

ST. GEORGE TUCKER'S "OLD BACHELOR" LETTER
ON LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN AMERICA

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

Anne Elizabeth McCorkle

1971

APPROVAL SHEET

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

Master of Arts

Anne B. Cougle

Author

Approved, May 1971

Carl R. Dolmetsch

Carl R. Dolmetsch

Robert J. Scholnick

Robert Scholnick

Charles F. Cullen

Charles Cullen

11
504111

cop. 2
Ref

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iv
I. THE "OLD BACHELOR" SERIES.....	2
II. ST. GEORGE TUCKER'S LETTER NO. XVI.....	17
III. LETTER NO. XVI: CRITICAL COMMENTARY.....	30
APPENDIX.....	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	54

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to establish the relationship between a group of essays in manuscript and an essay series appearing in the Richmond Enquirer in 1811 and 1813. St. George Tucker, the author of the manuscripts, wrote papers addressed to the Enquirer "Old Bachelor;" however, the findings of this study indicate that none of Tucker's letters appeared in print.

The circumstances which prevented the publishing of Tucker's papers do not reflect upon the literary merit of the essays. In the hope that the entire group will eventually receive critical evaluation, a critical edition of Tucker's letter number sixteen is offered. Tucker's letter on language and literature in America condemns public apathy in Virginia while defending America against attacks by the Edinburgh Reviewers. The letter documents one stage in the development of American literary nationalism.

ST. GEORGE TUCKER'S "OLD BACHELOR" LETTER
ON LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN AMERICA

A Critical Edition

I

THE "OLD BACHELOR" SERIES

The study of early American literature is often like examining an iceberg--eight-ninths of it is submerged beneath the surface. Accordingly, each year brings to light literary efforts which have been buried in diaries, letters, newspapers, and manuscript collections, waiting to be unearthed for critical appraisal. The time has come for a group of unpublished manuscripts written Ca. 1811 by St. George Tucker to receive critical evaluation.

These holograph manuscripts are among the holdings of the Tucker-Coleman Collection in the Swem Library of the College of William and Mary. Inside what appears to be the original folder are two leaves and twenty folios, with writing on both recto and verso. The pages are not numbered, but sixteen of the twenty-two essays are numbered by essay from twelve to twenty-seven and are semi-bound with string. Of the remaining pieces, two are numbered five and nine, respectively; three have no indication of number or sequence, and one carries a deleted twenty-eight in the upper left-hand corner where

a number should appear. One of the unmarked essays appears to be a draft of the essay once numbered twenty-eight. The content of the essays varies a great deal, but a majority take the form of letters addressed "Dear Sir" and headed For the Old Batchellor. The seven remaining essays consist of four completed allegories and one draft, one essay on patriotism, and a letter addressed to Solomon Squaretoes, Esq. (See Appendix for a listing of the exact sequence and content of each manuscript.) This paper will concern itself with only one selection in depth.

The author of the essays, St. George Tucker, was born in Bermuda in 1752, traveled to Virginia in 1771 to study law under George Wythe at the College of William and Mary, and made the area his home for the remaining years of his life. In September, 1778, Tucker secured a position among the Virginia aristocracy by marrying Frances (Bland) Randolph, the young widow of John Randolph of Matoax. During the next three years, his life as a planter at Matoax was interrupted by military service: as a volunteer defending Hampton and Williamsburg in 1779, as a major in the militia under Robert Lawson, and in 1781, as a lieutenant-colonel in the Franco-American campaign at Yorktown. Following his wife's death in 1788, Tucker moved his family to Williamsburg where he built what is now known as the

Tucker-Coleman home. Tucker was professor of law at the College of William and Mary from 1790 to 1804, served as judge on the Virginia Court of Appeals from 1804 to 1811, and was Federal Judge of the Virginia District from his appointment in 1813 until two years before his death in 1827.

Tucker is best known for his annotated edition of Blackstone's Commentaries and for his earlier Dissertation on Slavery with a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of Virginia (Philadelphia, 1796). In addition he published several individual poems, such as Liberty, a Poem: On the Independence of America (Richmond, 1788) and the three-part satiric Probationary Odes of Jonathan Pindar, Esq., A Cousin of Peter's, and a Candidate for the Poet Laureat to the C.U.S. (Philadelphia, 1796). For the most part, Tucker's other works, including three plays, miscellaneous poems, and the essays under examination here, remain unpublished.¹

As a lawyer-writer, Tucker was not an unusual phenomenon in his day, but one of a group which included such men as Richard Henry Wilde, William Wirt, William Crafts, Hugh Swinton Legaré, and Tucker's cousin, George Tucker. Each of these men combined writing with a legal career. Each faced the problem of living in a society antipathetic to professional writers.² Writing was a popular avocation; however, publication, especially for monetary reward, did not greatly enhance the position of

the gentleman lawyer or planter.³ Society's refusal to grant literary hopefuls their proper regard was united with the writers' own hesitancy to openly take credit for possible failures. These circumstances produced a market for anonymous light verse and occasional essays, reinforced by the English literary tradition of the Addisonian essay.

The first in a series of such anonymous essays appeared in November 1810 when Thomas Ritchie, owner and publisher of the Richmond Enquirer, introduced his readers to one Dr. Robert Cecil, the pen name of William Wirt (1772-1834), also called in the title of the column, "The Old Bachelor."⁴ From December 1810 to December 1811 twenty-eight "Old Bachelor" essays appeared in the newspaper; and after a hiatus of eighteen months, another five ran in 1813. Some took the form of letters supposedly addressed to Dr. Cecil. The thirty-three essays were reprinted in book form by the Enquirer Press in 1814 and again in Baltimore in 1818. Although not all the essays were attributed to Wirt, he was recognized as the primary author of the series. Before he assumed the character of the Old Bachelor, Wirt had gained recognition as an essayist of some import for his contribution to the Enquirer Rainbow series appearing in 1804 and 1805, and for the earlier and more popular group of ten essays he had written for the Richmond Virginia Argus in 1803. The

latter were republished in book form as The Letters of a British Spy. Wirt developed the Old Bachelor series to replace a newly begun project, the Sylph papers.⁵

The introductory number in the Richmond series is an account of the Old Bachelor's life, from his birth in Virginia through his several attempts at careers in law, medicine, and the ministry. "Enthusiasm is the prominent feature of my character," says Dr. Cecil.⁶ And in essay number eleven, the Old Bachelor specifies his purpose-- that "nothing will find its way to the public under the sanction of the Old Bachelor, but what is calculated, according to his opinion, to promote the course in which he has embarked: virtuously to instruct or innocently to amuse."⁷ The essays are closely modeled on The Spectator, and in an Addisonian manner treat subjects ranging from patriotism to gambling.

Among the contributors assisting Wirt with the series were his close friends Dabney Carr, Richard E. Parker, Dr. Frank Carr, Louis Hue Girardin, Senator R. B. Taylor, David Watson, Frances Gilmer and George Tucker.⁸ Several of these men were asked to adopt specific roles in the Old Bachelor household and to submit letters appropriate to their assigned characters. For example, Richard E. Parker and Dr. Frank Carr assumed the pen names of Alfred and Galen, the adopted children of the Old Bachelor.⁹ To supplement these contributions, Wirt encouraged responses

from his readers.¹⁰ The success of these invitations is measured by Dr. Cecil's lament on several occasions that he has been flooded with communications he is unable to use.¹¹

Writers seeking to identify the pseudonymous contributors to the Enquirer series have listed St. George Tucker as a likely member of the group. In 1849 John P. Kennedy, Wirt's biographer, credited Tucker with a part in the series. Succeeding scholars have accepted Kennedy's statements.¹² The assumption that Tucker was responsible for at least a portion of the essays was a reasonable one, but had not been thoroughly investigated until this attempt to establish the relationship between the twenty-two Tucker essays in manuscript and the Richmond Enquirer Old Bachelor series. Although no one has suggested that all twenty-two essays appeared in print, at least sections of Tucker's papers were expected to have been incorporated into the newspaper series. The first stage of the research was to compare the 1814 edition of The Old Bachelor with the newspaper essays. The 1814 edition proved to be an exact reprint of the Enquirer essays, in sequence and content. The essays in book form were then read for evidence of St. George Tucker's hand. The search yielded nothing to indicate that the Tucker manuscripts appeared in print. Further inquiries into correspondence between Wirt and Tucker during this period

and piecing together the necessary information revealed the reasons why there is no correlation between the two groups of essays. These findings allow us to reconstruct a reasonable picture of the events as we can now presume them to have occurred.

In March 1811 St. George Tucker resigned from his position as judge on the Virginia Court of Appeals and entered private life. Two years of relative inactivity were to follow.¹³ His biographer reports that "for some reason he had not been happy in his position nor in accord with some of his fellow judges, and he declared himself determined 'never again to engage in any Business or Office.'"¹⁴ Tucker took advantage of his new freedom by traveling to Elmwood for long visits with his daughter and by exploring the areas around Staunton and Lexington. He filled notebooks with descriptions of the countryside.¹⁵ He also wrote his friend Wirt concerning the Enquirer series, a project Wirt had commenced four months earlier. Wirt comments in a letter to Dabney Carr, February 27, 1811: "Tucker writes that it (the Old Bachelor) is doing good to the country, and honor to its author."¹⁶

The first evidence that Tucker planned to contribute to the series appears in August, 1811, five months after he resigned from the Court of Appeals. Then, in a letter to Tucker dated August 7, Wirt speaks of having received Tucker's "elegant communications for the Old Bachelor."¹⁷

Wirt assures Tucker that the essays on memory and artificial aid to hearing will be used, but not the letter from "Mitis the federalist (sic)." He also refers to a "first communication" in which Tucker addressed Dr. Cecil as "Old Squaretoes." Unfortunately, Wirt comments, another correspondent has already taken this name for his own. Tucker is asked not to use it again. A letter dated August 18, 1811, again comments on an essay Tucker has sent Wirt, a selection on party spirit.¹⁸ Another letter written the following day, August 19, states that Wirt has received Tucker's allegory on contentment;¹⁹ and finally, on August 25, Wirt writes congratulating Tucker on an allegory on ambition and patriotism and on the "other writings" he has received.²⁰

None of the seven specific essays Wirt mentions is found among the extant Tucker manuscripts. The essay designated by Tucker as number five, however, is an allegory on contentment. Tucker has noted on it, "written over again and altered August 9." Similarly, essay number nine is a letter dealing with ambition and patriotism. It too includes a comment in Tucker's hand, "thrown into a somewhat different form." These are the only two pieces bearing any editorial remarks of this kind. It seems reasonable to view them as drafts of two of the essays Wirt acknowledges. An unnumbered letter in the group is addressed to Solomon Squaretoes, Esq. It

is most likely a copy or draft of the first essay Wirt mentions. The findings indicate that Wirt received essays one through four by August 7, 1811 (copy of one extant; two, three, and four not extant), five and six by August 19 (first draft of five extant, six not extant), and essays seven through eleven by August 25 (seven and eight not extant; first draft of nine extant, "other writings": ten and eleven not extant though ten is referred to in Tucker's essay number twelve). Essays twelve through twenty-seven are in the Tucker manuscript collection, bound together in their proper sequence. As mentioned earlier, number twenty-eight is accompanied by what appears to be a draft. One additional unnumbered essay also lies unbound in the folder.

From the preceding evidence, we can surmise that Wirt had received eleven of Tucker's essays by August 25, 1811, with the first contribution arriving shortly before August 7. On August 6, 1811, the Richmond Enquirer printed "The Old Bachelor, No. XXIII." On the next day Wirt writes Tucker that twenty-five essays are already with Ritchie, and another "two or three" have been prepared to send him.²¹ This means that by August 7, 1811, the following had occurred: a) "The Old Bachelor" numbers one through twenty-three had appeared in the Enquirer; b) numbers twenty-four and twenty-five had been sent to Ritchie; and c) numbers twenty-six, twenty-seven, and possibly twenty-eight were ready to be sent

to Ritchie. Even if we assume that Wirt had written only an additional two numbers (twenty-six and twenty-seven), we must logically conclude that Tucker's essays would have had to appear in the Enquirer numbers twenty-eight to thirty-three. Neither the extant manuscripts nor the seven essays Wirt specifically mentions appear in print in these numbers. Moreover, the identities of the authors of numbers twenty-eight to thirty-three have been satisfactorily established.²²

This study acknowledges the possibility that Tucker sent Wirt letters which have not been accounted for here. Only an analysis of style, syntax, and vocabulary would prove beyond any doubt that Tucker wrote none of the Old Bachelor essays. On the basis of this investigation, however, we may conclude that Tucker's Old Bachelor papers never appeared in the Richmond Enquirer series. This should not be taken as a negative comment on the intrinsic merit of the essays. When Wirt enthusiastically received them in August 1811, he did not know that increased involvement in other activities would prevent him from continuing the series on a regular basis. He did not know that the book edition would be delayed three years. On August 7, 1811, Wirt writes Tucker:

Ritchie says that he will not bind up more than thirty numbers in the first volume which is to come out by winter. He has already five and twenty in hand, and I have two or three others prepared for him: so that you see I am bespeaking material for

the second volume, as it becomes a good provider to do. I shall be not a little proud to be bound up with you in the same volume and I cannot help flattering myself that we may be of some service in the country.²⁴

These comments indicate that Wirt was thinking about Tucker in terms of a project beyond the present series. Wirt sees the first segment of the Old Bachelor papers nearing an end, culminating in a book edition. He has already begun to plan for the second volume. His encouragement to Tucker in the following letter, written on August 25, 1811, indicates that Tucker would have felt warranted to continue writing letters to the Old Bachelor.

Bye the bye, since you seem resolved on private life how can you be more patriotically employed than in fashioning the morals and directing the spirits of your countrymen? Merely to read would be selfish, and life itself would almost stagnate on your hands. These efforts for the O.B. will act like tides upon your ocean and purify both the water and the air of your intellectual hemisphere. I hope you will continue them both for your own sake and that of your countrymen.²⁵

Determining why only segments of Tucker's essays are extant is difficult. Apparently Tucker wrote Wirt asking that his manuscripts be returned, for Wirt replies on August 22, 1812 that he cannot comply with the request since the essays are in Richmond and he in Warm Springs.²⁶ Wirt assures Tucker that he intends to renew publication of the series, with "interspersions of the essays which you were so obliging to furnish." Rather emphatically

Wirt states that he would hesitate to part with the essays even if he had no plans to proceed with the project. The tone suggests that by emphasizing the value of the papers, Wirt may be indirectly apologizing for not having used them. Certainly there is nothing to indicate that he did fulfill his original promise to his friend by incorporating Tucker's letters into the series.

Tucker made a copy of his reply to Wirt's August 22 letter.²⁷ In it he briefly comments on the long time which has elapsed since Wirt last wrote an Old Bachelor paper. Tucker goes on to explain his assumption that Wirt has completed the project. He notes that he has no copy of the essays he sent Wirt, and gently but firmly insists that Wirt return them when the series has been discontinued. It is possible that Wirt returned all or part of the papers, and that only the essays under discussion have survived the intervening years. It is also conceivable that Tucker began making copies of his essays after the initial numbers had been sent to Wirt. This would explain why the extant manuscripts include only the final essays. A third alternative is that Tucker was dissuaded from mailing any further essays after his first efforts were not printed. The evidence points to one or both of the latter suggestions since only letter number thirteen has been folded for mailing and addressed "For Doctor Robert Cecil."

Despite the fact that the essays were not published and that we cannot resolve the exact sequence of events, a majority of the letters Tucker intended for the Old Bachelor have survived and are now available for critical examination. It is to be hoped that in due time each will be edited with appropriate comments. The purpose of this paper is to construct a model for such editing, with a critical edition of letter number sixteen and a critical appraisal to follow.

Notes for I

¹Mary Haldane Coleman's sentimentalized account of Tucker's life is the only complete biography available: St. George Tucker: Citizen of No Mean City (Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, 1938). Other summaries of his life and works are found in the DAB and Jay B. Hubbell's The South in American Literature, 1607-1900 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1954), pp. 150-151. Tucker's poetic works have been examined by William S. Prince in an unpublished dissertation, "St. George Tucker as a Poet of the Early Republic," Diss. Yale University 1954.

²Hubbell, p. 215.

³Hubbell, pp. 212-3. A complete discussion of the problems of writing and publishing is found in his section on "Authorship in the Old South."

⁴Since the Richmond Enquirer has not been micro-filmed, it is necessary to read The Old Bachelor in the original papers. The Virginia State Library has the most complete collection of newspapers, from May 9, 1804 to December 30, 1820.

⁵Hubbell, p. 238.

⁶The Old Bachelor (Richmond, Virginia: Enquirer Press, 1814), p. 5. Tucker's personal copy of the 1814 edition is available in William and Mary's Special Collections.

⁷The Old Bachelor, 1814, p. 63.

⁸Identified by Hubbell, p. 238; John P. Kennedy, Memoirs of the Life of William Wirt (Baltimore: Lea and Blanchard, 1849), p. 266; and Richard B. Davis, Intellectual Life in Jefferson's Virginia, 1790-1830 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 283.

⁹Stated by Wirt in a letter to Dabney Carr, December 24, 1810, quoted by Kennedy, p. 275.

- ¹⁰The Old Bachelor, 1814, pp. 32-33.
- ¹¹See The Old Bachelor, 1814, "Advertisement," p. 102, and p. 165 for references to correspondence received by Wirt.
- ¹²Kennedy, p. 266.
- ¹³Kennedy, p. 275.
- ¹⁴Coleman, p. 147.
- ¹⁵Coleman, p. 148.
- ¹⁶Quoted by Kennedy, p. 275.
- ¹⁷Wirt to Tucker, August 7, 1811, Tucker MSS, William and Mary.
- ¹⁸Wirt to Tucker, August 18, 1811, Tucker MSS, William and Mary.
- ¹⁹Wirt to Tucker, August 19, 1811, Tucker MSS, William and Mary.
- ²⁰Wirt to Tucker, August 25, 1811, Tucker MSS, William and Mary.
- ²¹Wirt to Tucker, August 7, 1811, Tucker MSS, William and Mary.
- ²²Davis, p. 283.
Kennedy, p. 265.
- ²³The Old Bachelor, 1814, p. 173.
- ²⁴Wirt to Tucker, August 7, 1811, Tucker MSS, William and Mary.
- ²⁵Wirt to Tucker, August 25, 1811, Tucker MSS, William and Mary.
- ²⁶Wirt to Tucker, August 22, 1812, Tucker MSS, William and Mary.
- ²⁷Tucker to Wirt, September 11, 1812, Tucker MSS, William and Mary.

II

16For the old Batchellor.

Sir,

In one of your former numbers, which, unluckily I lent to one of my neighbours, who forgot to return it to me, I recollect you appear to have been not a little offended, with some sarcastic remarks of the Edinburgh Reviewers, on Mr. Barlow's Columbiad, and, on American literature, in general.¹ Having no pretensions to the character of a Critic, it is by no means my intention to take up the Gauntlet in their favor: permit me, however to say, that I think there is great force, in their observations respecting the multitude of words which are radically, and² entirely new; such as which are radically, and² al⁴ - and, coloniarch;⁵ neither multifluvian³ - cosmogyrallund their way into any dictionary that I am acquainted with, and might possibly, (the second especially,) provoke any but a classical reader.⁶ To vagrate,⁷ to bestorm,⁸ and to transboard,⁹ not only stand in the same predicament, but have not any thing to recommend them to my Ear, or to my understanding; still less have the new coin'd verbs to rainbow,¹⁰ to road,¹¹

to reroad,¹² and to forester,¹³ to invite attention, or to furnish pleasure. In making these remarks I would not be supposed to deny to an American Epic poet, the privilege of introducing new words into our language; but, that language is already so copious, that no new words, or expressions, ought to be introduced into it, which have not, evidently, a tendency to enrich it.

The privilege of Coinage, as it relates to our Language, may be aptly enough compared to that which is exercised, in respect to the circulating Medium of Commerce; there ought to be none below a certain standard of purity: and of this standard the classical Scholar is probably the most correct judge, in respect to language, as the essayist is, in respect to the precious metals. I am not disposed to deny to Mr. Barlow every qualification that may entitle him to the privilege of Coining, but I am inclin'd to think, that in some of the instances quoted by the Reviewers, he has exercised his privilege something in the same manner that crown'd heads have exercised their prerogative in regard to the current coin; by debasing it, in some Respects. Let it be remembered that we live in a Republic, where every Man lays claim to equal privileges and prerogatives, with his neighbour; if then, the example of Mr. Barlow should happen to fire the Imagination, and rouse the Ambition of our Orators, and Poets, consider what a Coinage we should have in a few years. --I am inclined to believe that the specimen of

Oratory which you have given us in your XXV number, would not be confined to your friend Mr. D_____ 's Colleague.¹⁴ In my Attendance on the debates, both in Richmond, and in Washington, I have frequent occasion to wish for a greater scope of comprehension than I possess, as I very frequently hear Expressions, the meaning of which I cannot understand. Our political Controvertists (I had like to have called them controversialists.)¹⁵ both in their speeches, and their writings, seem to aim at this prerogative of coining; and I am very much inclined to apprehend that if the public taste, or sentiment, do not put some check to their Ambition, very few of us will, in time, be capable of understanding each other; and, like Rabelais' Englishman, we shall be reduced to the necessity of conversing by signs.¹⁶

Another fault which the Reviewers find with Mr. Barlow, is, his Innovations in prosody, as an Instance of which, they condemn the following Line, because the middle syllable in Galaxies, is long

"New Constellations, new Galaxies rise."¹⁷

Had I not the Authority of that Colossus of Litterature, as he is frequently stiled, Doctor Johnson, I should hardly venture to say, that in this instance Messieurs the Reviewers have been very unlucky. But having him on my side, as his Dictionary proves, I will venture to express an opinion that neither Pope nor

Dryden would have changed the Line.¹⁸ I am inclined to apprehend, however, that many of our orators would take sides with the Reviewers, as I think I have observed it to have become a rule with them, to throw the Accent always as far back as the first syllable, even in such words as indignant, magazine, symptomatic, and systematically, which until within a few years, have always had the accent upon the second, or third. This very frequently produces a kind of guttural, indistinct, articulation, as if the speaker had taken his mouth half full of water, as an Auxiliary to his pronunciation. I have been told that the Dictionaries of Sheridan and Walker, are vouch'd as authorities for this barbarous suffocation of certain words, which formerly never stuck in the speakers throat, nor were drown'd in a torrent issuing from the salival Glands.¹⁹ But I am inclin'd to believe that neither of these Lexicographers carry their prosodial reformatations quite as far as certain Orators in this Country. The best guides to pronunciation are certainly those poets, who have distinguish'd themselves by the Harmony, or as the modern critics call it, the Rhythm, of their versification, and²⁰ numbers. Of these Pope I think is the most copious, the most uniform, and the most correct, except Goldsmith, whose numbers are sometimes even more musical to my Ear, than Pope's. If our Orators and Politician were to peruse the Illiad, and the

Odyssey, with the double view of enriching their Minds, and instructing themselves in the true pronunciation of their native language, I think their Hearers might sometimes be not only more edified, but more agreeably entertain'd than frequently happens. A vicious pronunciation is calculated to destroy the effect of even a good Composition. The Hearer's attention is diverted, or rather distracted, as it would be by a Child's rattling with a Stick, against the back of his pew, whilst he is trying to listen to a Sermon. For these Reasons I have often wish'd that our young Orators, especially, would pay more attention than is usual to a just, and harmonious pronunciation. But, there is another Rock, on which modern Oratory seems in great danger of splitting. I mean the prevailing dislike to words of one, or two syllables: the consequence of which is, that it takes three times as long to ask a Question, or to give an Answer, as it used to do; and very often the introduction of a word of five or six syllables, to express what is commonly express'd in one, provokes me in such a Manner, that I am obliged to ask the speaker to repeat what he has said, or decline making any answer to what I do not well understand. One of my Nephews, who has not long since returned from a certain Northern College, knowing that I was invited to dine with a neighbour on the other side of a Mill-pond, which divides our

plantations, ask'd me the other day "if I contemplated
 perambulating the Mound of the Reservoir of the
 comminuting grain-engine, or traversing it on Horseback"?²¹

I was so much puzzled that I requested him to write it
 down first, and then explain it to me, which with
 the assistance of his pronouncing dictionary he did in
 three or four minutes; "Lord! Papa!" said my little
 Betsy, when he had done, "he only means to ask you
 whether you will walk, or ride over the Mill-dam." --I
 was much obliged to the Child for her assistance, for I
 doubt very much whether I should ever have understood
 my Nephew, without it.

That America has not yet attained a very exalted
 character in the walks of literature may be accounted
 for from several causes, without adopting the opinion
 of Mons.^r Buffon,²² or the English Reviewers, as to any
 natural inferiority of Genius in this Climate, or
 superiority, in that of Europe. The study of Belles-lettres,
 has not yet become a profession in America; or if it has,
 it is only to a very few, not more distinguish'd in
 respect to Genius, than the great Majority of those who
 for Centuries have filled the Fellowships at Oxford,
 and²³ Cambridge, without producing one Specimen of
 Genius, or Learning. Authorship is a trade in England,
 in France, in Germany, and more, or less, in every part
 of Europe. Their works are daily brought into the

Market, and serve for the Entertainment of the day; the next day, there is a fresh supply, and what is left of the day before, is wheeled off to the Trunkmaker. One in an hundred is read, and talk'd of, for a year or two, and one in a thousand may survive the Author. These last are all that are remembered by the Critic, when he means to compare the state of Literature in his own Country, with what it is in any other. Considering how very few literary productions in this Country have appear'd in print, I think it no vain boast to say that Britain has no right to reproach us with degeneracy, in respect to Literature. Whatever faults a factidious, or even a candid, Critic may find in Mr. Barlow's poem, in D. Dwight's Conquest of Canaan, or in Trumbul's McFingal, they must all be considered, and especially the last, as affording grounds for a happy presage of what future times may produce in America, when Genius shall have more opportunities for Exertion, and Taste, to improve itself.²⁴

The Reviewers are pleased to observe, that the American People, is in all respects as old as the people of England; and therefore that our want of Literature is to be ascribed not to our immaturity, but to our Occupations, in which they condescend to compare us with the modern traders of Manchester, Liverpool, or Glasgow. Without disavowing the Justice of the Comparison, let me ask, if either of those Cities, or even their Metropolis

London, has produced among that class of persons, such men as, within the last thirty years, have appear'd as authors in America? But without pressing this Question further, were not the Egyptians as a People in all respects as old two Centuries after the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, as their fathers when it was destroy'd?²⁵ Were not the Athenians, after their City had been sack'd by Sylla and ²⁶ brought under Subjection not only to the Romans but their successors in Empire, the Turks, as a People in all respects as old as in the Days of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and ²⁷ Demosthenes?²⁸ Was not the Roman people as old, after their City had been destroyed by Alaric, and all their Libraries consigned to Destruction, as it was before these Events?²⁹ Why were they not afterwards as celebrated for their Learning? Because they had no longer before them those Models, and those Teachers, which had in better days furnish'd them with the Means of Instruction. Such was the Situation of our Forefathers migrating to this Country. They left their Books, and their Teachers, behind them. They had not the shelves of the Oxonian Library to resort to for Improvement, nor even such a Collection of Books as any ordinary Bookseller in London, who keeps what is called a circulating Library, could furnish. --At this day, I speak it with shame, there is not even the Skeleton of a Library form'd at the public

Expense in Virginia. A few well disposed clergymen, as I have heard, presented the College of William and Mary with their respective Collections, consisting chiefly of some of the Ancient Fathers, and other works on the subject of Divinity. The funds of that seminary have never been sufficient to enable them to purchase books, and never, that I have heard, has there been any donation from the Legislature. Under such circumstances, is it at all surprising that literary Talents should seldom emerge from the darkness, with which, as far as depends upon the public, they are surrounded in this Country? I speak not of the other States, of whose progress in patronising Literature I am not inform'd: But, in this State, public parsimony appears more anxious to exclude, than to impart light; and should the same narrow policy continue to influence our Legislators, it will not be surprising if Virginia should be regarded as the Boeotia of the American States.³⁰ --This apology for the state of Literature in Virginia will be acknowledged by all, who know how necessary Books are to Learning, and how unequal the resources of those who would wish to pursue a studious, and scientific Course of Life, generally are, especially in this Country, to the Attainment of so great an Object.

I am Sir, yours *dc*

Candidus³¹
~~H~~

Notes for II

¹ Joel Barlow's 1807 poem, The Columbiad, was reviewed by Francis Jeffrey in The Edinburgh Review, October 1809, article II. Volumes I-VII and IX-XLV of the 1810 reprints of The Edinburgh Review (for Ezra Sargeant by D.&G. Bruce, New York) are among the holdings of the Tucker-Coleman Library, William and Mary. Although a positive identification is impossible, it is likely that the reprints belonged to St. George Tucker.

² and] designated by the symbol "4"

³ multifluvian is listed by neither the OED nor the DAE. It is obviously Barlow's personal variation of the frequently used "fluvial."

⁴ cosmogyr The first and only use of the word was by Barlow, 1807, Columbiad, IX, 58, "She...whirls forth her globe in cosmogyr course." OED definition: whirling round the universe.

⁵ coloniarch The first and only use of the word was by Barlow, 1807, Columbiad, IV, 517, "That great coloniarch (Kaleigh)/Must yield the palm." OED definition: a ruler or founder of a colony. Same information available in the DAE.

⁶ In 1568 William Fulwood made the same point in The Enemie of Idlenesse. With reference to neologisms, he said, "most part of our English termes, are very farre different from our vulgare and maternall speach, in such sort, that who so fully vnderstand not the Latin tongue, yea and also the Greek, can scarce vnderstand them." A complete discussion of neology in the English language is available in Richard Foster Jones's The Triumph of the English Language (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953). Jones quotes Fulwood on page 94.

⁷ vagrate The first and only use of the word was by Barlow, 1807, Columbiad, IX, 314, "In this unbounded range, Where error vagrates and illusions change." OED definition: to range or wander.

⁸bestorm The word was not unique in Barlow since it appears as early as 1651 in Davenant's Gondibert, III, vi. OED definition: to storm on all sides, to assail with storms or storming.

⁹transboard The OED designates this word "rare", the DAE "obselete." Both agree it originated in America, though the DAE cites its first use in Scribner's Magazine, July 1899. In Barlow it appears in the Columbiad, VI, 38, "Barks after barks the captured seamen bear, Transboard and lodge thy silent victims there." OED definition: to transfer from one ship or vessel to another; to tranship.

¹⁰to rainbow The first use of the word as a verb was in Barlow, 1807, Columbiad, IV, 264, "His sword, high waving...rainbow'd for the spray."

¹¹to road Both the OED and the DAE agree that this form originated in America, but each quotes its first use in March 1884 by the Boston Herald: "The horse...can trot better than three minutes and can road easy 40 miles per hour."

¹²to reroad Repetitive form of intransitive verb "to road." See note 11.

¹³to forester As a transitive verb meaning "to place in a forest" this form first appears in Keats, Endymion, II, 305, 1818. Barlow's earlier use of the word is not listed by the OED or the DAE.

¹⁴Tucker refers to The Old Bachelor, No. 25, pp. 160-1 in the 1814 edition. The piece is a letter to Dr. Cecil from John Truename, who tells the story of Mr. D____. Mr. D____ was "distressed at hearing a member from his Country make a speech in the Assembly when it used to sit at Williamsburg" because the member's uneducated remarks demonstrated "the great want of learning among our people generally, and the necessity of something being done by the Assembly to encourage it."

¹⁵Tucker wrote "controversialist," deleted the last two syllables, and added "tist." The OED gives the two words as synonyms. Samuel Johnson's dictionary and the DAE have no listings for the words at all. However, "controversialist" comes from the verb root verso,are, which is the frequentative form of verto,ere, the verb root of "controvertist." Hence, "controversialist" connotes a person who habitually engages in disputes and would, therefore, convey a derogative meaning to one acquainted with Latin.

¹⁶ Francois Rabelais (1494?-1553?) French satirist and humorist, author of Gargantua and Pantagruel.

¹⁷ See the 1810 New York reprint of The Edinburgh Review, XV, p. 27, for a discussion of the line in the context of the review.

¹⁸ Tucker owned a copy of Samuel Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language, 4th edition, 1773, which is now in the Special Collections of Swem Library, William and Mary. In the 1773 edition, "galaxy" is listed as follows: Gala'xy

¹⁹ Thomas Sheridan, A General Dictionary of the English Language (1780). John Walker, Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language (1791). These dictionaries will be discussed at length in the critical comments.

²⁰ and] designated by the symbol "ϕ"

²¹ comminute Samuel Johnson's definition: to grind; to pulverise, to break into small parts.

²² George Louise Lecker de Buffon (1707-1788) French naturalist, author of Histoire Naturelle, 36 vols. (1749-1788).

²³ and] designated by the symbol "ϕ"

²⁴ Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), The Conquest of Canaan: A Poem in Eleven Books (Hartford, 1785).
John Trumbull (1750-1831), M'Fingal: A Modern Epic Poem in Four Cantos (Hartford, 1782).

²⁵ The Alexandrian Library Forty thousand of the library's four hundred thousand volumes were accidentally burned during Julius Caesar's occupation in 47 B.C.. The story that the library was finally burned in A.D. 642 by Amrou, general of the Caliph Omar, is now discredited.

²⁶ and] designated by the symbol "ϕ"

²⁷ and] designated by the symbol "ϕ"

²⁸ Lucius Cornelius Sulla (138-78 B.C.) sacked Athens and destroyed part of the city during the Mithridatic War (88-86 B.C.).

²⁹The Goth Alaric sacked Rome in 410 B.C.

³⁰Boeotia A country adjoining Attica on the northwest, proverbial for the stupidity of its inhabitants and for being artistically backward.

³¹Each of Tucker's letters to the Old Bachelor are signed with Latinized names such as "Candidus", or with more common pen names such as "Moses Dolittle." Their origins are obvious. The initials appearing in the bottom left-hand corner of each letter are less easy to explain. Further investigations may show them to be related to similar initials used by contributors to the Monitor Essays appearing in the Virginia Gazette, Williamsburg, in 1736 and 1737. These essays were anonymous pieces probably written by students and faculty at the College of William and Mary.

III

LETTER NO. XVI: CRITICAL COMMENTARY

St. George Tucker's sixteenth letter to the Old Bachelor recommends itself primarily to the literary historian interested in documenting the growth of American literary nationalism. It is the most topical of Tucker's essays, presenting as it does, answers to priority questions asked by Americans following the creation of the United States. Tucker's concept of American language and literature requires explication so that his position can be assessed and his essay properly evaluated.

In Tucker's opening paragraph, he sides with the Edinburgh Reviewers against Joel Barlow's linguistic extravagances in his 1807 poem. The Columbiad emerged from extensive revisions of Barlow's earlier work, The Vision of Columbus: A Poem in Nine Books, first published in 1787. A new and corrected edition followed in 1795. Two years later Barlow attempted to update The Vision once more, making it reflect his mature opinions. Now christened The Columbiad, the poem had undergone hundreds of changes in vocabulary; new

material had been added, and several sections rewritten. The logic behind these alterations stemmed from Barlow's absorption with Darwin's distinction between the language of poetry and that of prose: "the Poet writes principally to the eye. The Prose-writer uses more abstract terms."¹

Keeping this commandment in mind, Barlow turned to his earlier work determined to emphasize the visual quality. Deliberately coining words such as "coloniarch" and "cosmogyrals," he sought to reduce the abstract ideas by utilizing what he considered a modern conception of poetry. At the same time, Barlow wanted his work to be "American." Noah Webster was one of the few who supported Barlow's attempt to make the language of the Columbiad concrete and nationalistic. Webster wrote on April 9, 1808: "I like most of your neology--your new epithets and terms are mostly well formed--expressive--and valuable additions to our language."²

Others, however, accused Barlow of "petty offenses against the purity of the English language."³ In London reviewers objected to the "disposition in American writers for innovating so fast in our common national language."⁴ Barlow's attempt to introduce new words failed for the most part, as a glance at the OED shows. He was, however, a more cautious reformer than might be indicated by Tucker's selections. In sections of the Columbiad he employed already characteristically American usages which

soon became standard diction. And despite the almost singularly unfavorable reviews it received, the poem was fairly popular in America, "especially in those parts of the country where republicanism remained an active virtue and literary taste remained independent of criticism and instruction."⁵

Tucker's objections to Barlow's linguistic innovations have been corroborated by every critic of the poem since 1809. His tempered praise of Barlow later in the essay places him among Americans who looked to the Connecticut Wits for evidence that the country was or would be soon capable of producing an American epic poet distinguished enough to join the ranks of the English masters. The "Americanism" of the Connecticut Wits, however, was not an Americanism of style, for each chose his models from the best the traditions of English literature afforded. Dwight's Conquest of Canaan took for its literary models Pope's Homer and Milton's Paradise Lost. Barlow's Columbiad was heavily indebted to Pope, Milton, Virgil, and Homer. And Trumbull's M'Fingal was imitative of Butler's Hudibras.⁶ Like Tucker's own writing, the works of his contemporaries were uniquely American in thought, scene and action only. National themes dressed in the best English style satisfied the claims of Americanization.

Tucker's fear that coining words will become an

American fetish is a reaction to the young country's demand for originality. According to Baugh:

At the time of the American Revolution and especially in the years immediately following it there is evidence that Americans were beginning to be conscious of their language and to believe that it might be destined to have a future as glorious as that which they confidently expected for the country itself.⁷

In 1784 "Americanism" was introduced into the vocabulary by the Rev. John Witherspoon, president of what is now Princeton University. Acknowledging that he was indeed coining the word, Witherspoon utilized "Americanism" to designate the discussion of "an use of phrases or terms, or a construction of sentences, even among persons of rank and education, different from the use of the same terms or phrases, or the construction of similar sentences, in Great Britain."⁸ Witherspoon was not entirely against the creation of so-called "Americanisms;" but others objected strenuously. Timothy Dwight, for example, was unwilling to "see the language of this country vary from that of Great Britain."⁹ And this American literary conservative was joined by hostile critics in England, contemptuous of American English.

The more liberally minded Americans approved of the innovations in vocabulary. Thomas Jefferson joined Webster in welcoming the search for a new and American idiom.

Here (in America) where all is new, no

innovation is feared which offers good...
 And should the language of England continue stationary, we shall probably enlarge our employment of it, until its new character may separate it in name, as well as in power, from the mother tongue.¹⁰

It should be clear by now that Tucker was wary of such enthusiastic literary independence. Although in politics he advocated such liberal notions as the abolition of slavery, in matters of literature his reason pointed to the dangers of incautious innovation and stressed the need for control.

Tucker's discussion of pronunciation is indicative of his literary conservatism. Here he censures the dictionaries of Thomas Sheridan and John Walker, and turns instead to "that Colossus of Literature," Dr. Johnson. For a century after its publication in 1755, Dr. Johnson's two volume dictionary did in fact dominate the field of English lexicography and was drawn upon freely by most of Johnson's successors.¹¹ Nevertheless, few Americans appreciated the harsh criticism directed at their country by the author of Taxation No Tyranny. Many resented Johnson's picture of America as "the home of uncivilized barbarians, a region interesting only for its 'natural curiosities.'¹² The pompous Johnsonian style, moreover, was not greatly respected in this country. Tucker's friends, William Wirt and Frances Gilmer, despised Samuel Johnson. Tucker's admiration for him shows that he is tied to an older tradition. He also neglects to respond to the one area in which

eighteenth century improvements were made upon Dr. Johnson's monumental work--that of orthoepy, or pronunciation.

The first, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to describe a system of English pronunciation was made by Thomas Sheridan. His General Dictionary of the English Language appeared in 1780. Sheridan's goal was to describe the English language as its usage had been established by social custom, in a form he readily condoned. In general he succeeded; but critics, Webster among them, accused him of recommending the corruptions of the English stage and court.¹³ These attacks quickly cast doubt upon Sheridan as an authority on pronunciation, and caused the general public to distrust his guidelines. As Tucker indicates in the humorous story of his nephew, pronouncing dictionaries were a social necessity for the people of the period for they felt the need to cite authorities before speaking. Tucker may object to the current reliance on pronunciation guides; however, his own preference for a specific authoritative statement shows that he is resisting the change in pronunciation more than the appeal to authorities.

Tucker's reference to Sheridan is unusual. His dictionary was seldom used in America; and, as in England, his work was soon replaced by John Walker's Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English

Language. This dictionary appeared in England in 1791 and in an American edition in 1803.¹⁴ St. George Tucker was not alone in his criticism of Sheridan, but his disagreement with Walker's "prosodical reformatations" is indicative of a fairly conservative position. According to one linguist, "the success of Walker's book was immediate and wide and lasting."¹⁵ And by 1816, John Pickering "noted with satisfaction a 'general and increasing disposition' on the part of the American people to regulate their pronunciation by that of Walker."¹⁶

In passing it may be noted that Tucker neglects to mention the man who would soon become a leader in the field of American orthography, particularly for his 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language. There is some evidence to suggest that Tucker objected to Noah Webster's writings. William J. Prince records a poem written by Tucker in which he parodies Webster's pronunciation guidelines.¹⁷

Tucker's references to dictionaries are a useful index to his critical principles and his concept of the function of language. More important, however, is his appeal to Pope, Goldsmith, and Homer for guidance in pronunciation. Like Dr. Johnson Tucker uses well-chosen quotations from standard authors to illustrate proper usage, and he turns to the classics for the best examples of harmony in language.

Tucker's remarks on modern oratory are closely

related to his admiration for Pope and classical models. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, America had a vigorous and time-honored tradition of oratory reminiscent of the sophist period of antiquity when orations were a literary genre. The spoken and the written word were closely related. Speeches were subjected to the same critical analysis as essays, with attention paid to style, diction, and even punctuation.¹⁸ As a lawyer, Tucker's concern with oratory was even stronger than that of the ordinary citizen. Speaking effectively constituted a major requirement for the legal profession. Joel Barlow, for example, gave up the practice of law because his "oratorical powers were by no means of a high order."¹⁹

The cultural need for leaders adept at oral persuasion was reflected in the heavy emphasis placed on oratory in the educational system. Although the ancients, especially Horace, Cicero, and Quintilian, still served as the foundation for instruction, the Scottish rhetoricians Kames and Blair were more influential. Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres, published in Edinburgh in 1783, was by far the most important textbook of this period. According to Hubbell, "the study of Blair's Lectures, and other texts of the same kind probably had more to do with the literary conservatism of the South than the study of the ancient classics."²⁰ Blair

emphasized the classics, precision and simplicity in style, and a number of qualities reducible to what Hubbell calls "delicacy and correctness."²¹ Blair condemned the "sublime style"--the "magnificent words, accumulated epithets, and a certain swelling kind of expression."²² Tucker's objections to the multi-syllable words used by Virginia orators are consistent with the standards set by Blair. Once more Tucker shows himself to be strongly indebted to the influence which shaped his critical awareness.

Alexander Pope's influence on Tucker's aesthetic ideals is closely related to the American tradition of oratory. Bigelow asserts that "Americans in the late eighteenth century did not fail to note the affinities of Pope's poetry to rhetoric."²³ Agnes Sibley argues that one of the main reasons why Pope was so highly esteemed in America was the belief that poetry and oratory, rhetorical in form, were the most effective means of moral instruction.²⁴ Pope's reputation in this country did not begin to decline until the second decade of the nineteenth century. Before this time, adequate preparation for public speaking, or private social accomplishment, demanded a thorough knowledge of his works.

Tucker's well-defined position on the question of language is easily identified. He is above all a neoclassicist. He shares with the "Age of Pope" an interest

in achieving perfect form and an admiration for classical ease, symmetry, balance, and common sense. He owes his aesthetic ideals to Addison, Steele, Swift, Pope, and before them, to the tenets fostered by the age of Dryden. From Blair he received confirmation that "delicacy and correctness" are to be valued, and through the American tradition of oratory he learned to apply his neo-classical principles to the spoken word. None of this is surprising in a Southern lawyer educated in the eighteenth century.

A directive for American literature is implicit in Tucker's critical principles. American literature should follow a cautious path of growth, severely conscious of past achievements and relying heavily upon previous example. American literature must answer to a definite set of standards, representing the best in literature of all ages. This concept of variety within an ordered system does not encourage radical experimentation. Rather, it refutes a rejection of the past; it denies cultural isolation. Tucker wants the best of both worlds, an indigenous literature which adheres to the dictates of Reason.

Determining why America has not met her potential for greatness in literature is of greater concern to Tucker than specifying the course American literature

should take. He sees that a milieu conducive to literary productions is the necessary basis for the development of a national literature. By defending America against the attacks of the Edinburgh Reviewers, Tucker isolates the country's weaknesses.

Tucker turns to a defense of America's cultural backwardness with the argument that "the study of Belles-lettres has not yet become a profession in America; or if it has it is only to a few." This was certainly true during and immediately following the Revolution. In the South the only professional writers appearing during the first several decades of the nineteenth century were a few journalists such as Thomas Ritchie.²⁵ Speaking of the Revolutionary period, Hubbell writes:

There was as yet no place in America for the professional man of letters, as Freneau discovered to his sorrow. The nearest approach to a Southern man of letters was Robert Munford or St. George Tucker, but Williamsburg was too small to serve as a literary capital and Munford lived on a remote plantation.²⁶

Moving into the post-Revolutionary period, Benjamin T. Spencer observes:

There is one salient fact in post-Revolutionary America: the man of letters was neither honored nor respected by the majority of his compatriots. Hence belletristic writing faltered because it lacked the motivating power of social approval.²⁷

And, Tucker's contemporary, John Pickering (1777-1846), American lawyer and philologist wrote in 1816:

In this country we can hardly be said to have any authors by profession. The works we have produced have, for the most part, been written by men who were obliged to depend upon other employment for their support, and who could devote to literary pursuits those few moments only which their thirst for learning stimulated them to snatch from their daily avocations.²⁸

American authors recognized the antagonistic forces at work. They cried out against the absence of copyright protection. They blamed the "spirit of capitalism" for public apathy. They struggled to create literary centers where the arts might have an opportunity to flourish. And they recognized that the public's interest in politics and party faction were major causes of the neglect of the arts. Tucker's personal experience corroborated his awareness that Americans valued politics over literature. In a letter to William Wirt, April 4, 1813, Tucker wrote:

The truth is, that Socrates himself would pass unnoticed and forgotten in Virginia, if he were not a public character, and some of his speeches preserved in a newspaper.²⁹

Recognizing these retarding elements, Tucker could only look forward hopefully to a time in America when professional writers would have "more opportunities for Exertion, and Taste, to improve itself."³⁰

The next section of Tucker's essay is a superb re-tort to the following critique by Francis Jeffrey in the Edinburgh Review (October, 1809).

As epic poetry has often been the earliest, as well as the most precious production of national genius, we ought not, perhaps, to be surprised at this goodly firstling of the infant muse of America. The truth however is, that though the American government be new, the people is in all respects as old as the people of England; and their want of literature is to be ascribed not to their immaturity of their progress in civilization, but, to the nature of the occupations in which they are generally engaged. These federal republicans in short, bear no sort of resemblance to the Greeks of the days of Homer, or the Italians of the age of Dante; but are very much such people, we suppose, as the modern traders of Manchester, Liverpool, or Glasgow. They have all a little Latin whipped into them in their youth; and read Shakespeare, Pope, Milton, as well as bad English novels, in their days of courtship and leisure. They are just as likely to write epic poems, therefore, as the inhabitants of our trading towns at home; are entitled to no more admiration when they succeed, and to no more indulgence when they fail, than would be due, on a similar occasion, to any of those industrious persons.³¹

To the Edinburgh Reviewers America was an extension of the Roman Empire of Great Britain, kindred people, "destined to carry our language, our arts, and our interests too, over regions more vast than ever acknowledged the sway of the Caesars of Rome."³² Yet, America had produced no literature. The Reviewers accounted for this by pointing to the economic situation and class structure in the country. The absence of a leisure class, an aristocracy willing and able to appreciate poetry, was given as the main reason for the low estate of literature

in this country. The Reviewers objected to generals who "distil brandy," colonels who "keep taverns," and statesmen who "feed pigs."³³

Tucker agrees that there is no class of Americans who can be completely occupied with the liberal arts. Nevertheless, he finds the deficiencies of the "new Rome" rooted in a noneconomic problem. The lack of teachers, books, and literary models is to him analogous to the situation of the Egyptians after the destruction of the Alexandrian Library or to the plight of the Athenians and Romans after their cities had been sacked. He argues that Americans are the people of Greece in the days of Homer; America is the new Rome, but it is a Rome built upon the ashes of a society deprived of its major cultural resources. Specifically, it is Virginia without a public library and the College of William and Mary without a substantial collection of books.

In retrospect Tucker's estimate of the library at William and Mary seems a little low. John Jennings reports:

...despite the destruction of its original holdings in the fire of 1705, the library in 1781 contained some three thousand volumes. It was, in consequence, the second largest academic book repository in the new republic. The Harvard collection at that time numbered approximately twelve thousand volumes, Yale had around twenty-seven hundred, and Princeton fifteen hundred. When the college celebrated its centennial anniversary in 1793, the library collection, thanks mainly to the gift of Louis XVI,

would have increased to approximately four thousand volumes.³⁴

This is impressive. The loss of English financial assistance during the Revolution, however, made it impossible for James Madison, president of the College, to fulfill his plans for the library. The "good foundation to improve upon," Madison described in 1793 was apparently not much improved by the time Tucker wrote.³⁵

With regard to public libraries in Virginia, Tucker's complaint is definitely justified. Although individual wealthy Virginians had fine private collections as early as 1674 (Col. T. W. Willoughby), in 1679 Virginia was the only American colony without a single parish library. Maryland had sixteen, and Boston, meanwhile, had opened the first public library in 1640.³⁶ The first non-private library in Virginia was a subscription library opened in 1795 in Alexandria. Shortly before 1800 the Amicable Society of Richmond organized a Library Society which circulated books for twenty years; the Richmond Enquirer for October 15, 1815 speaks of its library as "select but too small." It was not until 1852 that the city of Richmond passed a provision "for public libraries and lectures." A room and one hundred and fifty dollars a year were furnished to the Library Society so that the public could be admitted.³⁷ John P. Little considered the library to be so insignificant that "it may be classed among the curiosities of the city, as it scarcely deserves

mention as any thing else."³⁸ In 1811 with only the meager holdings of the Library Society subscription library, Virginia did indeed seem more determined to "exclude, rather than impart light."

It is quite clear from Tucker's essay that he feels the discrepancy between his Augustan ideals and the American reality--between the light of knowledge and the darkness of an indifferent public. Americans had not always been so indifferent. Immediately following the Treaty of Paris, the surge of optimistic enthusiasm affected national literature as well as national politics. Just as Americans began to define the political structure of the country, so they attacked the question of native language and literature. Some of the specific requirements proposed by men such as Webster, Barlow, and Thomas Jefferson, have already been mentioned. In the 1780's, the previously unknown phrase "American literature" was heard more and more, just as the English language was given a native twist.

By 1800, however, political quibbling and fears about the future of the country distracted Americans from other concerns. Political pessimism set in as shaky exhilaration dissipated. Concurrently, the impatient advocates of literary emancipation discovered that American arts were not going to blossom miraculously. The United States had had thirteen years to produce a

literary great, and she had failed. A decade of disillusionment followed this realization. During this time Americans devoted themselves to politics. Spencer notes: "authors discovered that the public of the early 1800's had little interest in works not filled with political invective."³⁹

By the end of 1811, political interests had taken a definite form. Renewed hostilities towards Britain moved the political target outside the country. Interest in literary developments continued to drop, or rather, to be consumed by larger issues. In 1814 DeWitt Clinton lamented that politics "has spread a morbid gloom over our literature, has infected the national taste."⁴⁰ It was not until 1815 that political fervor was again matched by literary patriotism. Graphed, the rise of literary nationalism follows closely behind the moments of greatest political intensity. Hence, the War of 1812 had to do for the nineteenth century what the Revolution had done for the eighteenth.⁴¹

This historical outline indicates Tucker's place in the quest for nationality. He writes at a time when the call for a national literature was muffled and subdued by political uncertainties. His arguments are consistent with the general atmosphere of the time, a defensive approach to national literature resulting from a sense of discouragement and an awareness of public indifference.

In choosing the literary essay to present his arguments, Tucker draws upon a well-established tradition. As early as 1721 series of Addisonian essays appeared in American newspapers.⁴² In New England Timothy Dwight and John Trumbull alone produced nearly a hundred series of light periodical essays between 1785 and 1800. And the success of Joseph Dennie's The Lay Preacher (begun in 1795) made him the most popular of the early essayists. Elizabeth C. Cook has discussed the ease with which the Addisonian essay can be imitated and the extent to which such essays appeared in colonial newspapers, sometimes, she maintains, with a "great advance in the handling of conversation and a changed tone of philosophical discussion."⁴³ Some students have not been as pleased with the American copies. George Whicher comments:

In general, the imitation of English models resulted in feeble literary replicas, or in strange patchworks of Yankee homespun with Addisonian finery.⁴⁴

Regardless, these essays continued to be written and to be greeted with varying degrees of satisfaction by readers in colonial America and the early republic.

The Addisonian essay had ceased to be a satisfactory means for reaching British readers. This medium, moreover, was incompatible with the Romantic temper of the early nineteenth century. The cultural lag accounts in part for the continued popularity of the essay in America, as it does for the delayed response to

Romanticism in this country. Tucker's sixteenth letter gives no indication that he was aware of the approaching reaction to classical formalism. Elsewhere he demonstrates a non-Augustan appreciation for the imagination, but in the present essay his statement is clearly at variance with the Romantic persuasion. Pope and Addison are necessary models for Tucker, as for other neo-classic essayists of the period.⁴⁵ Tucker accepts these models; in fact, he insists upon them, and attributes the low state of literature in America to their absence.

As a member of its genre, Tucker's letter can be commended for its well-developed reasoning, lightened with humorous touches. In each of the five paragraphs Tucker responds to a specific point in the Edinburgh critique, describes its implications for America and Virginia, and then details the consequences of movements in an unwise direction. The classical or neo-classical examples to be emulated are cited. There is no doubt that this essay was written by an educated man, by a perceptive man of letters confronting the major issues of his time. Tucker's statement of his position on American language and literature and his awareness of the country's cultural deficiencies serve to document further one stage in the development of the American literary consciousness.

Notes for III

¹ from "The Love of Plants," quoted by Leon Howard, The Connecticut Wits (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), p. 310.

² quoted by Howard, p. 322.

³ Philadelphia Portfolio, January 1809. Ed. Joseph Dennie, Nicholas Biddle et al. Phil: Joseph Dennie et al.

⁴ London Monthly Magazine, quoted by Howard, p. 323.

⁵ Howard, p. 326.

⁶ George Philip Krapp, The English Language in America (New York: The Century Company for MLA, 1925), II, 286-7.

⁷ Albert C. Baugh, A History of the English Language (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), p. 431.

⁸ quoted by Krapp, p. 72.

⁹ Timothy Dwight, Works, IV, 278.

¹⁰ quoted by Krapp, pp. 73-4.

¹¹ M. M. Mathews, A Survey of English Dictionaries (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 30.

¹² Krapp, p. 281.

¹³ Krapp, p. 354.

¹⁴ Krapp, pp. 355 and 366.

¹⁵ Krapp, p. 356.

¹⁶ quoted by Mathews, p. 31.

¹⁷ William S. Prince, "St. George Tucker as a Poet of the Early Republic." Unpublished diss. Yale University, 1954, p. 19.

¹⁸Gorden E. Bigelow, Rhetoric and American Poetry of the Early National Period (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1960), p. 28.

¹⁹Joel Barlow, The Rhapsodist and Other Uncollected Writings ed. Harry R. Warfel (New York: SF&R, 1934) p. 108.

²⁰Jay B. Hubbell, The South in American Literature, 1607-1900 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1954), p. 178.

²¹Hubbell, p. 178.

²²Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres, IV. quoted by Bigelow, p. 67.

²³Bigelow, p. 31.

²⁴Agnes Sibley, Alexander Pope's Prestige in America 1735-1835 (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949), p. 73.

²⁵Hubbell, p. 211.

²⁶Hubbell, p. 99.

²⁷Benjamin T. Spencer, The Quest for Nationality (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1957), p. 68.

²⁸quoted by H. L. Mencken, The American Language (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), suppl. I, 42. Pickering's 1816 remarks are not entirely accurate. Charles Brockden Brown is generally considered America's first professional writer. His Wieland, Ormond, Edgar Huntly and Arthur Mervyn appeared between 1798 and 1801. The question of who deserves the title of America's first professional is largely a matter of definition. William Charvat has noted that if "intention" is the determining factor, Joel Barlow (in 1783) was the first writer to wish to live by literature alone. Paine (in 1794), Mrs. Rowson (probably in 1794), Joseph Dennie (in 1795) and Brown (in 1798) follow Barlow. See The Profession of Authorship in America 1800-1870: The Papers of William Charvat, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1968).

²⁹Tucker to Wirt, April 4, 1813, quoted by John P. Kennedy, Memoirs of William Wirt (Baltimore: Lea and Blanchard, 1851), I, 317.

³⁰Works which appeared in Tucker's lifetime include: Bryant's Thanatopsis (1817), Irving's Sketch-Book (1819) and Bracebridge Hall (1822), Cooper's Precaution (1820)

and The Spy (1821), and Poe's Tamerlane and Other Poems (1827).

³¹The Edinburgh Review (New York: repr. for Ezra Sargeant, by D. & G. Bruce, 1810) XV, ii, 22. The Tucker-Coleman library, William and Mary contains volumes I-VII (October 1802-January 1806) and IX-XLV (October 1806-March 1827).

³²The Edinburgh Review, January 1810, article 11.

³³The Edinburgh Review, October 1805, article 11.

³⁴John M. Jennings, The Library of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1693-1793 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), p. 79.

³⁵Jennings, p. 80.

³⁶Margaret Meagher, History of Education in Richmond (Richmond, 1939), pp. 136-7.

³⁷Meagher, p. 129.

³⁸John P. Little, History of Richmond (1851-1852, repr. Richmond, Virginia: Dietz Press, 1933), p. 136.

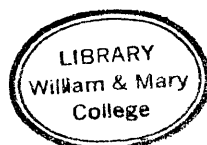
³⁹Spencer, p. 67.

⁴⁰quoted by Spencer, p. 67.

⁴¹Benjamin T. Spencer's The Quest for Nationality is the most comprehensive study of the growth of literary nationalism. Robert T. Spiller's anthology The American Literary Revolution 1783-1837 (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967) documents the growth and provides a bibliography for further study.

⁴²The first American paper to imitate the Spectator was James Franklin's The New-England Courant, which commenced publication in Boston on August 7, 1721. Soon following suit were The South Carolina Gazette (established January 8, 1732) and The Virginia Gazette (first number appearing on August 6, 1736). See George F. Horner and Robert A. Bain, Colonial and Federalist American Writing (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1966).

⁴³Elizabeth C. Cook, Literary Influences in Colonial Newspapers, 1704-1750 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), p. 155.



⁴⁴George Frisbie Whicher, "Early Essayists," The Cambridge History of American Literature, ed. William P. Trent et al. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 233.

⁴⁵Guy A. Cardwell argues that the neo-classic essayist was much safer in his choice of Pope and Addison as models than he would have been if he had struggled with the examples set by Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron. "The Influence of Addison on Charleston Periodicals 1795-1860," Studies in Philology, XXXV (1938), 456-470.

APPENDIX

TUCKER'S LETTERS TO THE OLD BACHELOR*

<u>Number</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Signature</u>
1	Letter	To Old Squaretoes from a female	no signature
(2	Essay	On Memory	?
(3	Letter	From Mitis the federalist	?
(4	Essay	On artificial aid to hearing	?
5	Allegory	History of Contentment	Lycidas
(6	Essay	On party spirit	?
(7	?	"other writings"	?
(8	?	"other writings"	?
9	Allegory	On ambition and patriotism	Benevolus
(10	Letter	From Diogenes	Diogenes
(11	?	"other writings"	?
12	Letter	Dream trip to Lilliput	Gulliveriansis
13	Letter	Personification of avarice	Misavarius
14	Letter	In praise of Virginia women	Philogenes
15	Allegory	Generosity and Economy	Lycidas
16	Letter	Language and literature in America	Candidus
17	Letter	Family history of Moses Dolittle	Moses Dolittle
18	Letter	Sequel to Dolittle family history	Moses Dolittle
19	Letter	Theory of the universe	Z
20	Letter	Sequel to 19. Dialogue between Skeptic and Believer	Z
21	Letter	The Vision of Seliom	Z
22	Letter	Story of Honorius and Aminter	Z
23	Letter	On eloquence	Benevolus
24	Allegory	Youth, Health, and Temperance	Lycidas
25	Letter	Sequel to 22. Written by Aminter's widow	Amanda
26	Letter	On benevolence and slavery	Philanthropus
27	Letter	Request for assistance with romance problems	Susannah Trifl
28	Allegory	On Ignorance	Lycidas
--	Allegory	On Ignorance	no signature
--	Essay	On Patriotism	no signature

* Parentheses indicate letters which are not extant but are known about through correspondence between Wirt and Tucker. Numbers 1, 5, and 9 are copies or drafts of pieces sent to Wirt. The numbering is Tucker's own, noted in the upper left-hand corner of each letter. Numbers 2, 3, and 4 are listed arbitrarily; their sequence is not known. Either 7 or 8 should have been a letter from Diogenes, since Tucker calls 10 the "second one."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Tucker, St. George. "For the Old Batchelor." 22 essays. Papers MSS. Tucker-Coleman Collection. Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
- Papers MSS. Tucker-Coleman Collection, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
- A Dissertation on Slavery: with a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of it, in the State of Virginia. Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1776.
- The Knight and the Friars. A Historical Tale; after the Manner of John Gilpin (New York: Eleazer Oswald, 1786.)
- Liberty, A Poem: on the Independence of America. Richmond, Virginia: Augustine Davis, 1788.
- The Probationary Odes of Jonathan Pindar, Esq. Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin Bache, 1796.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Books

- Barlow, Joel. Works. 2 vols. Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1970.
- Baugh, Albert C. A History of the English Language. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935.
- Bigelow, Gordon E. Rhetoric and American Poetry of the Early National Period. Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1960.

- Cairns, W. B. British Criticisms of American Writings, 1783-1815. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1918.
- Charvat, William. Literary Publishing in America, 1790-1850. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959.
- , The Origins of American Critical Thought, 1810-1835. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936.
- , The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870: The Papers of William Charvat. Ed. Matthew J. Cruccoli. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968.
- Clive, John. Scotch Reviewers. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.
- Coleman, Mary Haldane, ed. Virginia Silhouettes: Contemporary Letters Concerning Negro Slavery in the State of Virginia. Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, 1934.
- , St. George Tucker: Citizen of No Mean City. Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, 1938.
- Cook, Elizabeth C. Literary Influences in Colonial Newspapers, 1704-1750. New York: Columbia University Press, 1912.
- Couch, W. T., ed. Culture in the South. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934.
- Cunliffe, Marcus. The Nation Takes Shape, 1789-1837. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.
- Dangerfield, George. The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815-1828. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.
- Davis, Richard B. Intellectual Life in Jefferson's Virginia 1790-1830. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964.
- Dictionary of American Biography. Ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone. 20 vols. and index. New York: Scribner's, 1928-37. Supplements One and Two. New York: Scribner's, 1944, 1958.
- A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles. Ed. William Craigie and James R. Hulbert. 4 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938-44.

- The Edinburgh Review. New York: repr. for Ezra Sargeant by D. & G. Bruce. I-VII (October 1802-January 1806). IX-XLV (October 1806-March 1827).
- Elioseff, Lee Andrew. The Cultural Milieu of Addison's Literary Criticism. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963.
- Free, William J. The Columbian Magazine and American Literary Nationalism. Paris: Monton, 1968.
- Gordon, Armistead C. Virginian Writers of Fugitive Verse. New York: J. T. White & Co., 1923.
- Graham, Walter. English Literary Periodicals. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1930.
- Griswold, Rufus W. The Prose Writers of America. Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1847.
- Gummere, Richard M. The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.
- Horner, George F. and Robert A. Bain, ed. Colonial and Federalist American Writing. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1966.
- Howard, Leon. The Connecticut Wits. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943.
- Hubbel, Jay B. The South in American Literature, 1607-1900. Durham: Duke University Press, 1954.
- Jennings, John M. The Library of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1693-1793. Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1968.
- Johnson, Samuel. A Dictionary of the English Language. 4th ed. London: for W. Straham, J. and F. Rivington et al., 1773.
- Jones, Richard Foster. The Triumph of the English Language. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953.
- Kennedy, John Pendleton. Memoirs of the Life of William Wirt. 2 vols. Baltimore, Maryland: Lea & Blanchard, 1851.
- Krapp, George Philip. The English Language in America. New York: The Century Company for MLA, 1925.

- Little, John P. History of Richmond. Richmond, Virginia: Southern Literary Messenger, October 1851-June 1852. rpr. Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1933.
- Mathews, M. M. A Survey of English Dictionaries. London: Oxford University Press, 1923.
- Meagher, Margaret. History of Education in Richmond. Richmond, Virginia: Board of Education, 1939.
- Mencken, H. L. The American Language. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945.
- Miller, Perry. The Life and the Mind in America from the Revolution of the Civil War. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965.
- Nye, Russel B. The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960.
- The Oxford English Dictionary. Ed. James A. H. Murray et al. 13 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.
- Parks, Edd Winfield. Ante-Bellum Southern Literary Critics. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1962.
- Rarrington, Vernon Louis. The Romantic Revolution in America 1800-1860. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927.
- Prince, William S. "St. George Tucker as a Poet of the Early Republic." unpublished diss. Yale University, 1954.
- Sanford, Charles L. Quest for America, 1810-1824. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1964.
- Sibley, Agnes. Alexander Pope's Prestige in America, 1735-1835. New York: King's Crown Press, 1949.
- Spencer, Benjamin T. The Quest for Nationality: An American Literary Campaign. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1957.
- Spiller, Robert E., ed. The American Literary Revolution, 1783-1837. Garden City, New York, Anchor Books, 1967.
- Taylor, William R. Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character. New York: Braziller, 1961.

Tyler, Moses Coit. The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783. 2 vols. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897.

Whicher, George F. "Early Essayists." The Cambridge History of American Literature. Ed. William P. Trent et al. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936.

Wright, Louis B. The First Gentlemen of Virginia. San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1940.

Periodicals

Bolwell, Robert. "Concerning the Study of Nationalism in American Literature." American Literature, X (1939)

Cardwell, Guy A. "The Influence of Addison on Charleston Periodicals, 1795-1860." Studies in Philology, XXXV (1938), 456-470.

Clark, Henry H. "Factors to be Investigated in American Literary History from 1787-1800." English Journal, XXIII (1934), 481-487.

Coleman, Charles W. "St. Memin Portraits: St. George Tucker." Magazine of American History, VII (September 1881), 217-221.

Davis, Richard B. "Literary Tastes in Virginia Before Poe." William and Mary Quarterly, 2nd ser., XIX (January 1939), 55-68.

Gibson, George H. and Judith C. "The Influence of the Tatler and the Spectator on the 'Monitor.'" Furman Studies, Furman University Bulletin, n.s. XIV (November 1966), 12-23.

Hardy, Sallie E. Marshall. "Some Virginia Lawyers of the Past and Present." Green Bag, X (February 1898), 57-58.

Hornberger, Thomas. "A Note on Eighteenth-Century American Prose Style." American Literature, X (1938), 77-78.

Howard, M. C. "The Maryland Gazette, an American Imitator of the Tatler and Spectator." Maryland Historical Magazine, XXIX (1934), 295-298.

- Hubbell, Jay B. "Literary Nationalism in the Old South," American Studies in Honor of William Kenneth Boyd. Ed. David K. Jackson. Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1940.
- Hughes, R. M. "Belles of Williamsburg," William and Mary Quarterly, 1st ser., X (April 1930), 172.
- McCloskey, John C. "The Campaign of Periodicals after the War of 1812 for National American Literature." PMLA, L (1935), 262-273.
- Patteson, S. S. "The Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia, Part I." Green Bag, V (July 1893), 320-322.
- Streeter, Robert E. "Association Psychology and Literary Nationalism in the North American Review." American Literature, IVII (1945)
- Tucker, Henry St. George. "Patrick Henry and St. George Tucker." University of Pennsylvania Law Review, LXVII (January 1919), 69-74.
- Tucker, J. Randolph. "The Judges Tucker of the Court of Appeals of Virginia." Virginia Law Register, I (March 1896), 789-812.

VITAAnne Elizabeth McCorkle

Born March 14, 1947 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Graduated from Breckenridge High School, Breckenridge, Texas, June 1965. Attended North Texas State University 1965 and 1967. Graduated magna cum laude with Honors in English, Phi Beta Kappa, from Washington Square College, New York University, October 1970. M. A. candidate in English, College of William and Mary, 1970-71.