane the sacred shades, in which you walk, nor to put aside the veil, under which your bashful timidity conceals your charms: nor, did I possess the pencil of a Titian, or a Guido, would I pourtray [sic] you in any Colours that could raise a blush upon your modest Cheeks.---I will confine my remarks to those sequestered walks, and domestic Scenes, in which I have seen you engaged, where neatness, simplicity, industry, and aeconomy [sic], seem'd to borrow new Charms from conjugal affection, parental care and tenderness, filial piety, and sisterly love and kindness; where the character of the mistress, was lost, and forgotten, in that of the kind and indulgent protectress, the mild, & humane Guardian, the careful and attentive physician, and the watchful, and tender nurse; where the constant interchange of neighbourly kindness, and good offices, drew closer, & closer, the Bonds of friendship, and sweetned [sic] the charms of social life; where the fond mother, with unceasing patience devoted herself to the instruction of her children, and by her example manifested what her precepts recommended. How often, Eugenia, have I seen thee surrounded by thy Girls and Boys, each diligently conning over the lesson thou had'st given them, and eagerly, in succession, flying to thee, to shew their progress! --With what Alacrity, Eudocia, thou loveliest, and most excellent of thy sex, have I seen thee listen to the Instruction of thine incomparable husband, (the best and most amiable of men!) that thou mightest in his absense, supply his place as Tutor to thy son, in Languages which thou hadst never before been taught! In thee, I beheld a Cornelia; in thine infant Son, a descendant of the Gracchi. --Thee, mild, venerable, gentle, Valeria, have I seen surrounded by thy children to the third, & fourth Generation; to thee, their looks, their affections, their gratitude, their Veneration, were constantly directed,
for in thee, if ever she assumed a mortal shape, is Benevolence personified. With thee, did thy noble partner share that god like attribute: Have I not seen him, in the Hour of Calamity, with his sword drawn to meet the Enemies of his Country, in one hand, and giving his purse to his poor, and indigent neighbour, with the other! Illustrious Patriot! Thou wert the friend, the Coadjutor, and Companion, of Washington, in the Hour of Danger, and in the Field of Glory! Be thy name, like his, immortal, and, like his, thy memory, ever dear to thy grateful Country! --To the Genius of Hospitality, alone, it belongs to draw the picture of one who now sleeps in the Grave, and cannot blush to hear herself named. Yet her memory lives in the hearts of many a weary Traveller, many a war worn soldier, and many a gallant Officer, whose Lot it was to traverse the Continent in defence of the Liberty & Independence of his Country. She was the amiable Wife of Major Wall of Brunswick County, a Gentleman of moderate fortune, but of a noble, and liberal spirit, who resided on one of the most public and frequented roads, that lead from the Northern to the Southern States. --Their hospitable Mansion was alike the resort of the rich, and the poor, the Hero advancing with ardour to encounter, the fugitive, escaping from the Cruelties of, the Enemy, and the Emigrant, compelld' to leave, or endeavouring to save a portion of, his property. Seven times in the morning, has their hospitable table been spread, for as many different companies of travellers, and as often at mid-day, and in the Evening, for a like succession of half-famish'd guests. There, the war worn Soldier was sure to find refreshment, and rest, after traversing a Country desolated by a ruthless Enemy. Confidently, he approach'd the Door, sure of a kind reseption [sic] whatever hour of the day, or night; for never was
the Door of that temple of hospitality shut against a stranger; never
did he knock twice, for admittance; never was he ask'd who he was, or
whence he came, or whither he was going. Welcome, cordial Welcome, met
him at the Door; generous Hospitality entertained him, and often did
godlike Charity help him on his way, by her well-tim'd aid, when about
to take his leave. Ask of hundreds, yet alive, if this be true: they
would answer, that the Master of the House--met them with a countenance
open, and beneficient, as the Sun, and that the mistress with a look as
cheerful [sic] as spring, and benevolent as an Angel's, set before them
a repast that cheer'd [sic] their spirits, reviv'd their drooping Souls,
and made them remember that there is a God who suffereth not a sparrow,
to fall to the ground, in vain. Thrice happy, blessed pair! Accept
this small, but sincere tribute to the memory of your virtues: yet
suffer me to add, with pride, and with truth, that not to you alone,
among your generous Countrymen, is such a tribute due. Many have I
known; and many do I still know, with whom, if living, you would cheer-
fully [sic] consent to share it.

How many Penelopes, whose looms furnish'd cloathing [sic] for the
humble Slave, as well as his Master, during our eight years struggle for
liberty and Independence, might Virginia have boasted! They wrought
not for ornament, not to procrastinate the Hour of submission to the
importunities of insolent suitors, but, like Charity herself, to cloath
[sic] the naked. Never were the efforts of a Band of Heroes so well
seconded 20 by the well tim'd co-operation of the gentler sex. The
patriotic Soldier clad in Homespun, or wrapt in a Blanket, the fabric of
his wife, his Mother, his Sister, or his Daughter, felt a tenfold attach-
ment, a tenfold duty, to his Country. He persevered in his cause with
unshaken firmness, till victory, Liberty, and Independence crown'd his Hopes, and rewarded his perils, his Labours, and his sufferings. --The return of Peace did not banish the Looms, altogether; and the number which I have seen very lately, prompts a well-grounded hope that in case of another war, our modern Penelopes, will not only pattern after, but endeavour, if possible, to excel their mothers. --Let it not be supposed that their attention to their domestic duties engrosses them, so entirely, as to occasion the neglect to cultivate their understandings: the Ladies of Virginia are in general fond of reading; and without a compliment to them it might be said, that most of them write much better than their husbands, and Brothers; although the last might boast of a regular classical Education, and have left College with the Honor of being enumerated among the orators on the fourth of July.

It would be unpardonable to pass over in silence that heaven-born charity and benevolence, of which almost every house has furnished some Instance; I mean that parental tenderness to the Orphan, and that benevolent attention, which is shown by our fair Countrywomen to the friendless, particularly of their own sex--My amiable neighbor Mrs. Heartfree, when I first became acquainted with her had three of her own nieces, a distant female relation, & a helpless orphan, whose parents she had never known, in addition to three or four Children of her own, under her roof. The good Mrs. Bountiful had almost as many; and there are not less than a dozen, at this day, who regard the gentle, and benevolent Mrs. Motherly, with all the filial piety and affection that ever a daughter look'd up to a real mother. --My excellent friend Mrs. Neighbourly is another pattern of perfect kindness; she is sure to send my poor wife, who is generally in the longing way, in the Spring, a part
of her first dish of peas, strawberries, and apricots; and when we have a christening, which happens generally about—Christmas, the parson and the whole company are regaled with her mince-pies. --Nor ought I to omit the mention of my good Aunt Deborah, who mounts her little bald-face, sorrel poney [sic] and traverses the whole neighbourhood, for twenty miles round, whenever she hears of a sick Child, a Lady in the straw, or any person dangerously ill, who wants a nurse. Night after night, for weeks together, have I known her to perform that kind office; and when no longer wanted in one place, she is sure to be heard of, in some other, where they stand in need of such kind attentions: in addition to all this, there is not a poor person in the neighbourhood who does not apply to her for, and receive from her hands, medicines [sic], and every comfort they stand in need of, whenever any of their family is sick.

How many have I known, whom [sic] a sad reverse of fortune has compell'd to remove far, very far, from their own peaceful, and comfortable Homes, to some wretched Hovel, abandon the loved scenes of better days, and encounter the fatigues of long Journies, and every other Inconvenience, and privation, with fortitude, with resignation, with piety, and even with Cheerfulness [sic], nor cast one look of Reproach, or discontent, upon the improvident Authors of their misfortunes! Till, by their well timed exertions, patience, & perseverance, they have overcome all the obstacles they had to struggle with, and once more have felt the unparalleled happiness of domestic Comfort, Peace, and Harmony.

These, Sir, are barely the outlines, and Sketches, of those inestimable female Characters, with which Virginia abounds. I mean not to detract from the Fathers of our Country, by saying, that were all their Sons, worthy of their mothers, Virginia might boast of a Race, not
unworthy of ancient Greece, or Rome.

Iam [sic], &c.

E. 33

Philogenes 32
NOTES TO THE TEXT

1 "That extract from the letters of a Scottish Lady" appeared in the Richmond Enquirer, 17 December 1811, as part of Old Bachelor number twenty-seven, signed with the pseudonym "Susannah Thankful." Quite possibly, St. George Tucker composed the essay. Madam Schuyler was the wife of a prominent early citizen of New York.

2 William Wirt used the pseudonym, "Dr. Robert Cecil," in the Old Bachelor essays.


4 Originally read "through thick" ("thick" is lightly cancelled).

5 Probably a reference to Eve, who was "all Innocence and Purity" before the Fall.

6 Titian was a painter of the early Renaissance who developed the technique of using color instead of line to suggest form. See: Harvey, OCEL, p. 822. Guido was the given name of a number of Medieval and Renaissance artists and poets.
Heavy cancellation prevents listing of an earlier reading here.

Eugenia’s description does not allow identification of her with any historic character. Tucker may mean the name typologically. It means "of noble birth."

Eudocia’s description is too vague for identification with any historic character. Again, her name may be typological. It means "of a docile, or teachable nature."

Cornelia was a Roman, daughter of Publius Scipio Africanus, wife of Tiberius Sempronius Graccus, and mother of the Tribunes Tiberius and Gaius. See: Harvey, OCEL, p. 195.

The Gracchi were famous Roman Tribunes. One, Gaius, was a jurist. See: Harvey, OCEL, p. 319.

There is a Valeria in literature, a friend of Virgilia in Shakespeare’s Coriolanus, but she is far too young to be surrounded by her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. However, her description seems more specific than those of Eugenia and Eudocia because of the description of her husband as Washington’s "Coadjutor." The word was seldom used, even in Tucker’s time, except in the sense of a bishop’s assistant—obviously inapplicable here. Tucker probably had in mind a secondary meaning: "companion." This suggests that Valeria represents Mrs. Thomas Nelson, but Tucker may mean her to represent another type. Her name means "strong."

Heavy cancellation prevents listing of an earlier reading.
Brunswick County records show no marriage of any man named Wall prior to 1781, although Tucker's Major Wall was surely married before that date. A history of the county, however, mentions a man of that name in connection with the building of a chapel in 1733. See: Edith Bell and William Heartwell, *Brunswick Story: A History of Brunswick County*, (Lawrenceville, Virginia: Brunswick Times-Gazette, 1957), p. 29.

A cancellation following "half-" cannot be read.

"The fountain of all goodness" has been lightly cancelled.

"... there is a God who suffereth not a sparrow to fall to the ground, in vain." Tucker may have had in mind Luke 12:24 or Matthew 6:26 although neither of these passages refer directly to sparrows. Both passages state that because God cares for Nature he also watches over mankind. The syllogistic structure of this section of the Sermon on the Mount would have had great appeal to Tucker, a deist, since it "proved" empirically the existence of a benevolent God.

Penelope, the faithful wife of Odysseus, worked on a tapestry while awaiting her husband's return from the Trojan War, telling her suitors that she would marry one of them when she had completed her work. Each night, however, she destroyed the previous day's work. See: Harvey, *OCEL*, p. 630.

One instance of women making uniforms for soldiers during the Revolution may be found in Bell and Heartwell, p. 34.

"Seconded" replaces "supported," lightly cancelled.
"Hopes" replaces "wishes," lightly cancelled.

Tucker's meaning is unclear because of the uncertain antecedent of "them." If he means it to refer to the women, he uses "compliment" in the sense of "idle flattery." If the reference is to men, he means "without compliment" as a slur.

Names like Mrs. Heartfree are fairly common in Restoration comedy, where they are frequently metaphoric.

Mrs. Bountiful's name appears to be metaphoric.

Mrs. Motherly's name appears to be metaphoric.

Mrs. Neighbourly's name seems to be metaphoric.

"In the longing way" probably means pregnant, as the context suggests. Periphrasis of this sort is common in Augustan literature, but usually is more elegant than this example.

Tucker had no identifiable Aunt Deborah. From her description, we may suppose that this one is a slave, and represents slave women.

"In the straw" probably means ill or incapacitated in bed.

"Known" replaces "seen," here lightly cancelled.

"Unworthy" replaces "inferior," here lightly cancelled.

All of the Old Bachelor essays were signed with pseudonyms. "Philogenes" is from the Greek, and means "a lover of mankind."
No explanation exists for these letters found at the end of each of Tucker's manuscripts "For the Old Batchellor." For a discussion of their possible meanings, see: Mary Beth Wentworth, "St. George Tucker's Essay 'For the Old Batchellor' on Avarice," M.A. Thesis, College of William and Mary, 1973, p. 29.
The above essay cannot be dated closely, for it is never mentioned in Tucker's correspondence. That correspondence indicates that Tucker wrote many essays for the *Old Bachelor* during August and September, 1811, and it is reasonable to suppose that this one was one of them. Essay number fourteen could not have been written much later than 1 June 1812, for war was declared against Britain on that date, and the essay refers to war as a possibility, not a reality.

Of course, essay number fourteen begins with a reference to the twenty-seventh number of the published *Old Bachelor*. Initially, this suggests composition after 17 December 1811, when the published essay appeared in the *Enquirer*, but such a suggestion must rest upon the assumption that published essay number twenty-seven was not written by Tucker. Such an assumption cannot be proven, nor can it be completely disproven. Indeed, evidence suggests that Tucker may have written *Old Bachelor* number twenty-seven, signing it "Diogenes" and "Susannah Thankful." He marked his personal copy of the collected *Old Bachelor* with "Diogenes, p. 72" in a pencilled end paper list identifying the authors of several essays. This notation, taken with two references in the Tucker-Wirt letters to "Diogenes" pieces, suggests that Tucker had written the published essay, and that it may have been written and received by Wirt prior to 7 August 1811, when he advised Tucker that the material on hand was all that publisher Thomas Ritchie would bind in a collection, and that further contributions would be published in a second series that never
materialized. If this be the case, and if the pencilled numbers on the essays in the Tucker notebook indicate the order in which they were composed, then essay number fourteen probably was composed in early August, 1811. Because this date corresponds with the discussions of the Old Bachelor in the Tucker-Wirt correspondence, it seems a reasonable guess based on fragmentary and ambiguous evidence.

Whatever the date of the essay, it appears at first glance an unusual and objective portrayal of women engaged in their daily work. Tucker's letters support such a view. His first wife managed her own extensive holdings during the Revolution, even serving as midwife to a cow on one occasion. After the war, Frances Tucker must have taken charge again during her husband's frequent absences. After her death, Tucker seems to have called upon women around Williamsburg to assist him in educating his daughters, and one of these women, Leila Carter became his second wife.

She seems to have joined him in his gardening. While travelling the court circuit, Tucker stopped at the homes of acquaintances. The women of the essay are teachers, hostesses, tailors, and nurses, and the men who appear with them teach them languages, travel, handle money, serve in the army, and sometimes lose their fortunes. In the context of the essay, Tucker may well say that he wishes that the men of Virginia were "worthy of their mothers," for he has shown women at work. His women are not the frail, fair, heroines of the women idealized in novels. The women of Virginia novels are conservative and thoroughly feminine, spending their days riding about in their carriages, gossiping, going to balls, fretting about suitors of uncertain virtue, and occasionally supervising the servants who really perform the work of the household. They may be virtuous, but they are passive. Tucker's women are more active than Susanna Rowson's
Charlotte Temple, but they have less responsibility than Charles Brockden Brown's Jane Talbot, who has control over her own money and can bring about a temporary reversal in her circumstances without any assistance from an "improvident Author." Similarly, they have no business enterprises of their own, although Samuel Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe, perhaps the most acclaimed woman in any novel with which Tucker might have been familiar, seems to have had unusual authority in the management of her family's dairy. (She gave the dairy profits to her father thereby remaining dependent upon him.) In a period when Clarissa could be treated as an ideal woman because of her beauty and moral character, the portrayal of women performing any sort of work is a departure from the literary norm.

If Tucker's portrayal of women is unusual, it is not entirely unique because its intent is the demonstration of feminine virtue. In his women virtue is not innate, but it is not simply the avoidance of wrongdoing, either. It is the performance of tasks necessary to the survival and improvement of American society. The women of Virginia novels are by nature moral beings who are never in real danger from immoral suitors. The men of their families recognize that women are virtuous, but defenseless. Plantation chivalry demands that men protect their women, and it may be this chivalry that precluded a plantation Clarissa or a Charlotte Temple set in Richmond. Indeed, in most novels set in the South, women play a passive role, and men, for all their shortcomings, never stoop to villany like that associated with Lovelace or Montraville. The society of Virginia novels is not realistic in its treatment of innate feminine morality. The fact was that women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries may have been virtuous simply because they
never had time for vice. Tucker's ladies are not ladies of leisure. They work hard. In this respect, the essay is probably accurate. Anne Firor Scott has summarized the life of a Southern lady thus:

The real life of a Southern lady was more varied and demanding than the Fantasies of Southern men would admit. She became . . . a wife and mother as soon as the opportunity offered. Thereafter, she was likely to work hard for the rest of her life, having a baby every year or so, developing in the process a steely self-control, and the knowledge that the work she did was essential gave meaning to her life. Few people ever asked her if she thought life was as it ought to be, and only in indirect and private ways did she raise the question.  

Tucker never raises the question of the rightness of the lives women lead in his essay, but he seems to believe that life's meaning and virtue arise from the cheerful performance of duty. The goodness he shows is Deistic goodness that arises from right action, and its rewards are happiness and prosperity. Consequently, questioning life's value would be entirely inappropriate, for God is present and visible in human charity and in the beauty and orderliness of nature. He rewards the virtuous with the admiration of their fellow beings, with long life, and with prosperity.

Tucker almost completely ignores women of the lower classes and slave women. Of course, in passing he refers to Aunt Deborah, a nurse/midwife and probably a slave. Mrs. Heartfree, Mrs. Motherly, Mrs. Neighbourly, and Mrs. Bountiful are not as clearly upper class as Eugenia, Eudocia, and Valeria, but they are not associated with the impoverished women who receive general treatment late in the essay. Only the wife of
Major Wall, Eugenia, Valeria and Eudocia receive detailed treatment. It is possible that the inclusion of women of the lower classes and serious (if limited) treatment of their virtues suggests Tucker's democratic beliefs. Unlike the stereotypical slave and lower class women of Virginia novels who appear only in comic roles or semi-comic romantic subplots, Tucker's neighbors and Aunt Deborah are treated seriously. Indeed, their goodness arises from acts of charity and kindness. Tucker may mean to suggest that "all service ranks the same with God," but he treats the service of his upper class ladies with great detail and thereby weakens the case for women of other classes.

Perhaps the depiction of the manual labor in which the majority of the women spent their days would have spoiled the dignity of the essay. To show women doing farm work, gardening, or tending animals would have required pastoral sentimentalization, and Tucker obviously wished to make a more rational case for the idealization of Virginian women. He may have realized that a farm woman or shepherdess would have recalled to many readers Ralegh's "Nymph's reply to [Marlowe's] shepherd." He also avoids stressing feminine beauty as a poet had done in a Port-Folio item of 1801:

\begin{quote}
Virtue is beauty. But when charms of mind
With elegance of outward form are join'd
When youth invokes such bright objects still more bright
And fortune sets them in the strongest light
'Tis all below of heav'n we may view
And all but adoration is your due.\footnote{5}
\end{quote}

In other words, beauty is the product of virtue, youth, intelligence, and good fortune. Tucker, like Swift, knew that beauty all too often came from cosmetic pots and perfume bottles. He had composed poems that
echoed Swift's disgust with artifice. Although these epigrams never approach the fierceness of "Oh, Celia, Celia, Celia shits," they do include young ladies who perspire heavily, and the "Monitory Tale" for "A Country Wedding" spoke of a lady plagued by terrible flatulence. Not only did Tucker realize that beauty was frequently artificial; he saw it as the cause of vanity and excessive pride. Consequently, it would have been difficult to praise women for beauty, and Tucker suppressed the subject of appearance in his essay, making only one passing reference to it as a secondary quality, inferior to "Innocence and purity."

The essay appears to be a fairly rational case for praising Virginian women, and it might serve as a prescription for feminine virtue. If men were not present in the piece, it might be much better than it is but Tucker introduces men and a strong didactic element and seriously mars his work. In many contemporaneous works, men are directly compared with women, but Tucker avoids such direct comparison. As observed above, the men who appear in the essay seem to have responsibility and authority which they delegate to women on occasion. When men educate women, the women seem to learn their lessons so well that they surpass their teachers. Men may be improvident and ruin their families.

Valeria's husband is the first man to make a significant appearance in the essay, and Tucker places him in a ludicrous pose, "with sword drawn to meet the Enemies of his Country, in one hand, and giving his purse to the poor, with the other." The image is too strongly visual, and it seems unfortunately humorous for a close associate of Washington. Even worse, such great charity seems likely to bring about the financial ruin that Tucker laments near the end of the essay. Finally, Valeria's husband may be Tucker's commending officer, Thomas Nelson. Any humor
arising from this part of the essay is far removed from Tucker's intention, for he had great respect for Nelson and shared the reverence of his times for Washington.

The sketch of Major Wall of Brunswick is better, but he does not receive the strong eulogy given Valeria's husband. He is a generous and pleasant host to all who pass his home. Of course, there is a suggestion that the hospitality of the house is the product of a woman's efforts, for it is Major Wall's "amiable wife" who spreads the table, apparently in passive acceptance of her husband's "noble, and liberal spirit." The sketch of Major Wall does not isolate its subject as does the sketch of Valeria's husband. On the contrary, it places him beside his wife, both of them surrounded by Revolutionary War soldiers and refugees. The soldiers are called "heroes," but Tucker pays more attention to them when they are "war-worne," and in need of charity that will provide them food and clothing. They are fortunate that there are women like the wife of Major Wall and the Penelopes who weave fabric for the "Band of Heroes." The Penelopes' daughters have their looms, and seem ready to weave cloth for new uniforms for another war, but nowhere can heroes like Thomas Nelson and Major Wall be found. In the paragraph honoring the Penelopes, Tucker's intention becomes clear: He means to urge the men of Virginia to press for war so that they may prove themselves worthy of their ancestry. He chides them because while women have seen their duty and prepared for war, they have not done so. The women are paragons, but their male counterparts cannot serve as models of masculine virtue because they are poorly and inadequately drawn. Should a young man strike a pose, sword in one hand, purse in the other, like Valeria's husband, or should he
stay at home like Major Wall to serve as hospitable host? The alternatives are no more attractive: One can become battered, perhaps even wounded, and grow desperately cold and hungry. Tucker's treatment of men's duties in wartime fails to arouse dreams of glory because it is too closely connected to women's duty of relieving the hardships wrought by war. If the essay was meant to be only a piece of jingoistic propaganda, it is a failure, but as we observed above, this intention was secondary to the portrayal of feminine virtue. Because the tone of Tucker's war propaganda is so strongly hortatory, it attracts too much attention to the weakest parts of the essay, and the whole work is marred.

The structure of the essay seems clearly thought out, for an introduction precedes several short sketches of individual women, which precede in turn the longer, more detailed sketch of Valeria. The comparatively long passage on Major Wall, his wife, and his home, and the Penelopes precede several other short sketches of individual women. The essay closes as it began with general observations about an entire class of women and a moral observation directed to Dr. Cecil. The three most significant passages at the heart of the essay demonstrate the relationship of domestic industry to more abstract virtues while they introduce the war theme. The short studies around the three central figures have little to do with war, and make the war theme seem to be an afterthought, or an unwelcome intrusion, but it was hortatory didacticism similar to this that justified Virginian essays to their readers. Wirt follows similar structures in Letters of the British Spy and The Old Bachelor, but he hints early at the lessons he wishes to teach, and he does not allow his didactic material to overpower his expository material. This skillful interweaving makes his sentimental outbursts easier to bear.
The point has been made above that "Valeria" may be Mrs. Thomas Nelson, and the essay provides indications that Major Wall and his wife were historic persons, too. The description of Valeria is not sufficiently detailed to allow positive identification, and available records do not allow identification of Major Wall or his wife. As well-known as these couples may have been in 1811, their identities are not really necessary to the essay. After all, the other women, Eugenia, Eudocia, Mrs. Heartfree, Mrs. Neighbourly, Mrs. Bountiful, Mrs. Motherly, the Penelopes, and the women reduced from wealth, are all types, each embodying one ability or virtue. They are much like characters in naive allegory or Restoration drama. The first women in the essay, with their Latin names which suggest secondary virtues never realized, are similar to Spenser's allegorical figures, although even in his best allegories, Tucker's characters are not as vivid as those of Spenser. The later characters, with names that describe their traits, are similar to characters in Restoration drama, and the names of two of them are from plays, although their characterizations in the essay and the plays differ. In view of the company in which they are set, Valeria and Mrs. Wall need not be historical figures at all, but the suggestion that they are historic lends an air of reality to Tucker's essay. With Aunt Deborah, the slave/nurse/midwife, they make the virtues displayed throughout the essay seem concrete and attainable.

The Latin names, including the pseudonymous signature, "Philogenes," also suggest neoclassicism in the essay, and Tucker's closing statement to Dr. Cecil strengthens this suggestion with its invocation of Greek and Roman splendor. Throughout the essay, virtue and classical antiquity are presented together. Penelope, of course, was the emblem of fidelity
in marriage. In the Odyssey, she waited patiently, thwarting suitors while Odysseus made his way home from Troy. Cornelia and her sons, the Gracchi, were figures from Roman history. The inclusion of Artemis, the chaste goddess of the hunt, may seem unusual and inappropriate in an essay concerning women who all seem to be married, but her presence does not detract as much from the essay as does Tucker's Latinate diction, another neoclassical element. Tucker chooses "perused" instead of "read," "gratification" for "pleasure," and many other Latinisms like these make his writings seem artificial and pretentious. On the other hand, Tucker uses shorter words of Anglo-Saxon derivation to emphasize key passages in the essay. Other important passages are set apart by the use of the archaic pronouns "thee" and "thou" and the "-eth" verb suffix. In some cases, Tucker uses repetition for emphasis. In combination, these devices create a rhythm that supports the structure of the essay, and they allow Tucker to create a tone of fervent excitement. Tucker lacks Wirt's control of such sentimental passages, and the diction of the essay sometimes goes out of control to produce a nearly comic effect.

St. George Tucker's essay "For the Old Batchelor" in praise of Virginian women avoids the sentimental idealization of women found in other contemporaneous works, but it stops short of questioning woman's role in society. For this flaw, Tucker may probably be forgiven, for his age was not one in which inquiry of this sort was common. Indeed, to answer a question concerning the structure of society would have defied the empirical bent of the times. While Tucker was conservative and Augustan in his descriptive approach, orderly development, and neoclassical tendencies, he was aware of Romanticism, especially in his treatment of the past as a superior age and his attempts to portray high sentiment.
He was unable to control the Romantic elements in his essay, and lapses mar the work. A more serious flaw was his heavy-handed didacticism in the introduction of a war theme in the essay. These are aesthetic flaws that do not diminish the documentary value of the piece. Perhaps the same flaws evident today were those that would have prevented its publication in 1811. As it stands, however, the essay in praise of Virginian women has only such value as it derives from its revelations of a period, a subject, and a man.
NOTES TO THE CRITIQUE

1 Wirt to Tucker, 7 August 1811, Coleman-Tucker Collection.

2 Hubbell, p. 49.


5 Port-Folio, 1 (1801) p. 255.


7 See the text, p. 30.

8 See the text, pp. 34, 35.

9 See the text, p. 32.

10 See the text, pp. 32 - 33.

11 See the text, pp. 32 - 33.

12 See the text, p. 33.
13 See the text, pp. 33 - 34, 35 - 36.
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